

**UNIVERSITY OF DERBY**

**THE CONSTRUCTION OF COMPLEX AND DYNAMIC SIKH IDENTITY IN  
CONTEMPORARY FICTION IN ENGLISH**

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*In Loving Memory*

*I dedicate this thesis to my late father, Sardar Dhian Singh Majhail, a Sikh farmer of Tarn Taran Patti, who as a freedom fighter of India dedicated his life towards socio-political struggles of Sikhs during colonial Punjab, resisted colonial oppressions by engaging in public agitations for which he was imprisoned at the Lahore jail, and my late mother Sardarni Gopal Kaur, who taught me Sikh tenets from a young age. Even though my father passed away when I was fifteen, his contribution and legacy will always remain alive; never to be forgotten.*

*Their legacy continues in my youngest grandson, Dhian Singh, who reminds me of my father, and my granddaughter, Simren Kaur, who reminds me of my grandmother.*

## **Abstract**

The Sikh identity politics has existed throughout the Sikh history since its origins in the pre-colonial Punjab of 1469 to the colonial British Raj of India and the present period of world Sikh diaspora, each period projects different challenges and threats that the Sikhs as minorities have encountered and resisted. During the British Raj, Hindus of Arya Samaj targeted the Sikh identity whose attempt to erase Sikhs was resisted. The colonisers also associated the Sikh identity with loyal colonial subjects of the British Empire. Such attempts by society to reduce the identity of Sikhs to various socio-political constructs marginalised the Sikhs.

The focus of this study is to investigate the representation of Sikh identity within contemporary fiction written in English by Sikhs and non-Sikhs after India's independence in 1947. The aim is to study Sikh identity within different historical contexts of the selected texts, ranging from the post-Second World War pre-independent India to India's post-independent era including the 1984 Sikh genocide and the Sikh diaspora.

This study argues that the Sikh identity is complex, dynamic, and constantly evolving with time and changes with modernity. The research provides a new approach for analysing Sikh identity and culture, which is found beyond the socially constructed singularities of identity, culture and the 'Other'. The selected texts are diverse ranging from the contribution of Sikhs in the Second World War to their efforts in the Indian nationalism and the post-colonial world of Sikh diaspora. These diverse narratives are located within different cultural, contemporary, fictional and historical contexts that are related to the Sikhs.

The theoretical and critical approaches that the study engages with are multi-disciplinary, which develops new ways for thinking about the Sikh identity by providing an analytical framework that interweaves postcolonial lens and diaspora scholarship with the Sikh theorisation of identity to articulate a Sikh perspective. It shows that new identities are continuously forming in Sikhs while maintaining connections with their culture and heritage.

The notions of home, belonging and identity are challenged where the transforming aspect of Sikh identity becomes a new mode of existence, allowing Sikhs to reconfigure their identities whilst facing the challenges of the contemporary world. This study breaks new grounds as there is currently no critical comparative study that establishes a theoretical and analytical framework for studying Sikh identity through contemporary English literature.

# **The Construction of Complex and Dynamic Sikh Identity**

## **in Contemporary Fiction in English**

### **Introduction**

This thesis examines how the representation of Sikh identity is constructed, depicted and understood in contemporary<sup>1</sup> fiction in English whilst focusing on analysing dominant and prevailing constructions of Sikhs in culture from a critical postcolonial perspective. The texts chosen for my research are: - Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient* (1992) awarded the Golden Man Booker Prize in 2018, Khushwant Singh's first novel *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Shonali Bose's debut novel *Amu* (2004) and J. K Rowling's first novel for adults *The Casual Vacancy* (2012). Whereas all the texts have won awards and have been adopted into award winning films by both the Indian and overseas film industries as a way of reaching out to the wider audience, my focus is on the written texts and their use as creative means to describe and portray Sikh identity and culture in India and its diaspora. The texts selected cover a specific post-colonial period starting from the end of second world war in 1945, to the present day when many Sikhs live in the diaspora.

Throughout this study I argue that the Sikh identity is complex and dynamic, and remains fluid and in motion, transforming itself to cope with the challenges of the contemporary world. My chosen texts will enable me to analyse the representation of Sikh identity and culture to show that Sikh identity cannot be hastily read as the reflection of perceived dominant cultural ideologies that attempts to construct and fix identities as the 'Other' for this leads to the marginalisation of Sikhs as minorities<sup>2</sup>. Since various approaches can be adopted to study the question of Sikh identity it is futile to conceive any claims made by contemporary texts without exploring a Sikh perspective and understanding broader performance of Sikh identity, heritage and culture within the given historical contexts of the texts.

My choice of writers and theoretical framework allow me to explore varied styles of contemporary writings ranging from writings produced by a Sikh writer in Khushwant Singh, to non-Sikh writers of different background, such as, Michael Ondaatje a Canadian migrant of

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<sup>1</sup> The contemporary period is the current period of present that in the western Europe is recognised to have begun in 1945, after the Second World War ended. However, if we look at it from India's perspective, the contemporary for India would be after India gained "independence from Britain in 1947" (Eaglestone, 2013, p. 4). So, I consider contemporary fiction to those that were written after 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Sikhs are only 1.9% of India's total population recorded in 2001, with Hindus 80.5% and Muslims 13.4%.

Sri Lanka heritage, Shonali Bose a Hindu Indian migrant of America to the English writer J. K Rowling, which provides exploration of breadth of literary styles to understand representation of Sikhs in today's globalised and modern society. I purposely chose writers from culturally diverse backgrounds to attain an understanding of varied representations of Sikhs in narratives whilst equally exploring identities of both male and female Sikhs. This also informs an impartial and objective research on the Sikh identity and culture. The key concepts to be interrogated include Sikh notions of home, belonging, homeland, identity, race, ethnicity, male and female subjectivities, Sikh diaspora, displacement, colonial discourse, racist discourse, Eurocentrism, postcolonialism, Sikh culture, religion and heritage.

### **Locating Sikh readership and scholarship in contemporary English fiction**

Literature in English on India written after it gained its independence from the colonial rule in 1947 is labelled post-colonial. Most of these narratives do not focus on Sikhs and their culture. Most post-1947 Indian films or literature in Punjabi and other vernacular languages of India in which Sikhs widely presented are either not translated into English for the consumption of the wider audience which speak English, or the translations done often lose their true essence and meaning. Literary works in English produced by non-Sikh writers of South Asian origin and the diaspora<sup>3</sup> have become increasingly popular in representing the Indian culture after independence. The dominant Sikh-themed fictional novels written in English can be largely mapped into the fourfold typology of Sikh fictional readership: (1) works about pre-independent India, (2) works after the Partition of India, (3) works related to 1984 Sikh genocide, and finally (4) works related to Sikhs in the diaspora. This categorisation is an attempt to consolidate and facilitate the understanding of the broader Sikh readership of English fiction that is currently surfacing around the globe. This by no means suggests that there will not be many other themes related to Sikhs in the future since this categorisation certainly helps in rationalising the major themes that are currently surfacing on Sikhs in the contemporary fiction in English.

The first category of works about pre-independent India is to do with English fictions that reflect Sikhs from its origins in Sikhism during pre-colonial period through to colonial, leading up to the Independence of India in 1947. It includes texts such as *Bhowani Junction* (1954) by John Masters *Flashman and the Mountain of Light* (1990) by George MacDonald

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<sup>3</sup> The term 'diaspora' is "used to describe dispersion or scattering of distinct groups of people... who have all left their ancestral homeland for one reason or other, but have maintained some form of connection with their homeland" (Majhail, 2018, p. xi).

Fraser an English translation of *Sundari* (1983) by Bhai Vir Singh (published originally in 1898) and *The English Patient* (1992) by Michael Ondaatje.<sup>4</sup> Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* depiction of the end of second world war in 1945 marks of a beginning of European post-colonial period which coincided with a period of nationalist struggle for independence of India.

The second category of works after the Partition of India relates to the pains and sufferings of Sikhs that came about with the Partition of colonial India into two sovereign nations – India and Pakistan. In this period, Sikhs found home in the nation state of independent India in 1947, which also signifies start of the contemporary period for India. One of the first major attempts to represent Sikhs by a Sikh writer, Khushwant Singh, is *Train to Pakistan* (1956) originally published as *Mano Majra* in 1956. It highlights the effects of Partition on the rural lives of Sikhs and Muslims and shows corrupt national government of the newly independent nations. Other texts include *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969) by Nayantara Sahgal, *The Rape* (1974) by Raj Gill, *Azadi* (1975) by Chaman Nahal, *Ashes and Petals* (1978) by H.S Gill, *Twice Born, Twice Dead: A Novel* (1979) by Kartar Singh Duggal and *What the Body Remembers* (1999) by Shauna Singh Baldwin.<sup>5</sup>

The third dominant fictional category of works relate to the 1984 Sikh genocide, a theme that is significant to Sikhs globally. The writing includes *Jo Bole* (1983) by Raj Gill, *The days of the Turban* (1987) by Partap Sharma, *Jasmine* (1989) by Bharati Mukherjee, *Time Is A Fire* (2002) by Vikram Kapur, *Pages Stained with Blood* (2002) by Indira Goswami, *Amu* (2004) by Shonali Bose.<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that apart from Gill, Rammowalia, Singh and Sandhawalia, all the writers here are non-Sikhs who have produced works from a Hindu perspective that articulates the impact of 1984 Sikh genocide on the lives of people of India.

The final category, the Sikh in diaspora in fictions, that includes works related to the Sikh diaspora, represents Sikhs globally and reflects the theme of living beyond the nation of India where notions of home, belonging and displacement for Sikhs are contested. Most texts portray British Sikh diaspora such as *The Devil's Children* (1970) by Peter Dickinson, *The Immigrants* (1973) by Reginald Massey & Jamila Massey, *The Turban Wallah: A Tale of Little*

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<sup>4</sup> Others works of fiction include *The Crown And The Loincloth* (1981) by Chaman Nahal, *Duty, Honour & Izzat: From Golden Fields to Crimson – Punjab's Brothers in Arms in Flanders* (2019) by Steven Purewal

<sup>5</sup> There are other popular novels in this theme such as *Midnight's children* (1981) by Salman Rushdie, *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) by Bapsi Sidwa,

<sup>6</sup> *The Midair Frown* originally called *What the Judges Wouldn't See?* (2005) by Iqbal Singh Rammowalia, *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* (2007) by Anita Rau Badami, *Beyond Identity* (2007) by Preminder Singh Sandhawalia, *Helium* (2013) by Jaspreet Singh, *When a Mighty Tree Falls* (2017) by Amrinder Bajaj, *The Assassination: A Novel of 1984* (2017) by Vikram Kapur, and *The Case of the Reincarnated Client* (2019) by Tarquin Hall.

*India* (1984) by Len Webster, *A Wicked Old Woman* (1987) by Ravinder Randhawa, and *The Casual Vacancy* (2012) by J. K. Rowling.<sup>7</sup> The most prominent fictional theme within these works revolves around the British Sikh diaspora.

According to Eleanor Nesbitt, “little has been published on the ways in which Sikhs are represented in fiction” (Nesbitt, 2020, p. 6). While the critical fictional analysis of Sikhs in English fiction is limited, recent contribution and efforts of some active scholars in this field has allowed this scholarship to gain some traction. One of the earliest known critical works of analysis that articulates the Sikh perspectives was written by Harbans Singh in 1972 in English, who being multilingual, analysed the Punjabi version of Bhai Vir Singh’s *Sundari* (1898). The translation of this first Punjabi novel *Sundari* into English in 1983 activated the Sikh fictional scholarship. *Sundari*, written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, depicts the conditions of pre-colonial 18<sup>th</sup> century Punjab when Sikhs “were trying to consolidate themselves in the unfavourable conditions of the times” against Mughal and Afghan invaders of Indian subcontinent (Bal, 2006, p. 3528). *Sundari* is centred around a role of an idealised female Sikh character, nicknamed Sundari, who is represented as a “devout Sikh” and who motivates other Sikhs towards bringing a positive reform in the region (Bal, 2006, 3531). The critical analysis of *Sundari* by scholars such as by Gurpreet Bal, 2006; Manasvi Yadav, 1991; Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, 2013; Anshu Malhotra, 2020; and Jaspal Kaur Singh, 2020, has established a critical literary tradition focusing on Sikh identity.

The Sikh critic Gurpreet Bal states that “[t]he Sikh intellectuals worked hard to reclaim the Sikhs by purging all influences of other religions – both Hindu and Islamic” (Bal, 2006, p. 3534). In critically analysing *Sundari*, Bal focuses on the role played by Sikh women in the invention of a Sikh tradition and the construction of Sikh identity as well as community of “brave, strong and... saviours” of Punjab (Bal, 2006, p. 3531). Elsewhere, Anshu Malhotra focuses on the agency of Sikhs by examining cultural writings of Punjab through providing a feminine perspective. She recognises that the role of Sikh women is “vital to the cause of the reformed Sikh...construed in both negative terms, such as through the figure of the ‘unreformed woman’ who encouraged Sikh ambivalence towards religious identity, and more

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<sup>7</sup> *Hari's Pigeon* (1982) by Helen Griffiths, *Pig* (1994) by Andrew Cowan, *(Un)Arranged Marriage* (2001) by Bali Rai, *The Pocket Guide to Being an Indian Girl* (2004) by B.K. Mahal, *The Exile* (2008) by Navtej Singh Sarna, *Ghost Town* (2013) by Catriona Troth, *The Boy With The Topknot* (2008); *Marriage Material* (2013) by Sathnam Sanghera, *The Year of the Runaways* (2015) by Sunjeev Sahota, and *My Father & The Lost Legend of Pear Tree – Part One* (2016) by Kalwinder Singh Dhindsa. The novels that represent other Sikh diasporas includes *Inheritance* (2013); *Sugarbread* (2014) by Balli Kaur Jaswal that represents Singapore Sikh diaspora, and *Deep Singh Blue* (2016) by Ranbir Singh Sidhu representing American Sikh diaspora, which is helping with the spread of the Sikh culture transnationally, beyond the borders of India. Although limited but some Sikh-themed science fictional novels also exist that are part of this category, such as *The Hammer of God* (1993) by Arthur C. Clarke, and *Star Trek: The Eugenics Wars: The Rise and Fall of Khan Noonien Singh: Volume 1* (2001) by Greg Cox, which reflect on the Sikh diasporas of beyond earth.

positive ones, defining the ‘reformed’ Sikh woman’s role in bringing her men to the call of community” (Malhotra et al, 2020, p. 7). Malhotra’s analysis of Bhai Vir Singh’s novels shows that Sikh women are perceived ambivalently within the construction of the Sikh identity and community. On one hand, “women are indicated...as the cause of ersatz *Sikhi* [<sup>8</sup>], indeed for its present state of degeneration” but on the other, women are “also portrayed as *Sikhi*’s hope, capable of lifting men out of the confused morass” (Malhotra et al, 2020, p. 8). The Sikh critic Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh focuses on the construction of Sikh moral ethos in the socio-political activities carried out by Sikhs in her critical analysis of fictional texts. Her main concern is to establish the way in which Sikh religion is portrayed in texts and to analyse the performance of Sikh characters against the values of Sikhism. The non-Sikh critic Manasvi Yadav’s critical analysis of Indo-English fictions focuses on how the Sikh culture is depicted by both Sikh and non-Sikh writers. Yadav recognises the contribution of Sikhs and the Sikh culture in the making of Indian culture and to establish whether Sikhs are portrayed in fiction in accordance with the philosophy of the Sikh religion. Yadav claims that Sikhs in the Indo-English fictions are represented as “a respectable lot [whose] contribution to the safety of the northern region of the country, to the freedom movement and to the enrichment of the culture and literature of India is significant and noteworthy” (Yadav, 1991, p. 213). The Sikh critic Jaspal Kaur Singh’s critical work focuses on the representation of Sikhs in Indian and diaspora writings. Her objective is to understand the construction of Sikh gender and sexual identity in the Indian culture and the role gender plays in the construction of Sikh identity. The non-Sikh critic Alok Bhalla provides a Sikh perspective in 2006 by critically analysing Partition related fictions written in English, Hindi, and Punjabi, where he asserts that Sikhs were “suffused with religiosity” represented as “bewildered people who watch with helpless dismay their familiar social and religious spaces crumble...by [Partition] events which are incomprehensible” (Bhalla, 2006, pp. 104 - 131). In my study of selected texts, I refer to some of these critics who are relevant to the central concerns of the thesis to help in foreground my original approaches taken in this thesis.

The increasing interest in the study of Sikh culture, religion and politics has led to the expansion of Sikh specific academic journal publications which include titles such as *Sikh Research Journal* (since 2016), *Sikh Formations Religion, Culture, Theory* (since 2005), *Journal of Sikh & Punjab Studies* (since 2016), *The Abstracts of Sikh Studies* (since 2003). This can be seen as an attempt to merge broader Sikh scholarship, which provides the space for

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<sup>8</sup> *Sikhi* means the Sikh religion or Sikhism in lexical Punjabi language.

scholars interested in the Sikh culture. One of the most notable contributors to the debates is Jaspal Kaur Singh<sup>9</sup> who articulates Sikh perspectives by focusing on the representation of Sikhs in Indian literature and culture. Being a Sikh herself, she presents a critical analysis of Sikhs through a postcolonial lens providing a Sikh feminine perspective on varied types of Sikh narratives.

### **Motivation for the research**

The motivation for undertaking this research lies in my established knowledge of the Sikh culture, practices and identity. I am a Sikh by birth and from an early age, I have been fascinated about my Sikh heritage, culture and identity. Growing up hearing stories from my Sikh parents and family members has played a key role in shaping my understanding of the Sikh identity. My devoted father<sup>10</sup>, a *Jat*<sup>11</sup> Sikh farmer turned freedom fighter, dedicated his life to the socio-political struggles of Sikhs during the colonial British Raj. Having been born in the post-colonial India in 1953, I grew up hearing narratives of pre-independent struggles of freedom from the colonial British Raj, and the challenges of living in the post-independent India. The legacy of the British Raj was the partition of British India in 1947 into two separate states – India and Pakistan. The partition split up the ancestral Sikh homeland of Punjab into two unequal halves, where a larger half of western Punjab went to Pakistan whilst a smaller eastern Punjab remained in India. Most Sikhs who lived in the western Punjab part were permanently displaced from their ancestral homes after migrating into eastern Punjab and other parts of India, where they were recognised as refugees upon arrival. Only a small population of Sikhs stayed behind in the western Punjab of Pakistan after the partition. My birth village in Patti bordering Pakistan narrowly missed ending up in the western Punjab of Pakistan, almost displacing my parents too in 1947. The passing away of my father when I was fifteen was an unbearable loss. Following my father's footsteps, I remained connected to my Sikh heritage, culture and identity as mentored by my mother and paternal grandmother. I grew up in the post-colonial India where I met a number of challenges until I decided to migrate into the British Sikh diaspora. The gruesome act of 1984 Sikh genocide perpetrated by the then government of

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<sup>9</sup> Jaspal Kaur Singh is presently a professor of English literature at Northern Michigan University. She has produced analysis work on Sikh narratives found in Indian films, novels translated into English from its original vernacular languages, and some on contemporary English fictions, which has been consolidated into *Violence and Resistance in Sikh Gendered Identity* published in 2020.

<sup>10</sup> My father, Sardar Dhian Singh Majhail led in various public agitations against the colonial rule of India and worked hard in representing the people of his ancestral region of Patti Tarn Taran (Amritsar) Punjab during the British Raj. His anti-colonial resistance and numerous endeavours towards the independence of India resulted in his imprisonment at the Lahore Central Jail (now in Pakistan) where he resorted to expressing freedom struggles through various writings in his mother tongue of Punjabi.

<sup>11</sup> A *Jat* is an ancestral ethnic group of farmers native to the Indian subcontinent who are historically located in the Punjab region.

India is unforgettable for many Sikhs including myself, which drove me to work as a correspondent in India in an attempt to establish truth behind the 1984 genocide. I spent most of my career in teaching and research, also ran educational institutions in India and had an opportunity to work as a Director Education of Chief Khalsa Diwan in Amritsar, one of the oldest educational bodies of Sikhs founded in 1903. Throughout this research, I bring my own personal investment into providing a Sikh perspective in the analysis of the chosen texts, with an aim to answer several questions: what was the impact of colonialism in the construction of Sikh identity? What role did the partition of India, the 1984 Sikh genocide, and the settlement in the present Sikh diaspora play in the construction of the Sikh identity? How is the Sikh identity depicted in the contemporary fiction? Why is it important to recognise Sikh identity as complex, dynamic and a transforming identity?

### **What is Sikh? Who are the Sikh people?**

The first guru<sup>12</sup>, Guru Nanak (1469 – 1539), founded the Sikh religion or Sikhism in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent. In *Sikh Identity*, a renowned Sikh scholar Opinderjit Kaur Takhar states that “[t]he issue of Sikh identity dates back to the time of the [Sikh] Gurus and has not been resolved 500 years later” (Takhar, 2016, p. 4). Within relation to Takhar’s statement of the origin of Sikh identity, one must consider that Sikh denotes the religion as well as the individual who is, an adherent of Sikhism which represents the religious Sikh identity. Sikh is also a reference to a race or ethnicity of “a group of people who share a common cultural, geographical, linguistic, or religious origin or background” (Merriam-Webster, 2022). According to Kumar, the Sikh people “are an independent religious community...[who] espouse all attributes which establish them as an ethnic group. The members of an ethnic group...contain a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture and an association with a specific territory along with a sense of solidarity [, and] the Sikhs fulfil all the requirements” (Kumar, 2010, p. 104). So, in brief, the Sikhs are people who follow Sikhism, share a common Punjabi language, have ancestral links with the historic and pre-partitioned Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent, and have connections with common Punjabi culture and roots. The Sikhs around the world are recognised “by their distinctly wrapped turbans, uncut hair, and steel bracelet

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<sup>12</sup> The term guru comes from Sanskrit which means spiritual teacher, enlightener, guide or mentor.

(kara [<sup>13</sup>]), although in the Western world this is not necessarily the case. Most men have Singh (lion) and women Kaur (princess) in their names. The greater Punjab region is the historical homeland of the Sikhs, although significant communities exist around the world” (Blackwood, 2014, p. 75).

Sikhism is based on the philosophy of ten gurus who were around from 1469 to 1708. During this early period, the Sikhs or followers of Sikhism were recognised as the “disciple[s]’ of the Guru” and the religious emphasis was on the “inward identification with the teachings of Guru Nanak”, as outlined below:

A Sikh in Guru Nanak’s day was one whose mind had been cleansed of all evil as a result of *nam simran* and *nam japna* (meditation on God’s Name), *kirat karna* (performing good deeds) and *vand chakna* (sharing one’s income with the less fortunate). (Takhar, 2016, p. 8).

Guru Nanak’s ideology instilled the concept of performing *seva*<sup>14</sup> (selfless service) from its inception, which transformed the identity of Sikhs towards caring for all humankind. The successors of Guru Nanak institutionalised the egalitarian teachings as a way of living for Sikhs. The third guru, Guru Amardas (1479 – 1574) made “[t]he first moves towards a distinct Sikh identity” (Takhar, 2016, p. 9). During this period, the Sikh religion gained a lot of traction which focused on the inward spiritual development. The martyrdom of fifth guru, Guru Arjan Dev (1563 – 1606) by the Mughal dynasty was a major turning-point in the Sikh history. In the aftermath of the martyrdom, the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind (1595 – 1644) transformed the Sikh identity by taking “first moves towards militancy...[and] introduced the concept of *miri-piri* – the temporal and spiritual authority of the Guru” (Takhar, 2016, p. 11). *Miri-Piri*<sup>15</sup> empowered the Sikhs to actively engage in the socio-political worldly affairs whilst remaining focused on their spiritual development. This led to Sikhs being recognised in the society as spiritual warriors ready to fight for their existence amidst the rising conflict with the Mughals in Punjab. The second climactic turning point in the Sikh history occurred after the martyrdom of the ninth guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621 – 1675) by Mughals. This led to the birth of *Khalsa* in 1699 by the tenth and last Sikh guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666 – 1708) that “sealed the distinct Sikh identity” and brought further transformation in Sikhs through

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<sup>13</sup> *Kara* is one of the Five Ks (five articles of Sikh faith that all baptised Sikhs are mandated to wear) which essentially an “iron bracelet, which is a symbol of eternity” (Blackwood, 2014, p. 79).

<sup>14</sup> This Sikh concept of *seva* is explored in detail in chapter 1 and used throughout from then onwards in this thesis.

<sup>15</sup> The concept of *Miri-Piri* was established by the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Hargobind in 1606, which gave Sikhs the “saint-soldier/warrior” identity (Blackwood, 2014, p. 76). It is represented by two swords – *Miri* symbolises responsibilities towards temporal duties and *Piri* symbolises the spiritual development of a Sikh, and both *Miri* and *Piri* go hand in hand in life.

introducing Sikh articles of faith in the form of *Five Ks* (Takhar, 2016, p. 11). The Five Ks are the five articles of Sikh faith that all baptised Sikhs are mandated to wear which serve as symbols “for identification and representation of the ideals of Sikhism, such as honesty, equality, fidelity, militarism, meditating on God, and never bowing to tyranny” (Blackwood, 2014, p. 79). After the tenth guru, the Sikh-holy-text, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*<sup>16</sup> was regarded as the final guru that provides guidance and teachings to Sikhs around the world today. The Sikh religion has undergone key transformations since its inception in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The historical region of Punjab played a crucial role in the making of Sikh identity as Sikhs were geographically concentrated in this region. The rising Mughal-Sikh conflicts of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century resulted in Punjab becoming a battleground where Sikhs had to fight hard for their distinct identity and existence. The Sikhs refused to convert into Islam and be subjugated by the Mughal rulers. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the twelve Sikh leaders of the Sikh confederacy ultimately weakened the Muslim dominating Mughal and Afghan invaders of the Indian subcontinent and established Punjab under their rule as twelve sovereign states (known as *Misls* in vernacular Punjabi language of Sikhs). The greatest Sikh leader, Maharaja Ranjit Singh united the twelve *Misls* into one state of Punjab and established the Sikh Empire (also known as the Punjab Empire) in 1799. The Sikh Empire was politically centred in Lahore (now in Pakistan) and was at its peak in 19<sup>th</sup> century but was short lived. In 1849 the kingdom of Punjab was annexed by the British Empire in the aftermath of the Second Anglo-Sikh war. The last Maharaja of the Sikh Empire Duleep Singh, (a ten-year-old king) had his sovereignty and powers dissolved by the colonial rulers. He became a famous friend of Queen Victoria, converted to Christianity and was separated from his mother to be later removed from his homeland of Punjab and exiled<sup>17</sup> into Britain in 1854. In the later part of his life, he reconverted to Sikhism to reassemble his Sikh identity and decided to fight back to reclaim his sovereignty of the kingdom of Punjab but was unsuccessful. The absence of a clear definition and the lack of cohesion in Sikhs opened up a space for non-Sikhs to take advantage of the political position of colonial India, which led to the rise of Sikh identity politics during colonialism.

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<sup>16</sup> *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is a Sikh-holy-text which is the central holy religious scripture of Sikhism, regarded by Sikhs as final, following the lineage of the ten human gurus of the religion. It was compiled in the Gurmukhi script of the Punjabi language in 1604 by the fifth guru, Guru Arjan (1564 – 1606). The abbreviation SGGS in the citation of this thesis refers to *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

<sup>17</sup> The last Maharaja of the Punjab, Duleep Singh, grew up leading an extravagant life in Britain where he was famously recognised as the Black Prince of Perthshire.

## Discourses of the Sikh past

Focusing on the various aspects of Sikh identity in history can help us to understand Sikh identity and its presentation in fiction. In *Sikh Nationalism and Identity in a Global Age*, Giorgio Shani states that “at the beginning of the colonial period, not only was there no cohesive or homogeneous Sikh community but there was no single definition of a Sikh” (Shani, 2008, p. 26). Tony Ballantyne writing in *Between Colonialism and Diaspora*, states that there are five “divergent approaches to the Sikh past: “the “internalist,” the “Khalsacentric,” the “regional,” the “externalist,” and the “diasporic”” (Ballantyne, 2006, p. 4). I will explain each of these approaches briefly in the subsequent paragraphs.

As part of the ‘internalist’ approach, the “prioritisation has been on the internal development of Sikh “tradition,” the authority of its sacred texts, the social composition of the Panth [or the Sikh community], and political struggles within Sikh communities” (Ballantyne, 2006, p. 5). The focus of the internalist approach has been towards the development of the communal Sikh identity and forming a cohesive Sikh community. It started with the “Tat Khalsa<sup>18</sup>”, also known as Singh Sabha Movement, that began in 1879 which “clearly delineated Sikh identity and used historical writing to argue that Sikhism was a religious tradition entirely independent of Hinduism” (Ballantyne, 2006, p. 5). This resulted in the most iconic publication related to the Sikh identity politics in the Sikh history in Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha’s pamphlet text *Ham Hindu Nahin*<sup>19</sup> (*We Are Not Hindus*) in 1898 during colonial India, which was written to empower the distinctiveness of the Sikh identity in response to claims made by *Arya Samaj*<sup>20</sup> who claimed that Sikhs were Hindus. Nabha proved that the Sikh identity cannot be found in Hinduism as “the Sikhs are ‘neither Hindu nor Musalman’ but have their own distinct religious identity... Nabha gives perhaps the first exposition of the ‘nationalist’ position” of Sikhs and “paved the way for the politicization of Sikh identity” during colonialism (Shani, 2008, p. 34). The leaders of the Tat Khalsa “insisted that Sikhs were a distinct and self-sufficient community” which propagated the internalist approach that “faith of every Sikh had to rest on Guru Granth and Gurudwara”, and “strove to establish the turban as a distinctive marker of Sikh identity in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century” (Ballantyne, 2006, pp. 6, 19; Singh, *The Sikhs*, 2002, p. 211). This internalist approach stood firmly against threat to

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<sup>18</sup> Modernist Tat Khalsa or Tat Khalsa Movement refers to the Sikh organisation who were part of the Singh Sabha movement founded in 1879, Lahore who believed that Sikhs were not Hindus

<sup>19</sup> Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha. 1898. *Ham Hindu Nahin* rept. 2002. Amritsar: Singh Brothers.

<sup>20</sup> *Arya Samaj* founded in 1875 is a monotheistic Indian Hindu reform movement that promotes values and practices based on the belief in the infallible authority of the Hindu Vedas. It was the first Hindu organisation to introduce proselytization in Hinduism.

Sikhism that came in the rhetoric of Hindu Arya Samaj discourse during colonialism which tried to fix the distinctive identity of Sikhs by reducing them to Hindus.

The internalist approach gave rise to new generation of literary writing flourished by award winning writer like Bhai Vir Singh (1872 – 1957) who wrote the first Punjabi novel *Sundari* (1898), followed by *Bijay Singh* (1899), and *Satwant Kaur* (Part I in 1900 and Part II in 1927), which represented Sikh identity in Punjabi fiction writing in Punjabi. According to Tuteja, “from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the end of colonial rule in 1947 writings on the Sikhs [were mainly] published in three vernacular languages of eastern India”, which meant that the fictional works on Sikhs in English language were limited (Tuteja, 2006, p. 35). Perhaps one of the first novels written in English by a British writer during colonial period is *Through the Sikh War: A Tale of the Conquest of the Punjab* (1894) by G. A. Henty, which is a historical fiction that represents Sikhs in Anglo-Sikh wars leading to the decline of Sikh Empire of India. Whereas the western educated Hindu writer Mulk Raj Anand is one the first native Indian writers of colonial India who portrayed Sikhs in English fiction, but he marginalised Sikh identity. Indeed, he reduced it through the Sikh protagonist, Lal Singh, who gradually disowns his own Sikh culture, heritage and identity, as depicted in the trilogy, *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1939) and *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942). In *The Village*, Lal Singh rejects his ancestral home, family and village after a disagreement with his family about his cut hair while in *Across the Black Waters*, Lal Singh is displaced into World War I where he consciously identifies himself as a “Hindu...Rajput” instead of a Sikh, therefore showing signs of erasure of the Sikh identity (Anand, 1939, p. 75). In *The Sword and the Sickle*, Lal Singh returns back from the war to find India in a state of social and political unrest and his activist position lands him in prison where he “felt himself fast disintegrating to a sub-human state” after reflecting that the “lengthening of his hair [has] made him look like the Sikh he would have been if he had never had his ritualistic hair cut before the war” (Anand, 1942, p. 384). Anand is likely to have been influenced by his father “Late Subedar Lal Chand Anand, M.S.M. (2/17<sup>th</sup> Dogra)” who was a soldier in the British Indian Army and who was also “involved with a Hindu reform movement, Arya Samaj” which is reflected in Anand’s writing that reduces the Sikh identity of a Sikh, Lal Singh, to align with a typical rhetoric of Hindu Arya Samaj, which was the threat to the Sikh identity during colonialism that the internalist approach fought against (Anand, 1939, p. 4; Ahmed, 2005). In a way, this underlines the argument that Hindus were targeting Sikhs in an attempt to erase and reduce their Sikh

identity to Hindus whilst the internalist Sikh leaders were working hard towards representing Sikhs during colonial India.

Whilst the internalist approach recognises the role of Sikh heritage towards construction of the Sikh identity, it has a “tendency to abstract Sikhism from its crucial regional context” and “privilege[s] religious identity over social and commercial affiliations or regional identity” (Ballantyne, 2006, p. 16). This restraint in the internalist discourse opened up a space in contemporary period for the ‘regional’ approach which recognises the importance of “economic and agrarian history of the region [of Punjab], the crucial milieu within which Sikhism emerged and developed” (Ballantyne, 2006, p. 16). The regional approach emphasises the influence of the pre-colonial Punjab and its culture on the construction of Sikh identity. It articulates the “multifaceted nature of Sikh history” perceived as “a dynamic story of the shifting relationship between this community and its regional environment” of Punjab (Ballantyne, 2006, p. 16). Contrastingly, the ‘externalist’ approach on the other hand perceives “a distinct Sikh identity as essentially a product of the colonial state and Orientalist scholarship” (Shani, 2008, p. 29). This may be considered as an attempt to fix the Sikh identity to “consumers of, rather than participants in, modernity... [and therefore] reduces the Sikhs to silence, denying the contribution which Sikhs made themselves to the fashioning of their own identities” (Shani, 2008, p. 29).

According to Jaspal Kaur Singh, “British colonialism, through its “Divide and Rule” policy, constructed the turbaned Sikhs as ferocious warriors, ignoring their multifaceted religious and cultural attributes” (Singh, 2020, p. 2). Further, Harjot Oberoi argued that “Sikh identity... ‘cannot be explained by referring to the British policy of divide and rule, or the compulsions of elite politics’ but ‘resulted from a complex evolution” (Shani, 2008, p. 7). This shows that the externalist approach portrays Sikh identity as rigid by perceiving Sikhs through a colonial lens whilst ignoring the regional pre-colonial historical contexts, the internalist approach, Sikh theology, culture and heritage that has to date influenced the Sikh consciousness and identity. On the other hand, the ‘Khalsacentric’ approach of the Sikh history “insist[s] that Sikhism cannot be understood through the lens of Western disciplines” and therefore “rejects the authority of non-Sikh scholars and dismisses many professional Sikh historians” (Ballantyne, 2006, p. 15). This ‘Khalsacentric’ approach “enabled by a nativist politics” mainly stems from the anxieties of the “future of Sikhism” in “transnational Sikh[s]” who are members of the group based in North America “who are anxious about the maintenance of tradition in a diasporic age” (Ballantyne, 2006, pp. 13, 14). In an attempt to articulate Sikh history and

culture, the 'Khalsacentric' creates limitations such that it "caricatures Western culture and academic disciplines" which "reinforce[s] the long-established orientalist stereotypes of South Asia as a land of unchanging and eternal spirituality" which also "reify community boundaries, disempower non-Khalsa Sikhs, and prevent[s] the possibility of any positive dialogue...with non-Sikh scholars" (Ballantyne, 2006, p. 15, 16).

Finally, the 'diasporic' approach "frames the study of the Sikh community as a transnational and diasporic social formation" which has resulted in "Sikh diaspora", an emerging field of contemporary scholarship that would not have existed "without the process of colonialism" (Ballantyne, 2006, p. 21; Axel, 2001, p. 10). Ballantyne states that "diasporic Sikhs were a people unified by a common culture yet also were a people dispersed, either temporarily or permanently, from their "homeland"" (Ballantyne, 2006, p. 20). One of the first and most renowned displacement of a Sikh from the homeland of Punjab was that of the "last Sikh King Maharaja Duleep Singh" who was exiled in Britain in 1854 following the British colonisation of Punjab. Arguably, this marks the beginning of the British Sikh diaspora (Majhail, 2018, p. xiii). In *The Exile* (2008), Navtej Singh Sarna analyses the British historical accounts of the royal Sikh Maharaja and articulates the Maharaja's experience of displacement and tries to reconstruct Sikh identity and relationship with the homeland during colonial period.

The two World Wars contributed towards displacements of Sikhs from Punjab and affected their identity (as I show in Chapter 1). Darshan Singh Tatla who focuses on the post-1947 period by examining Sikhs of Great Britain, Canada and the United States was the first scholar to articulate the Sikh diaspora as "an exploration of social, economic and political linkages" of Sikhs to their "multifaceted", "complex and changing relationship with the Punjab" (Tatla, 2005, p. 11). As well as Tatla, Brian Keith Axel in *The Nation's Tortured Body* (2001) "rereads the last 150 years of Sikh history through the lens of the contemporary global Sikh community" and uses the term "the place of origin thesis" to describe diaspora which "draw[s] on a homeland in the reproduction of culture, religion, or ethnicity"<sup>21</sup> (Axel, 2001, pp. 9 - 10). Axel states that the Sikh diaspora has produced "four kinds of Sikh subjects<sup>22</sup> or, more precisely, four sites of Sikh subjectification", which "cannot be neatly separated" from each other because they possess "complex historical interrelations of the Sikh diaspora to

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<sup>21</sup> Brian Keith Axel acknowledges that "the struggle for a "Sikh homeland...remained within India between 1947 and 1971 and was not a concern for Sikhs living in other parts of the world," and that the "fight for Khalistan...remained somewhat obscure after 1984"" (Ballantyne, 2006, p. 22).

<sup>22</sup> Axel refers to these Sikh subjects as "(1) the colonial Sikh subject...constituted through a subjection to the sovereignty of the British Crown", "(2) the Sikh subject constituted by the nation-state...through subjection to the juridical and extrajudicial procedures of the modern nation-state", "(3) the Khalistani Sikh subject...through Khalistani militant practice and discourse on Sikh autonomy" and "(4) the Sikh subject constituted by Sikh studies...through procedures of knowledge production institutionalized under the rubric Sikh studies" (Axel, 2001, p. 35).

formations of empire and nation” (Axel, 2001, p. 34, 35). Whereas some scholars argue that the Sikh diaspora may lead to “fetishization of religious identity”, Axel demonstrates “the very real strengths of a diasporic interpretation of Sikh identity formation in the post-World War II period” (Ballantyne, 2006, p. 23). The Sikh diaspora provides the “analytical focus (rather than the Sikh community in a particular nation), the possibility of a genuinely transnational approach to Sikh studies” (Ballantyne, 2006, pp. 23, 21). That since colonialism, the Sikh diaspora has played a significant role towards producing Sikh identities which makes it an important area of contemporary research.

### **A brief literature review on identity**

Who am I? What is my identity? These questions have occupied people from disparate cultures around the world throughout the history. Defining identity is not straightforward as it involves researching into multiple interdisciplinary domains depending on the context of the term and its usage. These domains span across a number of academic disciplines ranging from science, sociology, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, theology to a broad field of humanities and cultural studies. A definition of ‘identity’ taken from a modern English dictionary as “who or what somebody...is” relates to “the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that make people different from others” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, 2022). This definition sets some general context on identity and emphasises its association with the representation of an individual and group that the individual belongs to, such that the characteristics, feelings and beliefs distinguishes an individual and the group uniquely from others in the society.

Identity is connected with the self, and arguably, consciousness or self-awareness is an important aspect of identity. Although John Locke considers “personal identity [as] a matter of psychological continuity”, Namita Nimbalkar, views his idea of “personal identity (or the self) to be found on consciousness (viz. memory)”, while Udo Thiel highlights that “[f]or Locke, being conscious denotes an immediate awareness” and “consciousness is a presence of the mind to itself” (Korfmacher, n.d; Nimbalkar, 2011; Stanford.edu, 2015). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, William James theorised identity into “the empirical self, the one who does the acting” and pure ego, the one “that is capable of thinking and reflecting” (Ruhl, 2020). Other critics such as Erik Homburger Erikson have defined identity as “1. continuity and self-sameness in time; and 2. mutual recognition of each other’s continuity, i.e., a place of one’s own in the community” (Levita, 2019, p. 194). In response to this view, Levita explains that Erikson

“advocates the view that the very first activities of life should be considered against the background of the relevant patterns of culture” (Levita, 2019, p. 194). The culture no doubt plays an important role in the construction of identity as many psychoanalyst scholars have argued. However, the essentialist view of identity defined as ‘self-sameness’ or the same as existed throughout the time is a problematic notion as I show later on. To the sociologist Anselm Leonard Strauss, “the individual is emergent out of a social process and constantly develops or changes” (Rose, 2013, p. 12). Strauss’s notion of identity “is connected with the fateful appraisals made of oneself – by oneself and by others. Everyone presents himself to others and to himself, and sees himself in the mirrors of their judgements” (Strauss, 2017, p. 7). One of the pitfalls of identity being conceived through appraisals and judgements of others is that it opens to both intentional and unintentional misinterpretation and appropriation carried out by the appraisers. This occurs when the appraisers make conscious or unconscious attempts to fix identities into their misunderstood and misconceived perception of others in the society. In the contemporary world of diasporas, it is increasingly common to find multiple identities coexisting, therefore, this creates a space for cross-cultural encounters where people preoccupied with cultural differences often result in misconceived perceptions of each other’s disparate cultures.

Arguably, in the post-colonial world of diaspora where multiple cultures coexist, the idea of identity emerging out of a social process conceived by individuals themselves through interactions expresses identity as an effect of a social constructionism<sup>23</sup>. As the feminist scholar Helena explains, “A social constructionist view of identities understands what it means to be a ‘woman’, ‘man’, ‘Black’, ‘white’, ‘queer’, ‘disabled’, etc. are historically and culturally contingent as well as shaped by power” (Helena, 2021). She further highlights that “Social constructionism is not the norm. The dominant belief about identities in our societies is essentialism. Essentialism believes that our identities are linked to a fixed, universal, innate ‘essence’. People who share an identification are then assumed to share unique traits and attributes” (Helena, 2021). This essentialist idea of identity based on fixed, universal and innate essence is problematic in many ways, for example, the Hindutva movement of India “with its ideology of a return to the authenticity of the golden age, of the wonder that was India, and its inalienable attachment to land that is peopled by minorities who wish to be independent... is the quest for authentic Indian-ness, for a *Hindu Rashtra*, an ethnically pure Hindu nation”

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<sup>23</sup> Social constructionism is a theory of knowledge in sociology that examines individuals and has “the underlying philosophical view that believes our meanings about the world are co-created by people, rather than reflections of an ‘objective’ reality” (Helena, 2021).

(Young, 2003 p. 62). This essentialist view of a pure Hindu nation rejects “minorities such as [Sikhs,] Muslims or Christians, and fix[es] Dalits (untouchables) and Adivasis (tribals) into its eternal racial hierarchy of caste” (Young, 2003 p. 62). Thus, such essentialist views of identity are problematic as it causes identity conflicts even in well developed nations where “the minority have no legitimate political means of resistance against the tyranny of the majority” (Young, 2003 p. 63).

The essentialist view of identity as fixed, unchanging and identical as “an integral, ordinary and unified identity” requires rethinking in a broader perspective as highlighted by a Stuart Hall in *Questions of Cultural Identity* (Hall, 2003, p. 1). Hall’s anti-essentialist concept of identity relates to “using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation” (Hall, 2003, p. 4). Hall’s view of identity emphasises that identity is fluid and transforming; can be rethought or reconceived by different discourses and perspectives, and always emerge in relation to specificity of a subject. Homi K Bhabha, another post-colonial critic, develops a linguistic framework of identity by exploring “how language transforms the way identities are structured when colonizer and colonized interact” (Huddart, 2006). Bhabha states that “we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 1). According to Bhabha, identity is not a fixed or static concept but fluid and flexible, shaped by cultural differences as experienced by individuals through cross-cultural encounters with disparate cultures. Bhabha refers to Jacques Derrida’s view that there is no absolute identity and the “[e]ffects of identity... [is] understood to be generated on the basis of *difference*” (Bennington, 2014, p. 11, emphasis implied). For Bhabha, the social articulation of difference “is a complex, ongoing negotiation” particularly from a minority perspective in the contemporary society where the minority are establishing themselves through ‘means of resistance against the tyranny of the majority’ (Bhabha, 2004, p. 3). The postcolonial critic Paul Gilroy provides his view on identity by focusing on the movement of people across the world of diaspora. He suggests that these movements create dynamic cross-cultural identities that transcends national borders and ethnic classifications. For Gilroy, identities are constantly remade and ethnicity is an endless process of identity construction.

As I have noted, identity as a concept is complex – something that cannot be easily defined but certainly requires rethinking away from the essentialist views of identity. So, the postcolonial notions of “identity as a “production,” which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” through “a matter of “becoming” as well as of “being”” has become increasingly relevant and important in the contemporary world of diasporas (Hall, 2021, pp. 266, 269). As Hall explains that identity “belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation” (Hall, 2021, p. 269). This implies that identity is complex, always changing and is constantly being transformed based on the historical, cultural and social contexts that individuals or groups are part of. The works of Homi K Bhabha, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, and various other postcolonial theorists are important and grounded throughout this thesis, as outlined in the *Methodology* and *Structure of the thesis* sections of this thesis. I have taken critical works of postcolonial theorists that are relevant towards the construction of complex and dynamic Sikh identity. These critics provide a new way to look at identity as “a reflexive, dynamic product of the social, historical and political contexts of an individual’s lived experiences” (Hall, 2013, p. 12).

### **Sikh theorisation of identity**

Ballantyne’s fivefold categorisation of the Sikh’s past where “boundaries between [them] are not always absolute or rigid” suggests that there are “important variations within each position” that impacts the Sikh identity (Ballantyne, 2006, p. 4). As well, this underlines the complexity that exists in the Sikh culture and identity. That Sikh identity is multifaceted, and complex shows not only how it cannot be easily fixed or reduced to a single monolithic arrangement but also that it requires a deeper understanding of similarities and differences within the manifold approaches of the Sikh past. In *Sikh Identity*, Opinderjit Kaur Takhar states that “[d]efining a Sikh is extremely difficult” as “not all Sikhs are the same, as is commonly assumed” within the Sikh community, therefore, “attempts to create one overall, uniform definition of Sikh identity cannot be sustained” (Takhar, 2016, p. 188). Additionally, “[i]t is not possible to cite a monolithic definition... which will encompass all types of Sikhs” (Takhar, 2016, p. 188). This suggests that Sikh identity is diverse rather than singular, rigid, and inflexible. According to Takhar, “Sikh identity is expressed both religiously *and* ethnically”;

moreover, where “Sikh ethnicity is commonly associated with the Punjabi<sup>24</sup> culture and its traditions” it is also collectively “linked to Punjabi praxis” (Takhar, 2016, pp. 185, 187). This underscores the view that there are many aspects to the Sikh identity which includes an association to Sikhism as religion, a connection of Sikhs to the region of Punjab, and a sense of the performative in Sikh culture and traditions. The idea of subjectivity or identity being ‘performative’ and its usage throughout this thesis is inspired by my reading of Homi K. Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*. Being performative is the subject’s ability to transform identity through performance or actions taken by the subjects in a transcultural setting. For Bhabha, performance plays a vital role by which new identities are negotiated. Its application in the context of Sikh identity refers to the actions taken by Sikhs in their everyday lives that results in bringing transformations in their identity.

In *Sikhism*, Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh examines “the subtle complexities of Sikhism” ranging from its origins through colonial period, art, culture, gender to the Sikh diaspora;

*Sikhism is not monolithic; like all religions, it is a diverse, dynamic and ever-accumulating process.* (Singh, 2011, p. 8).

This shows that Sikh identity like its religion is multifaceted and dynamic, always moving, ever accumulating, and transforming itself – this very nature also makes it complex to recognise. This complex and dynamic aspect of the Sikh identity can also be found in the “Sikh Theory of Evolution: *Haumain* and Problems of Hermeneutics” defined by Sikh scholar Daljeet Singh in his work, *Sikhism: Its Philosophy and History*, which is derived from the Sikh process of *Miri-Piri*<sup>25</sup> (temporal-spiritual balance) (Singh et al, 2008, p. 61). The latter is a method of bringing a balance in life that had historically known to have “transformed the Sikh character and the Sikh ethos” during pre-colonial India (Singh, 2004, p. 100). Daljeet, exploring the aspect that makes Sikh identity dynamic states, “Sikhism is an evolutionary theory about the spiritual-empirical development” where Sikh values are continuously formed as a process of combining the spiritual elements to enrich the empirical or temporal life in readiness to face challenges of the contemporary world (Singh et al, 2008, p. 84). He further argues that Sikh “spirituality is incomplete or partial without an essential and inalienable combination of the spiritual life with the empirical life” where “[t]emporal cannot be forsaken for the spiritual” (Singh et al, 2008, p. 82; Singh, 2004, p. 167). This implies that the Sikh consciousness is not

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24 Punjabi means belonging or relating to the pre-colonial region of Punjab, which includes the Punjab region of India and Pakistan.

25 The concept of *Miri-Piri* was established by the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Hargobind in 1606, which gave Sikhs the “saint-soldier/warrior” identity (Blackwood, 2014, p. 76). It is represented by two swords – *Miri* symbolises responsibilities towards temporal duties and *Piri* symbolises the spiritual development of a Sikh, and both *Miri* and *Piri* go hand in hand in life.

only always moving, but that Sikhs are to combine spirituality equally with the worldly matters for a spiritual liberation, and Sikh identity is a shifting identity that shifts between both spiritual and socio-political / socio-cultural / socio-economic subjectivity in life. Although he doesn't directly discuss Sikh identity in his writing, Daljeet uses key concepts taken from the Sikh-holy-text<sup>26</sup> to highlight the transitional aspect of the Sikh consciousness, which he states is an evolutionary process of transformation that Sikh identity undergoes. The evolutionary process of achieving a balanced spiritual-empirical development in Sikh identity enunciated in the Sikh theory of 'identity consumes identity'<sup>27</sup> confirms that Sikh consciousness and identity is fluid, shifting, and always evolving (SGGS, pp. 78, 86, 369, 490). Although the theory is rooted in Sikh spiritual tenets, its application is relevant in aspects of the temporal world. The phrase 'identity consumes identity' underlines that in Sikhism, identity is viewed as changing constantly from one state of consciousness to another with new identities constructed when the current consciousness undergoes an iterative process of deconstruction. Aspects of old consciousness are ultimately absorbed or consumed by another emergent consciousness, which subconsciously emerges as a transformed Sikh identity. The catalyst required for the deconstruction of the consciousness are the 'thoughts' and 'actions' of an individual, which are broadly categorised in the Sikh notions of *manmukh* and *gurmukh*. *Manmukh* are negative qualities that produces a negative identity whilst *gurmukh* are positive qualities that constructs a positive identity in a Sikh. Lexically<sup>28</sup>, 'Sikh' means a learner, someone who is continuously changing and developing his or her Sikh consciousness towards God realisation through "knowing one's own Self" (*Appa Cheenei*) and "recogni[sing one's] own origin" (*Apna Mul Pacchaan*), in order to shift consciousness towards being a "gurmukh orientated" person who maintains both spiritual and temporal aspects of life (SGGS, pp. 684, 441, 565, 1112, 730; Takhar, 2016, p. 190). Therefore, Sikh identity is complex, dynamic, and progressive which is shifting and moving continuously whilst transforming itself to cope with the everyday challenges of life both individually and collectively, as it has been doing since its origins 552 years ago in the pre-colonial Punjab of 1469.

Finally in *Sikh Nationalism and Identity in a Global Age*, Georgio Shani articulates the impact of globalisation on the Sikh identity by examining historical socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural transformations that have taken place in Sikhs both in South Asia

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26 The Sikh-holy-text is known as the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, which is the central holy religious scripture of Sikhism, regarded by Sikhs as the final, sovereign and eternal Guru following the lineage of the ten human gurus of the religion. The abbreviation SGGS in the citation of this thesis refers to *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*

27 See Appendix section of this thesis for reference to 'identity consumes identity' as taken from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*

28 Lexically is referred to Punjabi *Gurmukhi* language of Sikhs

and diaspora. He states that globalisation has resulted in “the transformation of the Sikh community of the Punjab in India, from a *panth*, a ‘religious’ community, to a *qaum* or ‘nation’ during the colonial period and, finally, to a ‘diaspora’” (Shani, 2008, p. 153). These transformations found in the collective Sikh identity throughout history reflects the very evolutionary, progressive and shifting aspect of the Sikh identity that acts as a testimony to the Sikh heritage that “Sikh religious and cultural tradition is dynamic”, as it has been transforming itself since its origins in pre-colonial period through in colonial to transforming itself in the current contemporary period (Shani, 2008, p. 152). It also signifies that the post-colonial Sikh identity in the globalised world has shifted beyond nations, towards “*transnational* culturally defined identities” resulting in “a world of deterritorialized global diasporas” and “*inclusive* Sikh identity *within* both South Asia and diaspora” (Shani, 2008, p.153, 152). It reflects that world diasporas have become a crucial aspect of the Sikh identity in the contemporary period where “Sikhs in the diaspora ardently maintain their culture, adopt the customs of their new neighbors and dynamically forge new ways of being in the world” (Singh, 2011, p. 17). The diaspora here relates to a discourse that James Clifford states is the one “that involves dwelling, maintaining communities... [and] articulates, or bends together, both roots and routes to construct... alternate public spheres, forms of community consciousness and solidarity that maintain identifications outside the national time/space in order to live inside, with a difference” (Clifford, 1994, pp. 307 - 308). Therefore, the globalised world has created this diaspora discourse and space for the Sikhs to form Sikh communities beyond India, a shift that reflects “reasserting the *transnational* sovereignty of the Khalsa *panth*” that of being “a ‘Global Fraternity’” and thus “reaffirming the universal values and radical egalitarianism of the Sikh Gurus” in the contemporary world of today (Shani, 2008, p. 156).

## **Methodology**

The methodology used for this research consists of critical theory, close reading and analysis of the selected texts to highlight the representation of the Sikh identity in contemporary fiction in English. The approach that I have taken is multidisciplinary that engages with the application of postcolonial theories, discourse analysis, race theories, theoretical critique of nationalism, concept of postmemory, diaspora theories and writings, along with the application of Sikh culture articulated by varied Sikh scholars, writers and critics, and the Sikh theory as found in the Sikh-holy-text to investigate the construction of Sikh identity as depicted in the contemporary English fiction. I have interrelated ‘Sikh theorisation of identity’ with

contemporary postcolonial theories of identity during textual analysis of fictions in English. The selected texts<sup>29</sup> are investigated through this comparative interdisciplinary scholarship, interpreted through a postcolonial lens, assessed through the application of disparate concepts, theories and scholars, which provides an important critique that allows for an in-depth analysis in an attempt to move away from the oversimplification of a single readership and approach for researching Sikh narratives. Moreover, being born in contemporary India to a Sikh family where my father was a freedom fighter of India during colonial India and mother a devoted Sikh, I have been brought up with childhood well connected to the Sikh culture of India after its independence, and then later moving between multiple diasporas leading to migration into British Sikh diaspora allowed me to experience the symptoms of diaspora, which I will bring to the textual analysis in order to provide a Sikh perspective to the selected texts.

I have interweaved critical theories of postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha throughout for critical postcolonial analysis, and Frantz Fanon's theories for analysing nationalism, Paul Gilroy's theories of race, racism and transnationalism for cultural analysis, Marianne Hirsch's notion of postmemory for analysing memory and its effects, Avtar Brah's diaspora concepts of home and belonging, Caryl Phillips's conceptions of displacement in diaspora, Teun Adrianus van Dijk theories for analysing racist discourse, and Stuart Hall's cultural analysis of diaspora identity. I have analysed the texts using Sikh theories and concepts introduced by various contemporary Sikh scholars, such as Nikki-Guninder Kaur Singh's work on Sikh aesthetics, identity and culture, Janice Gurleen Kaur Protopapas's work on Sikh performance of memory and music, Georgio Shani's work on Sikh nationalism and identity, Jagbir Jhutti-Johal's work on Sikh theology and identity, Jaspal Kaur Singh's work on Sikh gendered identity, Opinderjit Kaur Takhar's work on Sikh identity, and Daljeet Singh's Sikh theory of evolution as basis for the Sikh theory of 'identity consumes identity'. My chosen cross-disciplinary approach had imposed challenges especially in articulating critical theories into textual analysis, which I have overcome by critically analysing and interweaving works of various scholars in each chapter of the selective texts and then building on previously introduced concepts as I progress from one chapter to another. My texts have been carefully selected in order to ensure synergy and alignment with the fourfold Sikh-themed fictional readership that I have identified in the contemporary English fiction.

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<sup>29</sup> I have only selected fictional texts that have been written in English during the post-colonial period of India to inform my research.

## **Originality of Research**

The selection of my texts, produced by their culturally disparate writers, spanning across the fourfold typology of the Sikh fictional readership that covers both male and female Sikhs is the unique combination that has allowed me to critically analyse various historical contexts and comprehensively interweave ‘Sikh theorisation of identity’ into analysis in providing a Sikh perspective whilst reflecting on the consequences and effects of postcolonialism on Sikh consciousness, identity, and culture. There is no study that currently exists that relates to this specific research, which makes this research significant and original, which in turn, also goes beyond the existing scholarship. It also advances the current scholarship by providing a framework to textually analyse representation of Sikhs to demonstrate that the construction of Sikh identity is complex and dynamic as I have endeavoured in this research.

## **Structure of the thesis**

There are five chapters in this thesis with the first four split in such a way to align with the identified fourfold typology of the Sikh fictional readership. Chapter 1 informs the main conceptual chapter where Homi Bhabha’s postcolonial theoretical concepts are introduced and explored alongside ‘Sikh theorisation of identity’, which are common to all four chapters. My analysis raises the question of Sikh identity throughout the chapters and shows that Sikh consciousness and identity can never be perceived as simple or fixed as rigid. To suggest a possibility of defining a Sikh through this simplistic and single sided view of the Sikh identity reflects the very Eurocentric ways of thinking that fails to acknowledge plurality and differences amongst Sikhs and the different cultural challenges and experiences that Sikhs face depending on their historical, geographical, social and cultural setting. I do not attempt to search for a single definition or a meaning within the selected texts but rather explore the texts by keeping the diversity as discovered in ‘Sikh theorisation of identity’ to provide multiple and novel readings of the texts. In this process, I have constructed a theoretical framework that authorises critical analysis of the Sikh identity through its various historical postcolonial contexts, providing a structure to articulate Sikh theory of identity.

Chapter 1 examines complex and dynamic representation of Sikh identity in Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient* (1992) covering the historic period of Second World War and its ending with Japan bombings in 1945, which coincided with the nationalist struggle for the

independence of India from British Raj whilst reflecting on the post-colonial India of 1959 as narrated in the novel. Using postcolonial concepts of Homi Bhabha, I show attempts made to fix Sikh identity “into guardians of the Raj”, portraying them as loyal colonial subjects of the British Raj who were both demonised and exoticised in the European culture (Ballantyne, 2006, p. 18). I explore how the Sikhs’ occupation of Bhabha’s “in-between space” “provide[s] the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that start new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 2). I articulate the effects of remembering Sikh heritage and culture that “act as a pedagogical memory” that “ignites deep spiritual energy” and influences Sikh consciousness and identity (Protopapas, 2011, p. 22). I explore the combined effects of “living on the borderlines of the ‘present’” and memorisation of Sikh culture towards re-configuration of Sikh identity leading to the development of shifting identity, where Sikh consciousness moves between multiple in-between interstices, shifting from one experience to another, therefore continuously changing Sikh identity through being performative in Sikh ideology (Bhabha, 2004, p. 1).

Chapter 2 investigates the representation of Sikhs in the national culture of India after independence from the British, Raj was achieved in 1947 as depicted in Khushwant Singh’s *Tran to Pakistan* (1956). I argue that following the gruesome Partition massacres and the ambivalence of the independence, the Sikh identity remains complex and dynamic, which reflects a moving consciousness that desire a socio-political and socio-economic change. I show that India as a newly independent nation marginalised and repressed Sikhs, treated them as Others – both as traitors and the hyper-masculinised militants or saviours of the nation. I show that Sikh identity is complex, complications arising from Sikhs suffering the consequences of their painful in-between existences arising politically from Partition. I show that Sikh identity is dynamic as Sikhs managed to shift their identities away from the anxieties towards transnational consciousness and thinking beyond the boundaries of nations.

In Chapter 3, I argue that Sikh identity is complex, dynamic and transforming as depicted in Shonali Bose’s *Amu* (2004). I explore Marianne Hirsch’s concepts of postmemory in articulating the generational transmission of 1984 Sikh genocide and its impact on the traumatic memories of Sikhs in the present. I apply diaspora concepts of scholars and theorists such as Caryl Phillips, Paul Gilroy as well as postcolonial theories of Homi Bhabha to reflect on the concepts of home, displacement and belonging. I highlight the effects of repression of Sikhs and re-memorisation of 1984 Sikh genocide where reassembling Sikh identity is

complicated as pursued by female American Sikh protagonist in the form of return identity-journey to India to repair her past. I show how memories of Sikh heritage, culture and collective Sikh past play a significant role in the reconstruction of Sikh identity and memory, where negative consciousness is consumed by positive consciousness which transforms individual Sikh identity. Lastly, I show that Sikh identity cannot be thought as fixed or rigid but as a moving identity that changes with the social, political and economic circumstances of the modern world.

In the analysis of the chapters one to three, there are elements and conditions of Sikh diaspora that I have concisely reflected upon throughout by expressing how displaced Sikhs connect creatively to their Sikh culture, heritage and identity outside their physical boundaries of Punjab. The focus of Chapter 4 is mainly on the British Sikh diaspora as presented in J.K Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy* (2012) where I explore the notions of home, belonging and identity towards construction of diasporic British Sikh identity. I build upon postcolonial concepts used previously of scholars such as Homi Bhabha, Caryl Phillips, Paul Gilroy and also interweave Avtar Brah and Stuart Hall's concepts to examine assimilation of Sikhs in Britain. I highlight corrosive racism that is present in the backdrop of the modern British society. Furthermore, I demonstrate that Sikh identity is complex and dynamic which allows Sikhs to rise above any marginalisation of dominant culture, allowing Sikhs to explore alternate modes of belonging, reconfiguring and changing their identities in order to position themselves in the diasporic circumstances of culturally different society and modern world.

Finally, Chapter 5 concludes this thesis by reflecting on the Sikh identity discussed on the previous four chapters in relation to the fourfold typology of the Sikh fictional readership, where I also indicate any constraints and outline potential for future research. The research concludes that beyond the *façade* of the Sikh identity, there are incommensurable and ever evolving layers of complexity and dynamicity that is only waiting to be discovered.

## Chapter 1: The Construction of Sikh Identity, Anti-Colonial Resistance and the Post-Colonial Belonging in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992)

*Soldiers! Your labours, your privations, your sufferings and  
your valour will not be forgotten by a grateful country*  
– Major General Sir Henry Havelock

One of the concerns of this study is to explore how Sikh identity is revealed, tested, and performed within key historical postcolonial contexts in the contemporary fiction written in English. I choose to begin this discovery by examining Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992) which portrays Sikhs in the Second World War that ended with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 9 Aug 1945. The Sikhs "fought bravely for the [British] Empire in Europe, Africa, West Asia, Burma, Malaya and China" (Singh, 2011, p. 15) and a total of "over 83,000 Sikh troops, all of them 'turban wearing', laid down their lives for 'King and Empire', fighting for the British in the two world wars" (Shani, 2008, p. 31). During this period, while the displaced Sikhs served the European Allies, those at home engaged in the anti-colonial nationalism in colonial India. As a non-Sikh writer, Ondaatje has examined the role of Sikhs in the war effort and highlighted the effects of war on the lives of ordinary people around the world. This chapter examines the questions relating to the impact of war on displaced Sikhs. It explores the question of the representation of the Sikh identity during WWII and their experience of the sense of displacement away from home.

This chapter tracks the shifting identity of Sikhs presented in Ondaatje's narrative. I will analyse the novel with a postcolonial lens and apply Homi Bhabha's concepts from *The Location of Culture* to explore the representation of Sikh identity during the war. In addition, in my analysis, I will make use of Edward Said's strategy of "contrapuntal reading"<sup>30</sup> to show the possibility of conflicting voices or different simultaneous interpretations that are present in the novel (Said, 1993, p. 66). I will argue that Sikh identity is complex and dynamic, forming new identities driven by the needs and situation faced by Sikhs. I will show how the novel explores Sikh identities as a process of displacement, accommodation, and transformation. As

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<sup>30</sup> Edward W. Said developed contrapuntal analysis in interpreting colonial texts, which takes different perspectives into account. It is reading with "awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (Said, 1993, p. 51). This type of reading brings out different perspectives and voices through analysis, including highlighting things that may not be not obvious but important within the text. It means reading a text "with an understanding of what is involved when an author shows, for instance, that a colonial sugar plantation is seen as important to the process of maintaining a particular style of life in England" (Said, 1993, p. 66).

well as exposing that Sikhs have agency, I will also highlight that once displaced, Sikhs adapted themselves to overcome the challenges of war. Their participation in the two world wars was weighed up against their desire to remain free from the colonial oppression of the British Raj.

Michael Ondaatje is a Dutch Burgher<sup>31</sup> born in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1943 when the country was under British colonial rule. In 1954 he lived in England before migrating to Canada in 1962 where he studied and began his writing career<sup>32</sup>. Ondaatje's birth and his upbringing in a British colony has inspired him to write on diverse sets of themes and issues such as nationality, displacement, identity, cross-cultural encounters, diaspora, cultural differences and love that surface throughout *The English Patient*. In the "Acknowledgements" section of the novel, Ondaatje describes the research he carried out, which includes extracting historical accounts from various war related literary sources (1992, p. 322). His research into F. Yeats-Brown's *Martial India* along with three other historical books on the Indian military - *The Tiger Strikes*, *The Tiger Kills*, and *A Roll of Honor* allowed him to define the central Sikh character basing on historical war accounts (1992, p. 322). Is Ondaatje's representation of a Sikh protagonist in the novel an accurate reflection of history during war? On the surface of the novel, it appears that Ondaatje has represented a wartime identity of Sikhs as loyal and brave warriors of the British Empire who were always content in the war; however, as I will show in this chapter, careful postcolonial analysis of the text reveals colonial oppression of the Sikhs during the war.

Ondaatje expresses that *The English Patient* articulates "[a]ll people born in one place who live in another place [and who] have lost their source" (Procter, 2008). The novel takes place between April and August in 1945 and is mostly set in the Italian landscape. It is centred around four dissimilar characters who come from different walks of life, who all have their own voices and discourses to share. All the characters are displaced from their birth nations by war and have been brought together temporarily in a post-war fictional, nationless, and diasporic setting of the Villa San Girolamo in Florence, Italy. This is a makeshift hospital for treating patients of the Allies. One of the central characters, an old man burnt beyond recognition, has a mysterious identity and introduces himself as 'English'. Other people also refer to him as 'the English patient'. However, his identity is later revealed to be a "Hungarian named Almásy, who worked for the Germans during war" (1992, p. 5, 173). The other character

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31 Dutch Burgher is someone with Dutch and Sinhalese ancestry. Ondaatje traces his family's past in Tamil, Dutch and British colonial chaos.  
32 He attended Bishop's University and graduated from the University of Toronto in Canada in 1965. He studied postgraduate from Queen's University Ontario in 1967 and then began his career in teaching English at various educational institutions in Canada.

is a twenty-year-old Canadian nurse Hana, who serves the Allies and has volunteered to stay behind at the villa to care for Almásy (whilst everyone else have left the villa due to its dangerously dilapidated condition). Another character is David Caravaggio, who is Hana's old family friend from Canada, and is referred to as Caravaggio (I will use both names interchangeably). He has finished serving up in the British Intelligence and arrives at the villa looking for Hana to inform her about her father's tragic death. The final character to join the villa is a twenty-six-year-old turbaned man, a Sikh from British India. 'Kirpal Singh', nicknamed as 'Kip' by his British colleagues, who is a sapper in the Eighth Army (I will use Kirpal and Kip interchangeably until he denounces his nickname). His job is to defuse mines and bombs in the Italian landscape that were planted by Germans. These four diverse characters who share stories and form friendships whilst reflecting on their pasts and thinking about their future beyond the war form a close-knit diasporic community at the villa. Kirpal and Hana both fall in love with each other; however, they get separated at the end because of the nuclear bombings of Japan. The novel ends with a leap into the future (the year is 1959) where it provides an account of Kirpal Singh's post-colonial belonging. He is a doctor in the post-independent India who constantly reflects on his present situation and the memories of 1945, the time spent he spent with Hana at the Italian villa.

Ondaatje has included anti-colonial perspectives in the novel by allowing Kirpal to remember his anti-colonial brother (three years older than him) towards the end when he has developed his anti-colonial consciousness and resistance. Kirpal's brother is someone who does not "agree to any situation where English had power" and is actively involved in fighting to free India from the colonial rule, whilst Kirpal is helping the British colonial authorities with the European war effort (1992, p. 213). Ondaatje's approach of using memories of Kirpal's anti-colonial brother has allowed me to examine Kirpal's state of mind and the development of anti-colonial resistance in him. What was the impact of the memories of Kirpal's brother on Kirpal's identity? Did Kirpal adhere to the British colonial rhetoric of Sikh loyalty and dutifully serve in the British war, or did his identity exhibit agency that steered him towards resisting colonial oppression? I will investigate answers to these questions in this chapter.

### **The oppressed belonging and the fixed identity**

The representation of Kirpal and his Sikh identity is very complex. One of the complexities come from Kirpal's displacement during the war in the foreign lands away from

his home, at a crucial time of history when anti-colonial nationalism in India was escalating and taking new forms. Kirpal's recollection of past memories during his interactions with Hana at the villa has provided insight into his sense of home, displacement and belonging. He was "born in the Punjab" of the colonial India in 1919 (deduced from his age in the novel) and "Punjab" means everything to him (1992, pp. 81, 100, 199, 288). Punjab is what Kirpal considers his homeland, the place where Sikhism was formed in 1469, a place where ten Gurus of the Sikh faith lived, a place where Sikh Holy Book was compiled, a place of Sikh culture, a place of historic Gurdwaras<sup>33</sup>, a place where Sikh saints and warriors lived, a place that experienced Sikh sovereignty under the Sikh Empire, but this place was now under the control of the colonial British Raj, which Kirpal imagined while displaced in the foreign lands during war. He identified his home to be in the Punjab's city of Lahore where he grew up and lived with his family until he "joined a Sikh regiment and was shipped to England" (1992, p. 194). Returning to his home and homeland remains a strong desire in Kirpal whilst he is displaced in the European lands until he finds himself at the villa. Two important places of Kirpal's life that he remembers the most are "Lahore" (now in Pakistan) and "Amritsar" (in India), experiences of which he shares with Hana at the villa (1992, pp. 212, 213, 298, 289). From Kirpal's detailed recollection of the Golden Temple (in Amritsar) with Hana, he misses his regular visits to the Sikh holy shrine whilst he is displaced in the war. He also remembers the comforts of his *ayah* (or maid) employed by his family "who lived with them, helped run a household, cooked and served them meals", who also symbolises Kirpal's motherly "love", "affection" and recollection of "all comfort and peace during childhood", and such memories of home makes him feel nostalgic in the diaspora (1992, p. 238). Kirpal's family lifestyle at home was good but "all that had changed with the war" which uprooted him from his home, displaced him into British Indian army at the age of twenty-one and gets deployed to England in 1940 to help with the war effort in Second World War (1992, p. 194). His displacement in the war is a strategic positioning of Indian soldiers by British Empire and he had no intention of settling down in the foreign lands. He spends over a year in England before he positions himself into the Italian war campaign where he spends further four years hoping to return to his homeland after the war, evident from his realisation that the European "landscape around him is just a temporary thing, there is no permanence to it" (1992, p. 92). This shows that Kirpal feels displaced in the diaspora and considers Lahore his home and Punjab his homeland of the colonial India, not the displaced European lands disfigured by the war. After the first few

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33 A Gurdwara (also spelled as Gurudwara) is a Sikh temple or place of worship

months in London, Kirpal felt dislocated as “Singh had arrived in England knowing no one, distanced from his family in the Punjab” (1992, p. 199). This implies that he was homesick and therefore wanted a change to uplift himself, so he volunteered to be part of the Royal Engineers – an experimental unexploded-bomb disposable unit (1992, p. 199). Kirpal was “befriended” by an eccentric Englishman, Lord Suffolk, who was the head of bomb squad and became his mentor (1992, p. 197). Kirpal thought of Lord Suffolk as the “best kind of teacher”, “the first real gentleman he had met in England” and considered him “like a father” (1992, pp. 189, 197, 288). He accepted Lord Suffolk, and later Almásy, as his teachers and avowed to remain loyal to them as “[h]e was most comfortable with men who had the abstract madness of autodidacts, like his mentor, Lord Suffolk, like the English patient [Almásy]” (1992, p. 116). Kirpal’s homesickness suddenly disappears after the Holy Trinity accept him<sup>34</sup> where he comfortably “stepped into a family, after a year abroad, as if he were the prodigal returned, offered a chair at the table, embraced with conversations” and then he “beg[an] to love the English” (1992, p. 202). How closely does Ondaatje’s depiction of Kirpal reflect the actual war time experience of Sikhs? In *Historicizing Difference in The English Patient*, critic Paulo Lemos Horta states that a “consideration of *The English Patient* in light of its acknowledged historical sources allows for a recontextualization of the narrative of Kip’s adoption and rejection of an English persona that has hitherto been deemed the chief evidence of the novel’s postcolonial and progressive sensibility...[which] is seen as lying in the narrative of Kip [or Kirpal]” (Horta, 2009, p. 176, 173). Lemos Horta states that “Ondaatje’s Kirpal Singh does not differ in essence from the composite Kirpal Singh of British wartime propaganda: he is bereft of interiority and remains a type – the positive and romanticized stereotype of the Sikh holy warrior”<sup>35</sup> of the pre-colonial period (Horta, 2009, p. 177). Inspired by these sources, Ondaatje has ended up suppressing Kirpal’s consciousness and identity by silencing his feelings in the narrative, representing him as someone who is always content and does not show emotions until at the end when he suddenly retaliates and reclaims his identity. Lord Suffolk’s relationship with Kirpal is portrayed in a monologue style where Lord Suffolk acts like a surrogate English father who teaches Kirpal English customs and culture. Kirpal contently accepts the received knowledge without asking questions or getting into a dialogue, which appears patronising and undermines Kirpal’s own Sikh identity, customs and culture. It also presents Kirpal as subservient to Lord Suffolk who is shown to maintain knowledge, control and authority. Lord

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34 The Holy Trinity is a collective name given to a group of three – Lord Suffolk, Miss Morden, and Mr. Fred Harts in Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*.

35 The Sikh warriors have their roots at the time of sixth of ten Gurus of Sikh religion, Guru Hargobind who established *Miri-Piri* in 1606 and encouraged the practice of martial arts (*shastarvidya*) and physical fitness to remain ready for physical combat.

Suffolk's relationship with Kirpal can perhaps be analogised to the British Raj which strategically imposed new English customs and cultures on the natives of India to enforce their own colonial ideology, authority and control over people. So, Kirpal's identity cannot be simply defined as that of a content son or a student who admires and learns from his English fathers as teachers and is free from the symptoms and sufferings of being displaced in the war, but rather his identity is never complete as I show in this chapter.

Depriving Kirpal of his interiority, Ondaatje has produced work that fixes the Sikh identity into British wartime propaganda; however, Kirpal's identity is complex and cannot be thought about or fixed into these received colonial ideologies. For example, Kirpal's experience of the English culture outside of the portrayal of the Holy Trinity was not promising at all as he became a victim of regular stereotypical colonial discourse, targeted because of his race and distinctive turbaned appearance which made him feel an outcast and an outsider. Sikhs are easily identified by their turbans, which are a visible marker of their distinctive religious identity. Notably, their turbaned look is perceived as ambivalent. When Kirpal was waiting for his interview for the Royal Engineers, he noticed that he was "the only Indian" and was being "watched...sternly" by a secretary, especially when he wandered around the bookshelves (1992, p. 199). He felt uncomfortable and "as guilty as if he had put the book in his pocket" and did not understand why he was being targeted as compared to other soldiers there who wore same uniform as him (1992, p. 200). Kirpal was being viewed with a binary colonial lens, observed as 'Other', and singled out because of difference in skin colour, race, and background. He looked visibly different because of his turban:

She had probably never seen a turban before. The English! *They* expect you to fight for *them* but won't talk to you. (1992, p. 200, emphasis added)

The turban is a symbol of Sikh faith, a part of the religious identity for the Sikhs, but here Kirpal's turban denotes the prejudice that Sikhs faced during their foreign displacements that allowed others to easily identify him as visibly different from the crowd. Sikh scholar Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh states that "the turbaned Sikh soldier was a conspicuous imperial symbol" and the Sikhs were seen as "favored sons" and "loyal supporters" as they "travelled along vast networks to fight, patrol, administer and build railways for the British Empire", just as Kirpal has travelled to the European landscape to support the war effort (Singh, 2011, p. 15). However, Kirpal didn't feel that he was being welcomed by the dominant English culture as a favoured son or a loyal supporter of the imperial army but rather he was being perceived as an

outsider and a stranger. This Othering of the Sikh identity defined, reduced and fixed Sikhs to the dominant English view of those who do not fit within the English culture and have a space only in the British colonial army to “fight and die as good warriors” (Axel, 2001, pp. 48, 77; Singh, 2011, p. 15). In *Imperialism and Sikh Migration*, Anjali Gera Roy states that the “[t]urbaned and bearded *kesdhari*<sup>36</sup> Sikhs... could not possibly blend in the mainstream and were either exoticized or demonized”, which shows the ambivalence of the turbaned Sikhs (Roy, 2017 p. 14). The turbaned Sikhs of the imperial army were seen as different or ‘Others’, which made them objects of the colonial discourse who were perceived as outsiders in the English culture, as experienced by Kirpal who felt awkward with the secretary staring at him. Kirpal’s Sikh identity was being targeted because he was perceived as a ‘demonized’ stranger, a threat to the mainstream English culture. The demonisation made Kirpal feel that he was being treated as a criminal who is about to commit burglary, which made him uncomfortable and anxious. The turban as a symbol of Sikh faith would have been perceived normal back home in Punjab; however, in the European diaspora it had a demonising effect that created anxiety in Kirpal and affected his perceived Sikh identity.

Homi Bhabha states that “[a]n important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness” and further highlights that:

Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. (Bhabha, 2004, p. 94)

Ondaatje allows us to experience Kirpal’s ‘cultural/historical/racial difference’ through the concept of ‘fixity’ which highlights attempts made by the dominating west to fix the identity of racial/colonial ‘Others’. The application of Bhabha’s notions of fixity and rigidity on the turbaned Sikhs shows that the colonial identity of Sikhs was fixed to either exoticize or demonize subjects of the British Empire. The fixity viewed through the daemonic repetition of Kirpal’s identity was evident when he submitted “his first bomb disposal report in England” where “some butter had marked his paper” and officer exclaimed the markings as “Kipper grease” (1992, p. 93). This became a form of mockery in the unit as his name was “translated into a salty English fish”, which was repeatedly used by his colleagues such that his Sikh name

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36 A Sikh who does not trim or remove hair

“Kirpal Singh” was “forgotten” within a week (1992, p. 93). As Kirpal was new to the country, “[h]e had no idea what a kipper was” and “hadn’t minded” the nickname (1992, p. 93). Ondaatje shows that Kirpal remained passive and did not question the name calling but instead is shown to have accepted the ridiculed name, which shows that Kirpal’s identity is perceived by others as a form of subdued and submissive identity, who does not show resistance to colonial discourse. Homi Bhabha states that the “objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonised as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 101). Nicknamed ‘Kip’, Kirpal’s Sikh name was construed and reduced to a salty fish, and its repetition shows that the dominant culture eventually denied Kirpal his birth identity, and instead replaced and fixed it with a forced western identity that insulted him and made him look inferior amongst his peers. This was purposely done to establish a system of administration by his peers to portray the English as superior to Sikh soldiers. This attempt of fixing Kirpal’s identity to a derogatory slur is a sign of stereotypical colonial discourse, repeated by his English colleagues to negate his Sikh identity and undermine his position of equal authority amongst his peers. The nickname remains attached to him throughout the war until he questions and renounces it towards the end of the novel, in Italy, as a sign of anti-colonial resistance.

Kirpal remained passive and silently accepted the colonial treatment of his English colleagues even though he had a position of authority through his leadership role in the war. For example, “[t]here was always hesitation by the soldiers to call him ‘sir’, but Hardy barked it out loud and enthusiastically” (1992, p. 225). The hesitation of soldiers (except Hardy) in calling him ‘sir’ shows that his English colleagues had created a sense of ‘Othering’ by identifying Kirpal as a racially different ‘Other’ even though he had a higher rank than some of his colleagues in the army unit. His unit treated Kirpal as inferior due to his eastern background, which shows that the colonial discourse had fixed the identity of Kirpal as a passive, loyal and obedient colonial subject who would not challenge the status quo, as “[i]n England he was *ignored* in the various barracks, and he came to prefer that” (1992, p. 209, emphasis added). However, there were certain times when Kirpal found that he was made to feel like “a *king, a puppet master*” who “could order anything” which only happened when he was involved in neutralising a bomb with his colleagues (1992, p. 209, emphasis added). Then “those men who would not cross an uncrowded bar to speak with him when they were off duty would do what he desired”, which highlights that Kirpal was neglected and treated as an

outsider by his peers that in turn created anxieties and made him feel lonely, isolated and alienated (1992, p. 209, emphasis added). The English soldiers were purposely keeping their distance from Kirpal who excluded him from the group whilst they were off duty, and only interacted with him professionally when it deemed obligatory to do so. This made it difficult for Kirpal to establish any associations with his peers, therefore, he ended up keeping his distance from them. This highlights the oppression of Sikh soldiers at the hands of English soldiers in the army who have not only fixed Kirpal's identity but have also marginalised his position of authority and do not interact with him unless it is absolutely necessary. This created ambivalence of the English soldiers in Kirpal who were nice to the colonised Other only when it was in their selfish interests to do so, which shows that Kirpal encountered himself "in a double movement ... once as stranger, and then as friend" (Bhabha, 2004, xxv). This whole cultural experience that was new to Kirpal impacted his identity such that he remained submissive and ignored the colonial oppression whilst moving across different cultures; however, the memories of repression remained within the back of his mind until he reconfigured his Sikh identity at the Italian villa as I will show later on in this chapter.

Kirpal's existence is what Bhabha refers to as "living on the borderlines of the 'present'" which is "marked by a tenebrous sense of survival" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 1). Kirpal is undergoing borderline existence where his emotions are split between contrasting cultural experiences – of his Sikh culture on one side and his conflicting experience of the English culture on the other, whilst living in a space that is "in-between colonizer and colonized. This is a space of cultural and interpretive undecidability produced in the 'present' of the colonial moment" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 295). Ondaatje narrates that Kirpal "was accustomed to his invisibility" which implies that he ignored the colonial oppression and remained subdued and invisible by not reacting or resisting the prejudice he received and instead focused on his 'professional' duty and remained a 'foreigner';

But he was a *professional*. And he remained the *foreigner*, the Sikh. (1992, p. 209, 111, emphasis added)

This fixation of Sikhs as 'professionals' who remained 'foreigners' emphasises the colonial oppression of Sikhs, which represents them as emotionless and dutiful colonial subjects of the British Raj who do not have personal feelings. Nonetheless, they remain professional in the war while ignoring any form of prejudice and oppressions that they experienced. Ondaatje's

depiction of Kirpal's daily behaviour fits well with the way Captain R. W. Falcon<sup>37</sup> describes the role of Sikhs during British Raj as a "'fighting man' and the army as his 'natural profession'. Hardy. Brave and of intelligence; too slow to understand when he is beaten; obedient to discipline: attached to his officers...he is unsurpassed as a soldier in the East" (Shani, 2008, p. 31). Jaspal Kaur Singh states that "Even though [Sikhs] were constituted as brave and as warriors in earlier writings, the co-optation and transformation of...Sikhs as subjects of the British became predominant in the colonial discourse and at once feminized the Sikhs – as submissive to the British" (Singh, 2020, p. 132). The British depicted Sikhs "first as worthiest of adversaries and then as the most loyal of British subjects" (Horta, 2009, p. 174). This colonial war time identity of Sikhs, portraying them as heroic and professional but also obedient, submissive and lacking interiority, was fixed by the colonial British Raj through which Sikhs became complicit to their own oppression and acted as "surrogates and proxies for...imperial power", just as Kirpal is shown to act subservient in accordance with his colonised identity of being a loyal colonial subject of the British Empire (Horta, 2009, p. 174). Kirpal's submissive demeanour aligns closely to this colonial description of the Sikhs. He is perceived as a 'fighting man' with army as his 'natural profession' who is 'obedient to discipline', which reduces the Other to a specific and limited role, and therefore it represents a deliberately narrow definition whose original purpose was to propagate the colonial war propaganda of recruiting Sikhs into the imperial army. Devoid of interiority, Ondaatje's protagonist Kirpal is shown to possess no emotions when it comes to his work as a sapper and always remains passively 'professional' which displays his unconscious dedication to the war as a loyal colonial subject regardless of partiality around him. However, regardless of his professionalism, he is perceived as nationally and culturally different, a 'foreigner' – an outsider who is only there to work under the approval of English peers and is to return to his homeland after the war ends if he does not lose his life during the senseless war (which is something that Kirpal desired too), which reveals a subaltern identity in him. Kirpal did not question his authority and instead just complied to his English officers which made him a loyal colonial subject who is 'attached to his officers'; therefore, he became complicit in his own oppression.

Kirpal as a colonial subject remains a complex figure of difference and identity. On one side, Kirpal experiences the feeling of being treated like a 'king', and on the other side, he experiences being 'ignored' and treated as 'Other', which creates an ambivalence towards

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37 Described in the *Handbook on Sikhs for the use of regimental officers* by Captain Robert Worgan Falcon (1896)

English culture – an experience that Kirpal found “strange” and “he did not like it” because it made him anxious about his position (1992, p. 209). Kirpal’s borderline existence influenced his emotions everyday where he is seen to occupy a “liminal space”, an “interstitial passage between fixed identifications” that constructs the cultural difference and “prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 5). The term liminal refers to threshold and “[t]he sense of the liminal as an interstitial or in-between space, a threshold area, distinguishes the term from the more definite word ‘limit’ to which it is related” (Ashcroft et al, 2013, p. 8). For Bhabha, the liminal space is an interstitial passage that exists in the threshold or borderlines of cultures, where diverse cultures come together, meet and interact, and where cultural changes and identity transformations may occur. Bhabha uses the analogy of a stairwell as “a liminal space, a pathway between the upper and lower areas” to help us better understand the term, as explained below:

The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designation of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. (Bhabha, 2004, p. 5).

The liminal in-between space where different cultures interact challenges the pre-defined or received knowledge of binary systems and questions the fixities of stereotypical colonial discourses. It displaces the binary logic and constructs new understanding, knowledge and “identities of difference” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 5). Bhabha states that this “in-between”, liminal or borderline position creates anxieties but equally is a privileged position as going “beyond” the liminal borderlines “initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 1, 5). Liminality is the ongoing process of producing identity transformations through transcultural engagements at liminal in-between spaces. In *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, whilst referring to Bhabha, Ashcroft et al explains that liminality is “the transcultural space in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange between different states” (Ashcroft et al, 2013, p. 8).

Kirpal occupies a liminal in-between space at multiple levels where his attitude oscillates between different contrasting polarities. For example, while he appears to ignore

marginalisation, his identity fluctuates between the ambivalence of being ‘accepted and rejected’, ‘approved and ignored’ through his experience of being felt like a ‘king’ and being a ‘foreigner’, an ‘Other’. This illustrates that his Sikh identity is in constant conflict, oscillating between contrasting cultural experiences daily, where his identity remains challenged and is unable to belong to any particular experience completely. The consequence of this is that he remains secluded while occupying a painful ‘in-between’ space of anxiety, where his interiority remains repressed, which in turn, suppresses his Sikh consciousness and identity. It is this ‘in-between’ existence that has made him feel both included and excluded by the English culture. His cross-cultural encounters with his English colleagues have kept both the English and Punjabi Sikh cultures at the opposite ends of the spectrum, which results in vacillation of alternate perspectives, and shows that Kirpal possesses a shifting form of identity that moves between disparate cultural experiences. Consequently, he kept mostly to himself, avoided and ignored others and faithfully focused on his professional duty of a loyal colonial subject whilst moving and shifting between multiple polarities of the in-between interstices during his displacement in the war.

Kirpal spends a total of five years away from his homeland of Punjab in the European lands, with first year in England and rest of his time in the Italian campaign, where “[h]is only human and personal contact was this enemy who had made the bomb”, which shows that he lived an alienated and self-contained life in the Europe (1992, p. 111). By the time Kirpal found himself at the Italian villa, he was a twenty-six-year-old, identified by everyone with his fixed colonial identity of his nickname ‘Kip’ (until he denounces his nickname). The time spent at the Italian villa provides insight into his state of mind and the shifting identity, where his consciousness is challenged, and his cross-cultural encounters becomes personal as he interacts with diverse set of characters which allows him to further reconfigure his identity. At the villa where he stays for three to four months he develops relationships, and his identity undergoes multiple transformations as I will show.

### **The Sikh consciousness and Othering**

Kirpal’s Sikh consciousness embodies the Sikh notion of ‘*seva*’ which “means a deed of love and selfless service for fellow human beings” and is considered “the highest ideal in Sikh ethics” that is “deeply imprinted in the collective Sikh memory” (Singh, 2011, p. 15). In *Sikhism*, Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh states that:

By *seva* one cultivates humility. By *seva* one overcomes the obsession with egotistic self and extends beyond individuality. *Seva* is an essential condition of spiritual discipline... Serving others with a cheerful attitude is deeply cherished, and *seva* has become an essential part of Sikh life. (Singh, 2011, p. 15, emphasis added)

*Seva* is an essential aspect of Kirpal's life and identity during his displacement, which he carries out with love and dedication, allowing him to practice the principles of his Sikh religion overseas. In "The Mirror and the Sikh: The Transformation of Ondaatje's Kip", critic Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh states that "[b]y working faithfully as a sapper, Kirpal Singh performs continual *seva*, being fully dedicated to serving others as he searches for caches of explosives everywhere" (Mandair, 2013a, p. 13). Kirpal's coincidental discovery of the Italian villa was driven from his commitment to *seva* itself which was deeply imprinted within his Sikh consciousness and identity. After hearing the piano, Kirpal is concerned with the "danger[s] to the piano player" from potential hidden mines inside it, and with his second-in-command Sam Hardy, they immediately begin tracing the source of the sound. His search takes him to Hana. He then stops her from playing the instrument until he searches it thoroughly, an act that highlights his traits of caring for others and *seva* (1992, p. 79). After finding more people at the dilapidated villa, Kirpal at once wants to make it a safe place to live for them, which shows his *seva* or "[s]ervice to others goes beyond serving fellow Sikhs"; he genuinely cares for 'fellow human beings', which is the true essence of *seva* in Sikhism. Rather than sticking to his prescribed agenda, he diverts from it and follows his deeply imprinted Sikh instincts of serving others and therefore saves human lives from the unexploded mines around the villa which shows that his Sikh consciousness is subconsciously towards *seva*. So, he sets up his tent in the garden of the villa and goes out daily to probe the surrounding areas for mines and ends up spending around three to four months in the villa. Kirpal is aware of the dangers of being a sapper as his colleague Sam got killed by defusing a bomb in the surroundings of the villa, but that doesn't stop him from continuing his *seva* of making villa a safe place for everyone else (1992, p. 128). Every now and then Hana and David hear a sound of a bomb that Kirpal has defused in the locality. The fact that Kirpal puts his life at risk by serving others highlights his selfless act of kindness of *seva* that he cares for the humanity – a core principle of Sikhism. Kirpal's devotion to his *seva* kept him modest, humble and made him think 'beyond [his own] individuality', allowing him to focus his Sikh consciousness and identity towards the betterment of others in the society in the European landscape.

Kirpal's individuality and his Sikh culture is perceived by others as ambivalent, depicting him as a subject of difference. Consequently, he gets singled out at the villa which results in his Othering that is implied due to the cultural differences between east and west. Upon arrival, Kirpal becomes a symbol of an exotic Other at the villa. For example, Kirpal is "always washing his hands" – a practice that he considers part of his Punjabi culture, but David sees him being "too fussy" (1992, p. 81). As a vegetarian, Kirpal does not take alcohol and eats food with his "fingers"; nonetheless, David reduces Kirpal's food to "purist meal" that is analogous to food of "probably some rare animal" (1992, pp. 93, 112, 282). Kirpal's vegetarian diet is linked with his Sikh faith that recognises all souls as equal. This is performative in the Sikh concept of "*langar*, or 'Guru's free kitchen' in which vegetarian food is prepared and served to the congregation" (Jhutti-Johal, 2011, p.10). The practice of eating a vegetarian diet in Kirpal's life shows that he sees everyone as equal and is conscious of Sikh initiation<sup>38</sup> that endorses vegetarian food. With regards to consuming alcohol in Sikhism, "its use is also to be avoided" as it "dulls the senses" and Kirpal avoids it because he doesn't want alcohol to negatively consume his Sikh consciousness and impact his Sikh identity (Mandair, 2013b, p.172). David's lack of knowledge and understanding of Kirpal's Sikh culture led him to associate Kirpal's dietary habits to some rare animal, which depicts David's reflection of his own narrow-mindedness and biased Self.

Sikh identity cannot be accredited to some perceived assumptions or subjective observations but rather requires a deep understanding of complex Sikh culture, heritage and its context. Scholar Jaspal Kaur Singh explores the complexities of Sikh identity through the "feminization of baptized and turbaned Sikh men" and states that "[t]he discursive feminization of Sikhs began in colonial India" and as a result "the representations of male Sikhs, often feminized and othered as hypermasculine" has "le[d] to their Othering" (Singh, 2020, pp. i, ii, 7, 24). Whilst David Othered Kirpal, Hana on the other hand is fond of Kirpal (or Kip as he is known to everyone) from the day he arrived. For example, when Hana found herself "surrounded by foreign men", she "paused and smiled, somewhat amazed, [and] relieved" to find that "one of the men was a Sikh" from "a quick glimpse of his turban" and thought of a "villa romance" with an exotic race (1992, p. 67). Kirpal is identified as a Sikh from his turbaned look, a foreigner, and becomes a symbol of romanticisation of Sikhs as exotic foreign strangers of the war. Hana has immediately 'exoticized' Kirpal's turbaned look, which is different to the contrasting experience of the secretary that Kirpal encountered in England who

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38 "Sikhs initiated into Khalsa orders are strictly vegetarian" (Mandair, Sikhism: A Guide for the Perplexed, 2013, p. 172).

had ‘demonized’ him, which highlights the ambivalence of turbaned Sikhs. Hana’s act of romanticising of Kirpal developed from her “physical attraction” for him and was driven by her desire and fantasy to touch his exotic ‘brown’ body and long hair (1992, p. 132). She notices Kirpal’s “shirtless brown body”, “his hair spread out”, “the bangle that clinks”, “*kara*”, “the cold iron at his wrist”, “his physicalness” and his “muscles”, how Kirpal “flip[s] his hair forward” observed as “gnats of electricity in his hair” (1992, pp. 77, 78, 94, 130, 132, 111, 79, 133, 227, 133, 287, 236, 307). Kirpal becomes a symbol of an exotic Other whose Sikh identity is exoticized, masculinised and even feminised by Hana in her observations of him when she “imagines all of Asia through the gestures of this one man” (1992, p. 229). For example, Hana romanticises Kirpal looking after his hair and his bangle, and she touches his hair, “lets his hair free”, imagines “it pours” over her and “tie[s] it against her wrist” and analogises it to “an Indian goddess” whilst relating her own hair as “dry”, which are signs that highlight feminisation of the male Sikh identity by Hana (1992, pp. 229 - 230). In Sikhism, Kirpal’s long ‘hair’ represents *kesh*<sup>39</sup> – an emblem of the Sikh faith which is cleaned regularly and tied up into a topknot before a turban is wrapped around it, which symbolises that Sikhs have “renounced the world” and its materialistic aspects (Singh, 2011, p. 11). The ‘bangle that clinks’, observed by Hana, is another Sikh article of faith known as *kara*<sup>39</sup> or bracelet that Kirpal wears on his wrist. Both unshorn hair and *kara* have important spiritual and religious significance for Sikhs that has its roots in the Sikh heritage and are part of five articles of the Sikh faith, known as the Five Ks<sup>40</sup>. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh states that “each of [the Five Ks worn by Sikhs] is a symbolic reminder of multivalent spiritual associations” with “the infinite One” God (Singh, 2011, p. 11). The *kara* around the wrists of the Sikhs “is the sign par excellence of *krita nasa* – an annihilation of hereditary occupations that determine one’s place in society... [which along with Five Ks act as] symbols of self-respect and respect for one another. Each of these physical items is made up of spiritual elements” (Singh, 2011, p. 11). Hana is unaware of Kirpal’s cultural significance of these physical items, and this lack of understanding creates her subjective view that reduces the significance of items to the romanticisation and feminisation of the exotic Other. Kirpal’s unshorn hair and the bracelet have a special sacred meaning for him that provides him self-satisfaction and keeps the focus of his Sikh consciousness and identity beyond his own individuality, extending outward towards respecting and helping others through his performance of *seva*.

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39 The symbols of the Khalsa’s Five Ks - *kesh* for uncut hair, *kanga* for comb, *kacha* for long undergarment, *kirpan* for sword, and *kara* for steel bracelet.

40 The Five Ks are associated with *amritdhari* Sikh identity who wears the five symbols of the Khalsa.

The identification of Kirpal as “content”, and “fully comfortable in the world”, attributed to his “self-sufficiency”, is a case of ambivalent identification that conceals the colonial oppression of the Sikh identity in the war (1992, pp. 78, 96, 76, 134, 135, 183, 209, 244, 252). Lemos Horta articulates that the Sikhs in the war propaganda were depicted as “possessing all the virtues of a martial race – discipline, self-sufficiency, loyalty, unrivalled courage, and comradeship – and virtually none of the vices” (Horta, 2009, pp. 175, 174). For example, Kirpal is a reflection of this colonial propagandistic identity where his self-sufficiency is represented as his strength that provides confidence in his ability to deal with difficult situations and taking care of others without paying attention to his suffering (“never speaks about the danger that comes” with his work, refuses “morphine” for his pain), which comes in as a “relief” to Hana and “all of them in the house”, constructing Kirpal as a “knight, a warrior saint” and “their sentinel” (1992, pp. 77, 177, 33, 76, 304). This singularity of representing Sikhs as ‘martial race’ conceals the oppression and suppression of the colonial discourse, as it is the case with Kirpal’s self-sufficiency. The sappers positioned at the war “were denied the benefit of the cutting-edge research and experiments that Kirpal enjoys” and they “died trying to defuse British bombs, having been refused sensitive information that might have assisted them” (Horta, 2009, p. 178). “Sappers entered enemy territory to clear mines and erect bridges for the army advancing behind them, often cut off from other forces (hence “self-sufficient”) and enduring disproportionate losses (and hence “prone to self-sacrifice”)” (Horta, 2009, p. 178). This shows attempts made by the propagandistic sources to conceal the realities of the war and the colonial oppression that Sikhs had to endure.

The British army made Sikh identity rigid by fixing them to a singularity of a ‘martial race’ in order to appropriate Sikhs for their gains in the war and in the process, Sikhs became unconsciously complicit to their own colonial exploitation. Ondaatje’s over reliance on his acknowledged sources to represent Kirpal, whether due to ease or necessity, has constructed the biased, one-sided and discriminatory war propagandistic representation of the Sikhs which is a sign of erasing and omitting the colonial oppression of Sikhs in the war. Ondaatje has construed propagandistic sources without investing his own experience of being displaced and empathy which has resulted in the “mystification of Sikh identity” that represents Kirpal as soulless, always comfortable and content with the world, which is a sign of fixing and reducing Sikh identity to emotionless and masculinised exotic Others, who possess no interiority or individuality (Horta, 2009, p. 173). So, Kirpal’s self-sufficiency is perceived as a lack of feelings or emotions because he always remains relaxed and comfortable regardless of the

situation; this creates the mystification and ambivalence of his Sikh identity. Hana compared Kirpal's self-sufficiency to "privacy" after unsatisfied with "his ability to turn so easily away from the world" as he confined only in his work, perceiving him as someone who is emotionless, reserved and secluded (1992, pp. 209, 135). Hana's frustration came from her desire for Kirpal to pay more attention to her, more than his work and the people around him, and "break upon [her] emotions" such that she could fall "into the arms of a stranger" (1992, p. 96). Whereas Kirpal did not express his emotions or innermost feelings with anyone and kept himself busy with his colonial duty, which in turn, kept his identity ambivalent by depicting him fully comfortable and content. This resulted in perceiving Kirpal as "some kind of *loose star on the edge of their system*", identifying him to be culturally different to everyone else from the way he looked and conducted himself around others, which stresses him as an outsider and not really belonging to the cultural system of the villa at all (1992, p. 79). This denotes the Othering of Sikh identity as someone who cannot fit within the apparent norms of the western culture. So, Kirpal "enters the house only when invited in, just a tentative visitor" which implies that he felt an outsider and maintained his distance and personal space from everyone else there (1992, p. 79). Ondaatje links the ambivalence of Kirpal's identity to the 'invisible world' and 'anonymous race' that he belonged to, as emphasised below:

The self-sufficiency and privacy Hana saw in him...was as much a result of being the *anonymous member of another race, a part of the invisible world*. He had built up defences of character against all that, trusting only those who befriended him. (1992, p. 209, emphasis added)

Kirpal was far from being 'fully comfortable in the world' as identified by everyone at the villa. He is a colonised subject and has been a victim of colonial discourse and oppression from the Orientalist attitudes of English soldiers in the army. Due to the ambivalence of the English culture that he experienced in England; Kirpal finds it difficult to trust anyone in the European landscape, so he keeps his distance from others. He is displaced from his homeland, away from his family especially at a key time of history when the Indian national independence was mounting in British India. His anti-colonial brother was in the Lahore jail arrested for his active role in the Indian nationalism (that he later had told Hana about), therefore there was lots going on in his life. During his displacement, he had constructed a shifting identity that allowed him to move between different contrasting polarities. Kirpal remained isolated and the cultures occupied by Kirpal remained at the opposite ends of the spectrum, which resulted in the vacillation of alternate perspectives. He resides in the 'in-between' space because he is

inhabiting two separate cultures at once and he switches back and forth between perspectives depending on the situation he is facing. This shows that Kirpal's Sikh identity is complex and continues to maintain a shifting identity, moving between different contrasting cultural polarities as deemed necessary at the villa.

### **The liminality of the Italian villa and re-configuration of the Sikh identity**

The Italian villa signifies a transitional space that articulates cultural differences where Kirpal's representation of difference is read as inherited traits of his Sikh heritage, ethnicity and culture. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh says "Burdened by colonialism, Kip is busy carrying the white man's burden all the way from India to England to Italy. But inside, there is a lack of selfhood. Kip may look, speak, and act like a Sikh, but he is out of touch with himself" (Mandair, 2013a, p. 13). Kirpal's (referred to here as Kip) lack of selfhood is evident in how Hana perceives him as "[t]he one thing he will never consider is himself" and "[h]e himself has no mirrors" for self-reflection (1992, p. 230). The villa is a terrain that sustains Kirpal at a liminal position where Kirpal assembled new cultural conceptions and modes of existence from his past experiences and cross-cultural encounters; these also allow him to reassemble his selfhood and see the world differently as shown in this section.

Just as Hana is ambivalent about Kirpal, Kirpal's consciousness is also in a state of ambivalence about Hana. On one side, he wanted to confront her with his feelings for her but at the same time, he was confused and unsure because he felt that the cultural gap between them is wide and potentially a challenge to overcome. For example, Kirpal was aware that Hana has developed feelings for him, and vice versa, but he maintained his distance from her, knowing that "between them lay a treacherous and complex journey. It was a very wide world" (1992, p. 119). This implies that love between people of disparate cultures is a complex matter, since between them there remains 'a very wide world', which could create opportunities and barriers due to differences in cultural upbringing and growth. Both Kirpal and Hana had their own 'treacherous and complex journeys' of their past, present and future. Kirpal's maintenance of a distance between himself and Hana made her perceive Kirpal's identity to be rigid since it remains fixed only into his own Sikh culture, heritage and ways of life. So, Hana felt that love with Kirpal would be a challenge as he "allows nothing to enter him that comes from another world" (1992, p. 133). Kirpal on the other hand was blocking his feelings for Hana by allowing himself to not get close to Hana as "[h]e refused to believe in his own weaknesses", therefore

maintained his personal space and distance from Hana because of the ambivalence of falling in love with culturally different person, which brought his identity back into the painful ‘in-between’ position that created further anxieties in him (1992, p. 120). For example, Kirpal felt like confiding his feelings to Hana as “[h]e wanted Hana’s shoulder, wanted to place his palm over it...[and] wanted to surround the girl with [comfort]” but didn’t know how to do so, due to perceived cultural differences (1992, p. 120). These intricacies of love between culturally different people challenges their sense of identity and belonging especially when subjects are from different parts of the world. Kirpal is from colonial British India and Hanna is from Canada and their different cultural upbringing and belonging created the cultural/religious/ethnic differences between them. In 1945, Canada was a free nation whereas India’s future was undecided as it was yet to be independent from the British Raj. Kirpal had initially desired to return to his imagined homeland of Punjab after the war was over. The feelings for the homeland kept him going in the displaced lands for the last five years, but now this same feeling of home and belonging was challenged by his cross-cultural encounters with Hana.

Kirpal's dedication towards *seva* had reconfigured his identity and cultivated humility in him, allowing him to maintain a cheerful attitude at the villa. As Kirpal and Hana got to know each other, Kirpal’s identity moved away from his rigidity of keeping distance from Hana and shifted towards focusing on his love and comfort for Hana, which shows that Kirpal possesses a dynamic and shifting identity. Kirpal reconfigured his selfhood further through his interactions with Hana where he learnt to embrace her in his life, which reflects a sense of accommodation that reflects Kirpal’s transformed identity. For example, Kirpal and Hana spent time together in Kirpal’s tent which acts as an intimate place that “surround[s] them”, a place that transcends space and time, a place to reflect on past and present, a place where desires become realities, symbolising a place where Kirpal and Hana nurtured their relationship (1992, p. 133). Their love is beyond physical desires as they both share their personal, emotional and spiritual experiences with each other during “verbal nights” in the tent (1992, p. 288). Kirpal managed to alter his ambivalence about Hana by accepting cultural differences in his newly formed cross-cultural encounters with Hana. They travel imaginatively beyond space and time to places in the past, present and future, filled with imaginative experiences of both Punjab and Canada, understanding each other’s cultural differences and displaced belongings, which reflects a progressive accommodation through co-mingling of disparate cultures and experiences. Hana contemplates on her feelings of being “displaced out of Canada” and wishes

to be under a “tin roof...in the east end of Toronto” and talks about taking Kirpal “to the Skootamatta River, ...show [him] Smoke Lake” (1992, p. 135). Kirpal also shares his feelings of being displaced from Punjab and uses his imagination to tell Hana similarities in landscape of Canada and Punjab which he refers to Punjab as “his country of five rivers. The Sutlej, Jhelum, Ravi, Chenab, Beas” (1992, p. 288). It is plausible that the primary reason for both Kirpal and Hana to develop interest in each other could be to do with the fact that they were both displaced from their birth nations and found it easy to make friends amongst themselves. They both sympathise with their displaced positions, understand each other and find commonality within their cultures, which shows that Sikh identity is adaptable. Kirpal’s selfhood is altered towards finding out about “peculiar wonders” of Canada and desired to know more about Hana’s past there (1992, p. 284). For example, Kirpal asks Caravaggio to tell him about Canada and the “other stories about Toronto” implying that he wants to know more about Hana’s life in Canada as “what he was really interested in were the clues to Hana’s nature” (1992, p. 284). This also shows that Kirpal’s sense of home and belonging, once again, becomes a new problematic notion for him after his relationship with Hana, as depicted in his conversation with Caravaggio outlined below:

‘When the war with Japan is over, everyone will finally go home,’ Kip said. ‘And where will *you* go?’ Caravaggio asked. The sapper rolled his head, half nodding, half shaking it, his mouth smiling. (1992, p. 284)

Kirpal’s unconvincing nodding of his head in response to Caravaggio shows that Kirpal’s previous desires of returning to his home in Lahore and homeland of Punjab is weakened, symbolising that his previous firm ideas of rootedness into Punjab have become ambivalent through his cross-cultural encounters with Hana. This shows that Kirpal, who was perceived by Hana as someone who ‘allows nothing to enter him that comes from another world’, is transforming himself to unite with Hana by allowing himself to be part of her. Kirpal is serious enough about his love for Hana that he questions his sense of belonging and shows interests in the imagined landscape of Canada conceived from his interactions with Hana. Thus, Kirpal’s Sikh identity is not complete but rather fluid, the one that remains open to change, and therefore can be considered as a transforming identity.

Kirpal’s relationship shifted his consciousness inwards towards his love for Hana, which became a new mode of existence for him and vice versa at the villa. Their coming together brought a sense of empowerment to them both. For example, during daytime they both

give each other space, “the space he assumes is their right” and she also “likes the distance he leaves her”, which allows them to carry on with their daily lives (1992, p. 134). They learn new things about each other’s cultures every night and enjoy their “nights of no talk and nights full of talk. They are never sure what will occur, whose fraction of [the] past will emerge, or whether touch will be anonymous and silent” (1992, p. 287). This shows that they both respected each other, and their relationship appears to be progressing well. Hana realises that Kirpal would have “never allowed himself to be beholden to her, or her to him” which implies that they both share an unconditional love for each other (1992, p. 135). The consequence of this is that Kirpal gets more involved with everyone at the villa and is shown to prepare a special vegetarian dinner for everyone to enjoy on Hana’s twenty-first birthday including decorating the villa to express his love for Hana, which reflects a sense of ‘selfhood’ returning in Kirpal (1992, pp. 282, 284). Hana expressed her gratitude by singing and dancing “echoing the heart of the sapper” (1992, p. 283). These signs show that Kirpal’s consciousness is focused on expressing his feelings for Hana, which in turn, allowed him to reflect on his ‘Self’ (which he had previously neglected) and therefore in this process he begins to develop a selfhood. This implies that Kirpal went beyond his liminal ‘in-between’ position by managing to keep his identity in motion with his cross-cultural relationship with Hana. This new shift in Kirpal’s identity opened a space for self-reflection where he contemplates on his past, his family, his anti-colonial brother and expressed his feelings with Hana.

Kirpal’s selfhood is further developed when he practices spirituality found in Sikhism at the villa and shares his spiritual experiences with Hana. This is indicative when Kirpal and Hana unite with each other spirituality as shown when Kirpal constructs a unique Sikh cultural experience from his memory and allows Hana to experience and participate into it during verbal nights, where they both imaginatively travel to the Golden Temple – one of the holiest shrines of Sikhs located in Amritsar. For example, Kirpal “guides her into the great gurdwara, removing her shoes, watching as she washes her feet, covers her head” and shares history of the temple of Amritsar (1992, p. 288). Kirpal overlays his memory of the holy place into a physical experience performed by both Hana and Kirpal at the villa, where he enunciates the significance of the *Gurbani* or hymns of Sikh Holy Book<sup>41</sup> and informs Hana about how “[s]inging is at the centre of worship” at the Golden Temple (1992, p. 288). He helps Hana to

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41 The Sikh Holy Book, Guru Granth Sahib, has 1430 pages and is given the utmost respect in Sikhism and is treated as a living Guru. “The Granth Sahib is opened at random, a quotation selected, and for three hours, before the mist lifts off the lake to reveal the Golden Temple, the verses mingle and away out with unbroken reading” (1992, p. 288). The unbroken reading of 1430 pages of Guru Granth Sahib requires huge commitment and dedication by Sikhs.

envision “hearing the hymns of the saints” through visualisation of *kirtan*, which is a congregational “sing[ing of] the Book’s verses accompanied by musicians...[who] sing from four in the morning till eleven at night” (1992, p. 288). In *Sikh Sabad Kirtan as a Musical Construction of Memory*, Janice Faye Protopapas states that “[m]emorization<sup>42</sup> maintains a high place in both learning and performing *Gurbani*” and “[f]or the Sikh, keeping the words of the scripture in the heart can guide and transform the consciousness of the devotee... [such that] the words become essentially part of the “inner voice”” (Protopapas, 2011, pp. 74, 148-149). Kirpal’s imaginative investment through memorization of the *Gurbani* and performative involvement of Hana in the spiritual experience of the Golden Temple in the displaced lands confirms the growth of Kirpal’s Self. The process is guided by his inner voice of Sikh consciousness that depicts a transformed selfhood and identity that brought Kirpal and Hana spiritually together. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh considers this envisioning a construction of Kirpal’s self or “an inner link” that shows “the disintegrated senses of Kip begin to reassemble... with spiritual energy which he can pass on to his companion Hana, and to the reader as well” (Mandair, 2013a, p. 13). Hana “wished” to visit the Golden Temple as “[s]he herself would be allowed to place money or a flower onto the sheet spread upon the floor and then join in the great permanent singing” (1992, p. 289). Kaur Singh expresses that this experience signifies the union of Kip and Hana as below:

The split personalities are uniting... There are no racial barriers and there are no gender barriers and there are no temporal barriers as past and future coalesce in Kip and Hana’s journey to the Golden Temple. In fact, even the rigid walls between the subject and the object dissolve... (Mandair, 2013a, p. 13)

Kirpal and Hana, both transform themselves with their cross-cultural encounters. Hana, who bears the same resemblance to the British colonisers, has accepted Kirpal. This acceptance is a critical issue for the colonised once they are outside their cultural domain as it is the case with Kirpal and Hana’s relationship. Kirpal becomes a newly transformed Sikh who has accepted Hana in his life, gained his individuality and shifted his Sikh consciousness from his previous outlook of just helping others to his new outlook of helping himself too (which he had previously ignored); therefore, this signifies the progressive accommodation and reconfiguration of Kirpal’s identity.

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42 “Memorization (keeping in the heart) and thus, “singing from the heart” is a significant part of the religious discipline and daily practice of the Sikh” (Faye Protopapapaas, 2011, p. 148)

## The anti-colonial resistance of Sikhs

Janice Faye Protopapas states that the repetition and memorisation of “*Gurbani kirtan* and hymn singing in general possess a transformational power to awaken spiritual forces of memory”, which has a transformational impact particularly “on colonized people” (Protopapas, 2011, pp. 21 – 22). Further,

The hymns of *Gurbani kirtan* become a crucible where the recollection of suffering and oppression which the Sikhs endured throughout the history, ignites a *deep spiritual energy*. This *inherited memory of spiritual resilience* is today the memory kernel with which *all Sikhs identify* with on some level and may act as a *pedagogical memory*. (Protopapas, 2011, pp. 21 – 22, emphasis added)

Kirpal’s performative act of remembering *Gurbani* through his memory of the Golden Temple has ignited his ‘deep spiritual energy’ and ‘inherited memory of spiritual resilience’ that subconsciously created awareness in him of his Sikh heritage, consciousness and “communal identity, *communitas*, where values are reaffirmed and reinforced” (Protopapas, 2011, pp. 74, 148-149). This is clear when Kirpal talks to Hana about his freedom fighter brother as “[t]o be a wanderer is in *our* blood. That is why jailing is most difficult for his [brother’s] nature and he would kill himself to get free” (1992, p. 287). Ondaatje’s use of collective voice in the narration of ‘*our* blood’ symbolises the collective voice of the Sikhs that represents their communal Sikh identity. It emphasises the collective consciousness of Sikhs signifying that they would do anything to attain freedom from suppression and oppression of authorities. These signs of resistance in Sikhs have roots in the pre-colonial period of Mughal and Afghan rule of the Indian subcontinent that ultimately led to the establishment of the Sikh Empire which “even the powerful British Empire was afraid to challenge” (Singh, 2011, p. 15). Kirpal’s remembrance of this inherited pedagogical memory symbolises his new inner self which desires to be free from the colonial suppression and oppression of the British Raj like his brother, a transformation in Kirpal that Hana perceived as “switch[ing] allegiances” because of “the strange path of love he has for his dangerous brother” (1992, pp. 289, 287). This shows that Kirpal’s identity was being reconfigured through memory that reflected growth of anti-colonial consciousness in him, which demonstrates that his identity is a complex but transforming identity that has undergone multiple transformations within a short space of time at the villa.

With the signs of anti-colonial consciousness in Kirpal, the hearing of the bombing of “Hiroshima” and “Nagasaki” on the radio on “that August day” of 1945 acted as a catalyst that positioned the transformational power of Kirpal’s inherited memories of spiritual resilience in motion to actively fight against the colonial repression, which reveals the anti-colonial resistance in his identity and exhibits that he has agency. He leaves his tent dissatisfied, looks “condemned, separate from the world...weeping”, and furious with the British authorities she enters the villa in anger ignoring Hana’s presence, and shudderingly points his rifle at Almásy’s chest, claiming:

I sat at the foot of this bed and listened to you... Your fragile white island that with customs and manners and books and prefects and reason somehow converted the rest of the world. You stood for precise behaviour. I knew if I lifted a teacup with the wrong finger I’d be banished... You and then the American converted *us*. With your missionary rules. (1992, p. 301, emphasis implied)

Kirpal alleges that colonialism is the root cause of the bombings. He refers to the “tremor of Western wisdom” and holds Almásy, the only “civilised man” he knew, accountable for the upheavals of the British empire (as he thought Almásy was an “Englishman”) (1992, pp. 301, 129, 7). Kirpal shifts his perspective about Almásy from his previous friendly relationship as “get[ting] on so well together” to a new perspective that now reduced Almásy to a western coloniser (1992, p. 188). This demonstrates that Kirpal was ambivalent about the English culture and shows that he found himself in the painful ‘in-between’ existence once again after the bombings, which allowed him to generalise west as the perpetrating colonisers and east as the colonised who suffer at the hands of the west. He realised that it was the continued performance of the colonial discourse by the west, first by British and then by Americans, through enforcing ‘missionary rules’<sup>43</sup> on natives that had “fool[ed]” and ‘converted the rest of the world’ including himself (1992, p. 301). Kirpal, as a colonised subject, realised his own position in the European landscape where he was perceived an outsider, a foreigner, a demonised Other, an exotic Other, a loyal colonial subject and a colonised Other – identifications that he no longer wants to be associated with.

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43 The ‘missionary rules’ were the underlying “objective of colonial discourse” which imposed Christian missionary operations on natives through the establishment of Christian systems of instructions, as means to justify colonial conquests, which depicted them as good conquests, teaching moral values and western culture to the uncultured natives (Bhabha, 2004, p. 101). Christian values, English culture and particularly the English language were taught in large scale under such missionary operations to the indigenous people of colonised nations around the world during the expansion of British empire. In India, this was choreographed by the British East India Company as an “interventionist and ‘interpellative’ ambition of Charles Grant for a culturally and linguistically homogenous English India” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 150).

Using the collective voice of the Sikhs, Kirpal articulates struggles and experiences of colonised natives during the British Raj and highlights the impact of colonialism on the ordinary people of Indian subcontinent. The bombing created a space for Kirpal to performatively resist his colonial oppressions, where familial memories of his anti-colonial brother resurfaced into a reveal that he can now identify with, as shown below:

My brother told me. Never turn your back on Europe. The deal makers. The contract makers. The map drawers. Never trust Europeans, he said. Never shake hands with them. But we, oh, we were easily impressed – by speeches and medals and your ceremonies. What have I been doing these last few years? Cutting away, defusing, limbs of evil. For what? For *this* to happen? (1992, p. 302)

Due to the difference of opinion that Kirpal always had with his brother in the past, he had previously learnt to ignore and forget his brother's anti-colonial beliefs and ways. For, he knew that his brother thought of him not only as a "fool for trusting the English" but he was also "appalled at how we [Sikhs] throw ourselves into English wars" by loyally supporting the colonial empire (1992, p. 228). However, after the bombing, his brother's previously overlooked memories now resurfaced to disrupt the present, guiding Kirpal towards anti-colonial resistance, which made him realise that his brother had always been correct about this "new revealed enemy" (1992, p. 302). Nikky-Guninder Kaur articulates that "[t]he aggressive act is a meaningful response, revealing Kip's newfound ego. Feeling insulted and violated – perhaps for the first time in his life – Kip seeks to insult and kill the perpetrator" (Mandair, 2013a, p.13). Kirpal (referred to as Kip here) realises that the perpetrator is not Almásy but the colonial culture of administration, control and power, which identifies and defines people by prejudice and binary logic of Eurocentrism, dehumanises eastern cultures by fixing them as Other, essentialises the west as culturally superior to the east, and "would never have dropped such a bomb on a white nation" (1992, p. 304). This binary perception of the east and the west echoes Homi Bhabha's interpretation of Edward Said's concept of Orientalism<sup>44</sup> as "a semiotic of 'Orientalist' power, examining the varied European discourses which constitute 'the Orient' as a unified racial, geographical, political and cultural zone of the world" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 101). According to Edward Said, the conflict between the east and the west, self and other have

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44 Homi Bhabha interprets Orientalism in ways that are different to Edward Said. He criticises Said's Orientalism for depicting power as a singular and unstoppable entity and "opposes Said's homogenized approach (to subject formation)" (Mambrol, 2016). Bhabha provides different way of thinking about the Orient of the colonised subject. According to Bhabha, Orient or the colonised subject can be represented in a variety of ways as "the identities of the colonizer as well as the colonized are unstable, shifting and fragmentary – being caught up in a complex reciprocity, and the colonial subject has various ways of subverting and resisting the colonial domination" (Mambrol, 2016). Therefore, Bhabha "rightly rejects a notion of Orientalism as the misrepresentation of an Oriental essence" and rather recognises the agency of the colonised subjects in the representation of colonial discourses (Bhabha, 2004, p. 12).

their roots in colonialism, which creates binaries of differences between people and nations. The Occident or western powers have historically considered themselves to be superiors and seen the Orientals or people from the eastern nations (and Africa) as inferiors. The Occident colonised nations through justifications of “benign or moral terms, as a way of spreading the benefits of Western civilisation and saving native people from their own perceived barbarism” (McLeod, 2010, p. 25). Kirpal has attained an awareness of the colonial discourse and the white supremacy and proclaims that “[w]hen you start bombing the brown races of the world, you’re an Englishman” (1992, p. 304). This realisation has allowed Kirpal’s consciousness to go beyond his borderline existence and shifted his identity towards helping his own culture and people. He is now determined to “*touch the future on its hither side*”, which is to free colonial India from the oppressions of the British Raj. Thus, Kirpal’s identity is dynamic, always moving and shifting cultural polarities (Bhabha, 2004, p. 9).

Kirpal reconfigures his identity once again as he “stripped the tent of all military objects, all bomb disposal equipment, stripped all insignia off his uniform” and wears a *kurta* (traditional Punjabi clothing worn by Sikhs), which shows signs of renouncing colonial British artefacts and embracing his ancestral roots (1992, p. 304). He brings the photograph of his family out and says:

His name is *Kirpal Singh* and he does not know what he is doing here. (1992, p. 305, emphasis added)

Kirpal denounces his colonial nickname Kip, and now refers to himself with his Sikh birth name, “Kirpal Singh”. These acts of renunciation represent signs of the decolonisation of his colonial consciousness and identity. Kirpal is reassembling his identity by accepting the communal Sikh designation of “Singh”<sup>45</sup> – an identity historically bestowed on Sikhs by the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh as part of *Khande ki pahul*<sup>46</sup>. This “was the transforming ritual that breathed new life and gave freedom to all recipients” (Singh, 2011, p. 11). By regaining communal Sikh identity which symbolises his freedom from the oppression and suppression of colonial powers, Kirpal ‘Singh’ has given himself a new life. This change in Kirpal’s identity reflects shifted focus of the Sikh consciousness towards ‘knowing one’s own Self’ and to ‘recognise own origin’ within the temporal world. The next morning Kirpal gets his Triumph motorbike out and leaves “the three of them to their world, [and was] no

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45 “Singh – A name all Sikh men affix to their first name, meaning ‘lion’” (Singh-Sohal, 2012). “As [Sikh] men received the surname Singh, women received the surname Kaur, signifying princess” (Singh, 2011, p.11).

46 *Khande ki pahul* is an initiation through the double-edge sword, which was established by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 as the cultivation of Sikh Identity into the order of the Khalsa (Singh, 2011, p.11).

longer their sentinel”; thus, the European landscape is no longer his world either, symbolising renouncing of the west (1992, p. 304). This signifies that Kirpal is not only finally free from the wartime colonial oppressions but he is also decolonised and in control of his own life; therefore, he can no longer be considered as a loyal colonial subject of the British Raj. Kirpal is seen to make his own self-definition by deciding to leave Italy and on route to India, something that he wanted to do it himself, without being defined by a coloniser, which shows that he has agency. Kirpal set off to his homeland of Punjab well equipped, modified with the wartime knowledge and skills gained in European lands to finally use it to fight for his homeland, reflects the performance of anti-colonial consciousness in Kirpal. While traveling back home, he not only gets glimpses of Hana but also remembers his interactions with Almásy and tries to ignore such feelings and remained determined to side with his brother to fight against the oppressions of the British Raj. In this way, Kirpal’s identity is always on the move, changing to suit situations as the need arises, which reflects that he possesses a dynamic Sikh identity.

### **The post-colonial belonging of Sikhs**

Towards the end of the novel, Ondaatje provides a glimpse of the post-colonial India by taking the reader straight to the year of 1959 (year deduced from Hana’s age mentioned as “thirty-four”), which reveals Kirpal’s complex and ambivalent sense of belonging in contemporary India (1992, p. 320). Though he is married with two children, and lives in a new place in India carrying out a new *seva* of helping others by working as a doctor (a career that is now aligned to the old traditions of his family), he still desires for Hana. This underlines his uneasy and displaced sense of belonging that exists at his age of forty (1992, p. 318). Kirpal is preoccupied by his past imaginations of the war and the Italian villa, experienced in the form of “trigger[s] of memory” flashbacks that are invoked intermittently while he carries on with his everyday activities that range from scenes of “his garden”, “dry cut grass”, “the stone stairway” and the smell of “burn[s] on the arm” of his patients which reminds him of the war (1992, pp. 318 - 319). The memories of Hana that he cherishes “as if a camera’s film reveals her, but only her, in silence” are particularly important to him and he considers them as “limited gift[s]” and “moments of revelations” (1992, p. 319). Through these moments of revelations, he “witnesses” her aged “from being a young woman into having the angular look of a queen”, “watches... her face and body”, “lengthening of her dark hair”, “her eyes” and has “urges to talk with her” like he used to in the villa (1992, p. 319). That he strongly wishes to go back

into the turbulent time of the villa and “return to that stage they were most intimate at in the tent” (1992, p. 319). This shows that for the past fourteen years Kirpal has been stuck in the memories of 1945 and has not moved on with his life, even though he has his own family in India. After all these years, he is shown to be actively seeking to reach out to Hana.

Where does he sit in his garden thinking once again he should go inside and write a letter or go one day down to the telephone depot...and try to contact her in another country. (1992, p. 317)

Kirpal is still living in the borderlines of the ‘in-between’ existence, in the liminality of his desires for Hana and his new life in India, between the feelings of being unsettled and settled at the same time, which creates the sense of an ambivalence of belonging in the post-colonial India. His identity is shifting and fluctuating between imagination of Hana and the reality at home, which implies that he experiences a displaced sense of belonging. This liminal existence has no doubt created further anxieties in him, which is evident from the longing he has for Hana; he is not fully content with his new life in the post independent India. His love for Hana is rooted in his consciousness such that he sees her in everything he does and everywhere he goes. He imagines what Hana might be doing in Canada at the same time as him whilst he carries on with his daily life in India. Although Kirpal has tried his best to find out about Hana’s whereabouts and attempted to reach out to her by sending various letters and making phone calls in the past, he has had no luck and his efforts to find her are still ongoing in 1959; his identity is in a state of anxieties.

After Kirpal left the villa in 1945, Hana also tried to contact him through the “continuation of the letters she wrote to him for a year, getting no reply, until she stopped sending them, turned away by his silence” (1992, p. 319). However, these generically addressed letters never reached Kirpal as neither of them had each other’s postal address. Also, it is likely that Hana wrote these letters when she was comfortably back in Canada, as she planned after the WWII ended, so she must have written to him up until 1947 which coincides with the period when colonial India finally gained independence from the British Raj. However, this period overlaps with what Partha Chatterjee calls “the moment of arrival” when nationalism had arrived in the form of state ideology that “appropriated the life of the nation into the life of the state” (Chatterjee, 1986, pp. 131, 161). The moment of arrival period leading up to 1947 in British India was turbulent, witnessing bloodshed and killings in an unimaginable

scale under the garb of nationalism and its state ideology of religious segregation<sup>47</sup>. This process ultimately partitioned British India into two independent nations – India and Pakistan, a post-colonial situation that I explore in Chapter 2. For the context of this chapter, it is important to realise that in the history of India, the timescale after the second world war up until 1947 was a challenging ‘moment of arrival’, which Kirpal had to encounter after he suddenly left the Italian villa. After India gained its independence in 1947 from the British Raj, Kirpal was also uprooted from his ancestral birthplace of Lahore (as it became part of Pakistan after the Partition) and now lives in a new place in India. Kirpal’s imagined homeland of Punjab that he fondly told Hana about in Italy, was divided into East and West Punjab after the Partition and his home city of Lahore became part of West Punjab governed by Pakistan. Therefore, Kirpal not only lost his love and friendship when he left the Italian villa but also lost his ancestral home and family afterwards, due to the Partition, which created anxieties, as evident from his emotionally broken state and displaced belonging in India. His brother’s warnings about the British authorities being the “map drawers” became true since the British officials mapped the borders curving two new nations out of colonial India, based on little knowledge of the national culture and the desires of the Sikhs of Punjab (1992, p. 302). The whole process of the transfer of power was rushed into by the British authorities so that they could leave India as quickly as possible, leaving behind the unsolved problems of colonialism in the hands of the newly divided nations. So, Kirpal is suffering the consequences of colonialism, which has permanently exiled him from his home of Lahore and separated him from his beloved Hana; things would never be the same for him just like he can never go back to his time at the Italian villa or to his ancestral house of Lahore. Kirpal truly feels betrayed by the colonial British authorities who have displaced him into his current liminal position of anxieties, which “reinforces the point that the imaginative machinery of colonialism does not quickly disappear as soon as once-colonised lands achieve independence and can indeed endure in refreshed forms” (McLeod, 2010, p. 48). The legacy of colonialism that partitioned his homeland of Punjab and displaced him from his home of Lahore and Kirpal left him with no choice but to endure the consequences and find new ways to deal with the present situation of an unsettled instability in India. Would Kirpal ever be able to go beyond this newly formed borderline existence and find new ways to deal with his present displaced situation? The problem is that he doesn’t feel a oneness in India as he felt with Hana in the Italian villa, which shows that the

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47 The religious segregation was based on Muslims on one side versus Hindus and everyone else on the other side. The Sikhs like other minorities suffered the consequences of not fully fitting into either of the two widely propagated state ideology during the Partition (I explore this in chapter 2).

diasporic position of the villa somehow brought culturally dissimilar people together more so than the independent nations have done for Sikhs. Fourteen years of leaving the European landscape of the war, means that Kirpal's existence is haunted by the ghosts of his colonial past that reminds and keeps him in a state of anxiety. For example, even though he has a lovely family of his own in a new place in India, his self still wants to reconnect with Hana in the same manner as he did at the Italian villa – a desire that appears impossible to fulfil; thus, he is living in a state of imagination. His love for Hana is imaginative, for he is aware of the geographical distance between them and the challenges that life has created as he is now married. Deep down in his heart, he knows that he will never be able to “hold” Hana the same way again (1992, p. 320).

Ondaatje ends the novel transcending space and time and bridging the geographical gap between Canada and India by conceptually merging a situation that Hana produces in Canada to a situation that Kirpal responds to by reconfiguring it at his home in India, as detailed below:

And so Hana moves and her face turns... Her shoulder touches the edge of a cupboard and a glass dislodges. Kirpal's left hand swoops down and catches the dropped fork an inch from the floor and gently passes it into the fingers of his daughter. (1992, p. 320)

Kirpal's consciousness connects with Hana in such a way that they both once again unite with each other by going beyond time and space, which makes their love everlasting. This ending of the novel is eerie and uncanny but at the same time it appears renewed and spiritual in a way that shows love has no national or cultural borders, limits or boundaries; it transcends beyond space and time. A glass dropped by Hana that gets caught as a fork by Kirpal symbolises the reconfiguration of love that reflects the formation of a new beginning between Kirpal and Hana. Kirpal then shares the fork with his daughter which symbolises that love is being transferred into his family. In a way, his reconfigured love now carries a new meaning, the one that he can comfortably share with his family; therefore, his family becomes a healthy connective tissue or bridge between him and Hana. This can be analogised to receiving and accepting a new opportunity that leads Kirpal to materialise a family journey on route to Canada where he will finally reconnect with Hana. Once again, Kirpal has managed to go beyond his 'in-between' existence which confirms that his identity which is fluid and always in motion is now shifting towards reconnecting with Hana in Canada (together with his family) in a new and exciting way which resonates with the beginning of a new journey.

Seen through the prism of the Sikh theory of evolution and ‘identity consumes identity’, Kirpal’s Sikh consciousness and identity is continuously evolving learning from varied social, cultural and spiritual experiences that he had had in his life as part of ‘living on the borderlines of the ‘present’’. He has always been able to shift his identity away from negative consciousness of living with pain, sufferings and anxieties and moved it towards positive consciousness of helping others as well as himself through *seva*, as he reconfigured for Hana to live in the present. Therefore, Kirpal’s negative consciousness is consumed by the positive consciousness in his life, which is a sign of a dynamic and transforming Sikh identity that aligns with what the Sikh scholar Daljeet Singh describes when he states, “Sikhism is an evolutionary theory about the spiritual-empirical development” (Singh et al, 2008, p.85). Viewed in this context, therefore, Sikhs should strive towards “socio-moral responsibilities” in the Sikh notion of *Miri-Piri*<sup>48</sup> (temporal-spiritual power) (Singh et al, 2008, p.85). The notion of *Miri* asks Sikhs to carry out worldly responsibilities with love, such as, contributing to work, family, charity and social affairs, to make the world a better place, which is visible in Kirpal through his dedication of *seva*. *Piri* is the internal spiritual development required to connect to God through remembrance and meditation, which is visible in Kirpal in his spiritual experience of the Golden Temple. The Guru emphasised that to succeed in life towards the liberation of our souls, *Miri-Piri* needs to be well balanced in life, which is an aspect that Kirpal is learning to do in his various liminal existences of present. Therefore, Kirpal exhibits this evolving spiritual-empirical development in his consciousness that keeps his identity always on the move, continuously developing and finding new ways to cope with the challenges of the borderline existences of the contemporary world. Kirpal is a dynamic Sikh who is well equipped to face new challenges and looks forward to new opportunities in life, which highlights the dynamic and evolving aspects of his Sikh consciousness and identity.

## Conclusion

The representation of the Sikh identity in *The English Patient* is complicated, perhaps something that Ondaatje never realised himself. Although his novel is “a mirror walking down a road” it’s important to ensure that the mirror reflects a Sikh identity that is not aligned to the wartime propagandistic sources that Ondaatje portrayed in Sikh protagonist (1992, p. 97).

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48 The concept of *Miri-Piri* was established by the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Hargobind in 1606, which gave Sikhs the “saint-soldier/warrior” identity (Blackwood, 2014, p. 76). It is represented by two swords – *Miri* symbolises responsibilities towards temporal duties and *Piri* symbolises the spiritual development of a Sikh, and both *Miri* and *Piri* go hand in hand in life.

Ondaatje's over reliance on his acknowledged sources as pointed out by Horta has produced work that conceals the innermost feelings and interiority of the Sikhs and covers their colonial oppressions by absorbing readers into their mystification and romanticisation, which is aligned to the colonial propagandistic portrayal that appropriated Sikhs for recruitment into the imperial army for greater colonial pursuits. Without a good understanding of these colonial interventions and the knowledge of Sikh heritage, culture and social politics, it is hard for a reader to find an identification with Sikhs that reflects their cultural identity. However, the application of the postcolonial lens alongside the Sikh perspective has revealed that the representation of Sikhs during the war identifies them as romanticised, feminised, demonised, exoticised and colonised subjects who remained repressed, enduring colonial oppression and suppression whilst displaced from their homeland and lived in a state of anxieties. It revealed that the colonial discourse controlled and fixed Sikh identities into a rigid colonial definition of a loyal colonial subject of the British Empire, which propagated Sikh identity as 'martial race', 'favoured sons', 'loyal supporters' and subservient colonial subjects who will 'fight and die as good warriors' whilst defending the British Empire. Sikhs as colonised Others had to experience the colonial rigidity and an unchanging disorder and degeneracy of the west, which they had to resist in the end. Therefore, Sikhs have agency which resisted the colonial oppression and, in the process, lost their faith in the British Raj.

This study shows that Sikh identity is complex and dynamic and is constantly on the move forming new identities as a process of shifting, accommodation and transformation. During the war, Sikhs occupied a liminal 'in-between' space which formed the basis of various transformations and formation of new identities. Kirpal's identity shifted many times, adapting to various situations he faced, starting from early days of joining the army in Lahore to his displacement in England, with further transformations when he joined the sapper unit where he moved twice. His move from England into Italy where he ultimately found himself in love at the Italian villa where, as well as shifting between disparate cultural experiences his identity is transformed by each cross-cultural. Kirpal's identity changed from being a repressed person possessing a subservient identity that accepts stereotypical colonial discourse, to an identity that exhibited resistance that challenged marginalisation and portrayed anti-colonial resistance to fight for his homeland. Kirpal's love for Hana also transcends space and time as found towards the end of the novel, where he is united in memories in an inseparable spiritual union that traverses national boundaries, which in turn, shows that love is eternal and cannot die as evident from Kirpal pursuing new routes to Canada. This confirms that the Sikh identity cannot

be thought in a simple, rigid or fixed way as it is always changing, forming new cultural routes driven by the needs and situation faced by Sikhs. In the next Chapter 2, I will show the impact of independence of India from the colonial rule in 1947 on the Sikh consciousness and identity, which would also provide some further insight on Kirpal's displaced position in India.

Ondaatje's adoption of various aspects of Sikh heritage and culture into the novel, such as emphasising the contemporary issues of a turban, Sikh articles of faith and places of religious significance, and unparalleled revealing of the spiritual experience of the Golden Temple, novel is creditable. However, he has also made an error in the account of Baba Budha Ji's *ber*<sup>49</sup> (Indian jujube) fruit tree, "A tree of superstitions, for hundred and fifty years old" that needs a correction to do with its naming (1992, p. 288). He has incorrectly named its association as 'Gujhaji' instead of the actual name of 'Baba Budha Ji', which might be a typo or a mistake (Gujhaji historically does not exist); however, sensitive religious information should be double checked during editing and corrected. Apart from this account of the tree, other related details of Sikh culture are expressed fittingly in the fiction.

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<sup>49</sup> The *ber* tree at the Golden Temple is associated with Baba Budha Ji, the first head priest of the Golden Temple (District Administration Amritsar, 2020), where he meditated whilst helping with the construction of gurdwara.

## Chapter 2: Moving Consciousness and Identity of Sikhs in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956)

*Consciousness of the bad is an essential prerequisite to the promotion of the good*  
– Khushwant Singh (1956, p. 157)

The previous chapter looked at how Ondaatje's *The English Patient* tracked the shifting identity of Sikhs at a key historical time of World War II. In this chapter, I focus on Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* to explore Sikh consciousness and identity during a specific period of 1947 in India when the colonial India gained independence from the British Raj which resulted in two sovereign nations – India and Pakistan. This novel, as Khushwant Singh states, provides insight into pain, anxieties and sufferings that came along in the form of communal riots of the Partition<sup>50</sup> between Muslims on one side in Pakistan and Sikhs and Hindus on the other in India was “precipitated by reports of the proposed division of the country into a Hindu India and a Muslim Pakistan” (1956, p. 7). It responds to the questions: How were Sikhs as minorities represented by the national culture of India after independence? What was the impact of Partition specifically on Sikhs? As a Sikh writer, Khushwant Singh, has explored such questions in the novel by highlighting the consciousness of the Sikh peasants of Punjab.

Sikh consciousness and identity, driven by the circumstances of Partition, were complex and dynamic. I will show that Sikhs remained marginalised and oppressed, and were appropriated by the government of India for its own gains. It portrayed them as rigid and reduced their identities. I will apply Frantz Fanon's concepts to show that the national consciousness of the independent India underrepresented Sikhs who desired a change in national culture where their voice as a minority is valued. Even though the boundaries of India as a nation was carved, the idea of nationhood for Sikhs was not fixed by, or reliant on, the newly created borders of the nation. Sikhs have agency and the ability to traverse beyond nations by exhibiting a transnational identity and depicting a consciousness that is beyond the nation of India.

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* is the first novel of the contemporary period in English written by a Sikh on the theme of partition, Sikh culture, Sikh identity and Sikh-

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<sup>50</sup>Partition refers to division of British India into two sovereign nations – India and Pakistan.

Muslim-Hindu relations that portray internal cultural differences that threatened national unity after independence. It was originally released entitled *Mano Majra* (1956). Khushwant Singh was born in 1915 in Hadali, Punjab (now in Pakistan) into a prosperous Sikh family but he migrated to India from Pakistan after partition, where he remained until his death aged 99 in 2014. His personal experience of the partition of India inspired him to write this novel, which was made into a film in 1998, and remains one of his most well-known novels of India. Khushwant Singh had to leave behind his ancestral birthplace in Pakistan when he migrated to India after partition. As he says below, Khushwant Singh was devastated by the communal riots:

The beliefs that I had cherished all my life were shattered. I had believed in the innate goodness of the common man. But the division of India had been accompanied by the most savage massacres known in the history of the country... I had believed that we Indians were peace-loving and non-violent, that we were more concerned with matters of the spirit, while the rest of the world was involved in the pursuit of material things. After the experience of the autumn of 1947, I could no longer subscribe to this view. I became an angry middle-aged man, who wanted to shout his *disenchantment with the world* (Singh, 1964, emphasis added).

Khushwant Singh provides his ‘disenchantment with the world’ through a sober examination of the independence of India on 15 August 1947, India’s national culture, the communal conflict of the Partition and the consciousness of Sikhs during Partition in *Train to Pakistan*. Set in the small fictional village known as Mano Majra, on the Indian border of the newly divided Punjab bordering Pakistan, which was inhabited by the Sikh peasants, the novel begins a week or so after the independence of India and ends in September 1947. Mano Majra has seventy families with equal population of Sikhs and Muslims but only one Hindu family of Lala Ram Lal, who is a moneylender. The Sikhs own all the land in the village whilst Muslims are their tenants, but they get on well with each other. The people of Mano Majra are living peacefully together after the Partition “as if nothing had happened” and because there is “[n]o communal trouble” people are somewhat unaware that the “British have left and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan” (1956, pp. 22, 23, 25). The plot depicts independent India under the control of a corrupt and bureaucratic federal government. One of its central male characters is Hukum Chand, a Hindu in his fifties who is a “magistrate and deputy commissioner of the district”, an important government official involved in the government of the Punjab (1956, p. 21). He uses his power and authority to maintain law and order and has

control of the village and its surrounding areas of the district and is referred to by people as the “Government” (1956, pp. 32, 44). His accomplice is an unnamed Hindu police sub-inspector, in charge of the police station of the neighbouring fictional city of Chundunnugger. The main plot begins during one August night when the moneylender becomes a victim of dacoity; Lala Ram Lal is murdered by a Sikh dacoit Malli and his gang. One of the central protagonists is Juggut Singh, famously known as Jugga, a young Sikh peasant from Mano Majra and a “son of the dacoit Alam Singh who was hanged two years ago” (1956, p. 26). Jugga is muscular, six-foot four and known as a “badmash” or “a criminal” and although people are intimidated by him, he keeps his own village protected and is in love with a Muslim lady (1956, pp. 17, 60). He suffers the consequences of his father’s notorious legacy in dacoity and his criminal past when he was with Malli’s gang of dacoits. Since he was not at home at the night of the murder, Jugga gets arrested by the police even though they feel that it is unlike Jugga to have killed Lala Ram Lal. The other central character in the novel is a twenty-seven-year-old Sikh man, Iqbal Singh, a passionate social worker of the People’s Party of India, who immediately following his return from England starts to propagate peace in the village. Iqbal is accommodated at the gurdwara by Bhai Meet Singh who is a Sikh priest in his sixties. The head of the village is a respectful Sikh man, Banta Singh, “a modest hard-working peasant like the rest of his fellow villagers... [who is a] collector of revenue – a lambardar” and has an “official status ... since government officials and the police dealt with him” (1956, p. 74). Imam Baksh is another side character, a Muslim and the head of the Mosque, who represents the voice of Muslims of Mano Majra. Iqbal’s sudden arrival in the village the day after the murder raises concerns so he also gets arrested the following morning along with Jugga by the police. The plot which revolves around the effects of partition and post-independence on the previously peaceful village, highlights motives of the corrupt national government of India that oppressed the villagers and created communal conflicts between Sikhs and Muslims in order to uproot Muslims to Pakistan, and in addition, it reflects the national consciousness and culture of Sikhs at Mano Majra.

### **The ambivalence of the independence of India in Sikhs**

The consciousness and identity of Sikhs in Mano Majra remained ambivalent towards the independence of India, its nationalist achievements, and the national culture. This suggests an important critique that concerns the achievement of Indian independence, that it was suitable only for the rich and educated, who are generally referred to in the novel as the “bourgeois”

class, and exclusive for the “proletarian” society (1956, p. 50). The social worker, Iqbal Singh, felt that “the Englishmen have gone but the *rich Indians* have taken their place”; this implies that colonialism has been replaced by the supposed ‘bourgeois’ class of elite Indians (1956, p. 59, emphasis added). The impact of the struggle for independence on the lives of ordinary people of Mano Majra is underlined through the use of the collective voice, ‘we’, by Banta Singh, head of Mano Majra in statement that represents Sikhs as shown below:

What is all this about Pakistan and Hindustan? *We* live in this little village and know nothing ...why did the English leave? ...*Freedom must be a good thing*. But what will *we* get out of it? Educated people...will get the jobs the English had. Will *we* get more lands or more buffaloes? (1956, pp. 48, 59, emphasis added).

Although the popular view of the Sikh peasants is that ‘freedom must be a good thing’, at the time they are unsure of what freedom means politically and economically for them. This ambivalence towards independence that occurred due to the Partition led to the association of independence and freedom to the massacre and “destruction” of the Partition (1956, p. 50). As Banta Singh says, “[a]ll *we* hear is kill, kill. The only ones who enjoy freedom are thieves, robbers and cutthroats” (1956, p. 50). He further proclaims that they “[w]e were better off under the British. At least there was security” (1956, p. 50). This shows that in comparison to their present feeling of being anxious of the Partition, Sikhs felt better represented during the colonial British Raj of India. Imam Baksh being the collective voice of Muslims of Mano Majra felt that “[f]reedom is for the educated people who fought for it. *We* were slaves of the English, now *we* will be slaves of the educated Indians – or the Pakistanis” (1956, p. 48, emphasis added). This further emphasises that the concept of India and Pakistan as partitioned independent nations is disempowering for both the Sikhs and the Muslims of Mano Majra. In *The Wretched of The Earth*, Frantz Fanon discusses the role of colonialism in breeding a particular kind of middle class in colonised countries. He states that:

National consciousness, instead of being the *all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people*, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the *mobilization of the people*, will be in any case *only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty* of what it might have been. (Fanon, 1963, p. 148, emphasis added).

The national consciousness of the Sikhs in Mano Majra was ‘only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty’, which created a void waiting to be filled with the desired meaning of ‘what

independence might have been' for the Sikhs, for "[i]ndependence meant little or nothing to these people" (1956, p. 48). For the Sikhs, this ambivalence of the independent India stems from the fact that there was no 'all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people' in the ideology of the new nation, which resulted in the construction of India failing to represent the innermost hopes of Sikhs of Punjab. Moreover, that Sikhs are asking "[w]hat is happening" regarding the independence of India, and that they 'know nothing' about its achievements, is evidenced in the narrator's comment: "no one in Mano Majra even knows that the British have left and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan" (1956, pp. 48, 26). This also shows that India was partitioned unexpectedly and abruptly without considering Sikhs. The national consciousness and national culture of India in the novel, is one that is conceived by the 'rich' and the 'educated' class. This in turn, shows that India is a nation that was imagined only for the 'bourgeois' class, who took power and control of India from the English colonialists. Therefore, as a newly independent nation, India was damaged from the onset by the government that remained in power; education, and class, and did little to accommodate the Sikhs of the proletarian society of Punjab. For example, in the novel, after the independence is achieved, Iqbal is sceptical on whether the "Congress government" in power emerging from "the bourgeois revolution could be turned into a proletarian one" and he feels that "[t]he stage had not arrived. The proletariat was indifferent to political freedom for Hindustan and Pakistan" which shows that the ordinary people of India were excluded by the bourgeoisie from the ideology of the nation (1956, pp. 49, 50). Fanon articulates that for "the national bourgeoisie" to be successful, it must "create the conditions necessary for the development of a large-scale proletariat, to mechanize agriculture, and finally to make possible the existence of an authentic national culture"; this is missing in the newly formed India (Fanon, 1963, p. 175). The 'authentic national culture' portrayed by Khushwant Singh puts the very imagined nation of India in question on whether it considered the diversity of a 'whole people' of India that it tried to homogenise. Its narrative of the people certainly does not represent the nation as a whole since the nation as a perfect ideal is neither completely accepted nor rejected by the Sikhs of Mano Majra, who struggled to understand how the new nation would work for them when their voice and concerns were not represented into the construction of the independent nation.

Sikhs remained ambivalent about the newly formed India, whose national culture underrepresented and regressed Sikhs. The educated Sikhs were seeking a reform of national culture after the independence of India as visible in Iqbal. Frantz Fanon states:

The living expression of the nation is the *moving consciousness* of the whole of the people; ... The collective building up of a destiny ... Otherwise there is *anarchy*, *repression*, and the *resurgence of tribal parties* and *federalism*. The national government, if it wants to be national, ought to govern by the people and for the people, for the outcasts and by the outcasts. (Fanon, 1963, pp. 204-205, emphasis added).

In relation to Fanon's statement above, Khushwant Singh allows us to experience the 'moving consciousness' of Sikhs and shows that the national government of newly independent India failed to represent Sikhs as its citizens and the independent India as a nation did not work towards a collective building up of their destiny. Because the government disempowered Sikhs as minorities resulted in anarchy, repression, 'resurgence of the tribal parties' and federalism after independence which impacted collective Sikh identity.

The reader of the novel witnesses 'disorderly riots and 'savage massacres' of the Partition, depicted as "floating carcasses" of murdered bodies in Satluj river, the arrival of "ghost trains", "trains with corpses", "train with more corpses" and each train bringing a "promise of worse horrors than the last one", first arriving from Lahore in Pakistan to Amritsar in India (1956, pp. 131, 73 – 74, 24, 133, 109, 123). This shows that the newly formed federal government of nations were not able to control the killings. The narrator comments on the "division of the country into a Hindu India and a Muslim Pakistan", which signifies that India as a nation was constructed for Hindus whilst Pakistan was for Muslims only. As much as this created cultural differences and divisions amongst people, the minorities such as Sikhs who stayed behind in India suffered from the ambivalence of the independence leading to rising anxieties. The Sikh homeland of Punjab was split into unequal halves; the larger western Punjab was given to Pakistan whilst the smaller eastern Punjab remained in India. Since over "ten million people" displaced from their homes travelled across nations to find a new home and belonging, this gave rise to large scale migrations and displacements of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs (1956, p 7). The Sikhs who lived and traced their ancestry in the Punjab of Pakistan became repressed and displaced forever into the Punjab of India to establish a new home and belonging. This gave rise to the 'repression' of Sikh refugees and the emergence of the new Sikh diaspora of the Partition in India, represented in the novel by the "arrival of forty or fifty Sikh refugees" from Pakistan who were sheltered at the gurdwara of Mano Majra (1956, p. 91). As I discuss later in this chapter, the resurgence of the Sikhs is visible when they take the matters in their own hands after remembering their oppression from the past by Muslim

invasions of India. The Sikhs “retaliated by attacking a Muslim refugee train and sending it across the border with over a thousand corpses...wrote on the engine “Gift to Pakistan!” (1956, p. 23). This shows that although torn between the margins of core Hindu and Muslims due to splitting up of the colonial India on religious grounds, Sikhs were active and performative to the events of Partition.

This Sikhs’ ambivalence about the independence of India impacted their consciousness and identity such that it kept them in a liminal state, as evidenced by Iqbal Singh, who suffers from the consequences of liminal state of anxieties. Iqbal’s identity remains within the agonising polarities of the ‘in-between’ existence which kept him ambivalent of the achieved independence of India. For example, on one hand, Iqbal thought independence is “a step forward” which has brought “political freedom” from the colonial British Raj (1956, p. 48). However, on the other hand, he felt that independence has not provided any “economic” freedom to the people of Mano Majra who would rather “remain slaves all [their] lives” – first as colonised subjects of the colonial Raj and now of the Indian authorities (1956, p. 48). So, he strongly feels that there is still a need “to take the next step” of independence towards economic reform such that “freedom [would] mean something” for everyone in India, including “[m]ore land, more buffaloes” for “the peasants and workers” of Mano Majra, which reflects the ‘moving consciousness’ of the Sikhs after independence (1956, pp. 48 – 49). Critic Jaspal Kaur Singh emphasises that “Iqbal, the modern, foreign-returned, western-educated, circumcised, Euro-interpellated (Ashcroft et al. 233), clean-shaven, shorthaired *mona* Sikh (241), symbolizes the altered ethos of the Sikh nation” (Singh, 2020, p. 73). This altered ethos of the Sikh nation is visible in Iqbal whose view of attaining economic freedom is through actively fighting to change the newly formed corrupt “bania Congress government” and proposes to “[g]et rid of the princes and the landlords” and the policing system which “instead of safeguarding the citizen, maltreats [them] ...and lives on corruption and bribery” (1956, p. 39). He shows his complete dissatisfaction with the government in power and feels that “criminals are not born ...[but] made by hunger, want and injustice” of the nation (1956, p. 43). Consequently, his desire for a “proletarian revolution” makes him feel that a new political reform is required for “stopping exploitation by the rich, and abolishing landlords” in order to “get people more food, clothing, comfort” (1956, pp. 50, 39). This shows that the independence of India did not incorporate the national moving consciousness of Sikhs; as seen through Iqbal, rather than being celebratory of the achieved independence, Sikhs were looking at bringing further reform and change to the national culture. Even though Iqbal is conscious that change

is required to rebuild India, he remains passive because of being repressed by the government authorities (as I will show later on), therefore, he is unable to shift his identity towards bringing a political reform; this keeps, him within the polarities of ‘in-between’ borderline existence.

Repressed Iqbal felt that he was “not a leader” as he was unable to cope with the challenges imposed by the government and therefore wished that [his political party] had sent someone else to Mano Majra” (1956, p. 51). The consequence of this is that Iqbal felt “lonely and depressed”, “fatuous to suggest” any change, and therefore he occupied a painful ‘in-between’ position, where he felt “[w]hat could he – one little man – do in this enormous impersonal land of four hundred million” (1956, p. 50). This feeling kept him pessimist and despondent, which led him to resort to excessive drinking of alcohol. This had an impact on Iqbal’s Sikh consciousness, affecting his Sikh concept of *seva*<sup>51</sup> which he desired to carry out through his social work but was unable to fulfil because anxieties made him both socially and politically inactive at Mano Majra. Though he had new ideas for rescuing the Sikh subjects from their victimhood of the Partition, he was unable to become a leader who could mobilise the community to agitate for further reforms after independence. Iqbal “mimick[s] the author’s own inaction during the Partition violence” that represents both Iqbal Singh and Khushwant Singh were “suspended in an in-between space” of anxieties which kept them within the liminality of their borderline existence after the independence of India (Singh, 2020, p. 75). Would Iqbal be able to shift his identity from this painful ‘in-between space’? I examine this later on, but first I would like to explore the repression of Sikhs by the national culture of the independent India.

### **National culture and the repression of the Sikhs**

The living expression of India as an independent nation not only lacked a government that was national but also a national culture that failed to express the ‘moving consciousness of the whole of the people’ or showed any signs of working towards ‘collective building up of a destiny’. The narrative shows that India as a nation has Othered displaced refugee Sikhs arriving in country by keeping them repressed rather than accommodating them. That the Sikh peasants of Mano Majra are either feminised or hyper-masculinised leading them to be treated as ‘outcasts’ whilst the governmental authorities are interested in uprooting Muslims against their own will from India into Pakistan at any cost. It was the federal government of India’s

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<sup>51</sup> See chapter 1 where I have discussed *seva*

exploitation of people for its own gain, which led to the repression of minorities such as Sikhs during and after Partition in India.

The government authorities of Mano Majra and the villagers are ambivalent towards the Sikh refugees arriving after being displaced from Pakistan, which results in the repression of refugees in India. For example, on one side, the Sikhs of Mano Majra welcomed the Sikh refugees, gave them “shelter” and felt that it was their “sacred duty” or *seva* to help them, however, on the other side, they treated refugee Sikhs as “strangers coming from Pakistan”, as “outsiders” who will “do something which will bring a bad name on the village”, which perceived them as ‘Others’ (1956, pp.115, 117). This ‘Othering’ of refugee Sikhs by the Indian society depicted refugees as different even though they looked the same and belonged to the same Sikh faith; this highlights that refugee Sikhs were repressed<sup>52</sup> by their own Sikh community. In the novel, the district government of Punjab of India, Hukum Chand, is anxious of the arrival of Sikh refugees and declares that “[t]hey may start the killing in Mano Majra” which shows that refugee Sikhs were repeatedly demonised in India as ‘Others’ (1956, p. 90). The demonisation of the displaced refugee Sikhs stemmed from the stereotypical communal perception that the Sikhs who have been victimised by Muslims in Pakistan “through massacres and have lost relations” are likely to disrupt peace in India by retaliating against the Muslims there, in order to avenge and salvage their own victimhood (1956, p. 91). In *Memory and Negotiations of Identity in Train to Pakistan*, critic Giuseppe De Riso comments on “the effects of ‘rumours’ on the workings of collective memory” (Riso, 2018, p.150). He further highlights that

at the time of Partition countless rumours of acts of violence perpetrated by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs to each other circulated uncontrollably through the population, spreading sentiments of fear which created a peculiar short-circuit in the relationship between past events and the future which legitimised violence in the present. (Riso, 2018, p.150).

It was these acts of spreading rumours by all parties that attempted to fix the identities of the refugee Sikhs of Partition by reducing them to the singularity of criminals and murderers, perceiving them as “foreigners”, rather than accepting them into the Indian society (Riso, 2018, p. 151). This resulted in the refugee Sikhs becoming anxious of their new surroundings where they felt unwelcomed and repressed. The Sikh refugees were not only displaced from home,

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<sup>52</sup> This repression would have been experienced by *The English Patient's* Kirpal Singh in chapter 1 who would have been considered as a refugee Sikh too after being displaced from his home in Lahore into India.

but their families were victimised by Muslims in Pakistan, so they arrived in India after losing some of their family members to the massacre in Pakistan. Rather than understanding the displaced position of the refugee Sikhs, attempts were being made to fix their identities into some rigid structure. It reflects the newly independent nations federal government's inability to save the innocent lives during Partition, where Hindus and Sikhs remained targeted by Muslims in Pakistan, and vice versa.

The federalism of India ended up facilitating corruption in the national government of "Mr Nehru" in Delhi who was more interested in delivering "fine speeches in the assembly...magnifying their egos" and laying the "blame" on regional magistrates (1956, pp. 160, 25). This in turn had an impact on the Sikhs of Mano Majra who were marginalised by the government authorities. This is evident when Hukum Chand, to spread fear, demonises refugee Sikhs as an attempt of appropriating their position for his own gains; he wants to evacuate Muslims from Mano Majra. For example, Hukum Chand spreads fear of the refugee Sikhs and informs the police officers that "we must get the Muslims [of Mano Majra] out of this area whether they like it or not. The sooner the better" (1956, p. 91). He concocts a plan entailing spreading rumours in the village for the "peaceful evacuation" of Muslims from Mano Majra (1956, p. 25). Hukum Chand is "uneasy about his own role" as a magistrate, for he feels unsupported by the central government and worries that "the government will blame" his position of authority if "the killings" took place at Mano Majra (1956, pp. 160, 25). He feels that he "must maintain law and order" at any cost to ensure that his own position as a magistrate stays intact since "where there was killing or burning the government suspended or transferred" magistrates (1956, p. 25). This shows that "tacitly encouraged by governmental forces" of Delhi and he resorts to misusing his regional powers and authority for his own personal gains in order to avoid getting himself suspended or transferred (Riso, 2018, p. 152). Hukum Chand reflects on his predecessors who became rich from bribery, corruption and illicit means and advocates taking bribes "within reasons" as "everyone does that" (1956, p. 24). He refers to the central government of Delhi for making noise to curb corruption whereas they themselves do the contrary, which shows hypocrisy and failure of the national government after the independence of India. For example, Hukum Chand tells the police inspector that "all these Gandhi disciples are minting money", which implies corruption and the lack of confidence in the new government (1956, p. 24). The sub-inspector states, "[w]hat do the Gandhi-caps in Delhi know about the Punjab? What is happening on the other side in Pakistan does not matter to them" (1956, p. 24). This shows that the Indian national government kept silent and did not

do much about the killings of Hindu and Sikh refugees by Muslim mobs at Sheikhpura and Gujranwala in Pakistan where the “Pakistan police and the army took part in the killings” (1956, p. 24). These pitfalls of federalism are further visible in rhetoric questions, “[w]here was the power? What were the people in Delhi doing?”, which imply that though Hukum Chand has regional power within his district, he suffers from the oppression of the central government which holds and controls the power (1956, p. 160). This oppressive government silently ignored the events of Partition, leaving the incompetent regional magistrates to resolve the massacres of the border.

Jaspal Kaur Singh states that “[s]ince the Partition, Sikhs, within Punjab and within India, have inhabited an *uneasy space*, as religious minorities and as “traitors” who had supported the British during the first Independence Movement of 1857” (Singh, 2020, p. 75, *emphasis added*). This ‘uneasy space’ of Sikhs, as a consequence of colonialism, is clearly visible in the *Train to Pakistan* where the Sikhs of Mano Majra are observed as ‘traitors’, portraying them as Others, different from the Hindus; this leads to their victimisation and repression in their own homeland of Punjab. This Othering stems from the Hindus’ ambivalence about Sikh identity as represented by Hukum Chand and sub-inspectors who belonged to the Hindu community of India. For on one side, the sub-inspector and Hukum Chand talk about the resurgence of Sikhs at Amritsar against Muslims during Partition as “the only way to stop killings... Man for man, woman for woman, child for child” (1956, p. 23). He compares them to “*our* RSS boys [who] beat up Muslim gangs in all the cities”, which perceives Sikhs as similar to the “militant Hindu nationalism” of RSS<sup>53</sup> who Hukum Chand considered as ‘our’, representing the collective voice of Hindus (1956, p. 23, *emphasis added*; Froerer, 2019, p.9). This shows that on the one hand, the dominant Hindu culture was fine when Sikhs and RSS acted in similar fashion towards Muslims and were perceived as India’s patriotic militants. On the other hand, Hukum Chand and sub-inspector are shocked that Sikhs and Muslims of Mano Majra are peacefully living together after the Partition and frustrated that Sikhs were not getting rid of Muslims from their village (unlike RSS), which depicts Sikhs as ‘traitors’ of the independent nation. This underlines the notion of a colonial discourse<sup>54</sup> since Sikhs are being fixed as ‘population of degenerate types’ who have ‘lost their manliness’, as the narrator states below:

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<sup>53</sup> RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) philosophy, a right-wing Hindu nationalist group that spreads the ideology of Hindutva

<sup>54</sup> Similar to how British colonisers fixed Sikh identity in WWII that I discussed in chapter 1

Sikhs are *not doing their share*. They have *lost their manliness*. They just talk big. Here we are on the border with Muslims living in Sikh villages as if nothing had happened. (1956, p. 23)

This reflects the expectation of Hindus from Sikhs during Partition which was to function like RSS towards getting rid of Muslims from India; those Sikhs who didn't do so were Othered and portrayed as feminised or hypo-masculinised 'traitors' of the nation in the society, also perceived as 'not doing their share'. This represents attempts made by Hindus to redefine Sikh identity in their own terms, either by accepting and fixing them as hyper-masculinised 'militants' for supporting Hindu nationalism or rejecting and reducing them to 'traitors', which shows the 'uneasy space' Sikhs encountered leading to their marginalisation and repression in India after independence. The Othering of Sikhs is also visible when the sub-inspector perceives Sikhs as culturally different and inferior to Hindus, as "we Hindus are not like that. We cannot really play this stabbing game" (1956, p. 23). This demonised Sikhs as militants in the society, which in turn, resulted in constructing cultural differences between Sikhs and Hindus. Homi Bhabha states that "[t]he representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 3). This representation of Sikh identity by Hindu sub-inspectors highlights attempts made to fix the communal identity of Sikhs in order to perceive them as socially and ethnically different from the dominant groups of the society in their own homeland. However, Sikh identity is complex and dynamic and cannot be perceived by such generalised, subjective, demonised or pre-given perspectives of the dominant culture, society or by the fixed tablet of colonialism, as visible in the main Sikh characters of the novel.

Iqbal is a complex subject of difference, and his Sikh identity is both complex and dynamic, for the complexities exist because of his past and upbringing, which influences him in the present. Iqbal was born a Sikh, "belong[ed] to district Jhelum – now in Pakistan". He moved to "England" where he got educated and spent many years of his life, before he recently returned to India with a desire to bring social and political change in Punjab (1956, pp. 51, 151). His background constructs him as a twice displaced diasporic subject, whose sense of home and belonging is complicated. He was first displaced from his birth "home...in Jhelum district" of Pakistan to a new cultural location of England where he was exposed to foreign upbringing (1956, p. 41). Now he is displaced from England into the newly partitioned India, arriving in Mano Majra where he is trying to establish his new sense of home and belonging but nonetheless finding it difficult to do so. Iqbal's multiple displacements reflect the dynamic

aspect of his Sikh identity, which shows that he has an ability to shift from one cultural location to another, which in turn, identifies him with Bhabha's borderline subject who experiences the 'living on the borderlines of the present'; this makes him a contemporary diasporic Sikh subject<sup>55</sup>. Additionally, the fact that he has recently returned to India reflects his shifted Sikh consciousness towards the Sikh idea of *seva*, which in this context is a way of bringing social change to the Indian national culture and society. So, national culture and independence work for the whole of people, which shows dynamic aspect of his identity, as evident when he says "after seeing the world...one feels how backward we are and one wants to do things about it. So I do social work" (1956, p. 38). This implies that he sees India as an incomplete nation which he refers to as 'bourgeois' society and desires to genuinely bring change in his return to India as a native intellectual from abroad. However, Iqbal's return journey<sup>56</sup> has brought new challenges for him to cope within India mainly around attending to corruption that came with the federalism of newly independent nation. This becomes the cause of his repression.

As discussed previously, Iqbal suffers from the ambivalence of the independence of India where he is unable to shift his Sikh identity towards a social reform for the people, which kept him within the painful liminality of his 'in-between' space. The main reason for his anxieties stemmed from one of the biggest challenges that Iqbal faced upon his return to India for he was not able to fit into the social and cultural structure of his own country because he was not only perceived as Other, but was also bestowed with various identifications by the community and authorities, such as an "unorthodox" Sikh, an "agitator" and a "stranger", which kept Iqbal repressed (1956, pp. 152, 70, 92, 93, 36, 60, 61, 110). Although he has western education he subverts its importance, and he is singled out in the society because of his diasporic Sikh identity. Throughout the novel he is perceived as a person "belong[ing] to a different class" of western educated intellectuals, who are different from the natives of Mano Majra so he doesn't fit in the village (1956, p. 37). He is the only "Sikh without long hair and beard" in Mano Majra whilst everyone else wears a turban in accordance with the Sikh faith (1956, p. 152). The disapproval by his own Sikh community that "left Iqbal with an uneasy conscience" was due to his appearance which portrayed him as a person who belonged to an 'unorthodox' background (1956, p. 152). Critically, he gets framed by the federal authorities as a Muslim because of combination of various factors, first, his name, 'Iqbal', is "one of the few names common to the three communities" (Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs); second, his

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<sup>55</sup> Similar to Kirpal Singh of chapter 1

<sup>56</sup> See chapter 3 which provides impact of return journeys on Sikh identity of repressed diasporic subjects of 1984 Sikh genocide.

birthplace of Jhelum (now in Pakistan), third, he is unexpectedly circumcised (the sub-inspector finds out after he is frisked at police station), which constructs the “likelihood of [him] being [a] Muslim” (1956, p. 41). So, “[c]ircumcised, therefore Muslim”, becomes the cause of his Othering and repression at Mano Majra (1956, p. 155). His name created “distrust and anxiety” about his identity, for he was perceived as “literally belong[ing] to any community, which made it impossible, somehow paradoxically, for anyone to trust him. He could not be placed with certainty in any reassuring grid; framed neither as friend, nor foe” and therefore he remained an outcast, an Other and a ‘stranger’ in his own acclaimed nation (Riso, 2018, p. 159). This resonates with Caryl Phillips warning about the emotional consequences of living in such a displaced state where one experiences the feeling “of, and not of, this place” which results in “high anxiety” of belonging (Phillips, 2001, pp. 1 – 4). Khushwant Singh allows us to experience this feeling ‘of, and not of’ India in Iqbal who wants to fit into his home country after returning from abroad; he brings social reform but at the same time he is unable to fit in India, which creates high anxieties in him. Furthermore, the federal authorities take advantage of Iqbal’s displaced position and identity crises that came from his birth name. Even though “his innocence” was confirmed, they arrested him on suspicion of Lala Ram Lal’s murder and took him to the police station where he is “forced to show his sex to prove his religious affiliation” of being a Sikh (1956, p. 58; Riso, 2018, p. 159). Iqbal confronts the authorities against false accusations, arrest and police mishandling but because of his “belligerent attitude” he is labelled as an ‘agitator’ by authorities, who also become apprehensive of falsely arresting him since they know that “[s]ome sort of case would have to be made up against him” which highlights his exploitation by the government (1956, p. 58). However, when authorities discovered that Iqbal happened to be circumcised, they misused and abused his unchangeable biological factor for their own gain by devising a plan to frame Iqbal for the murder of Lala Ram Lal and bringing unrest to the village. Hukum Chand’s immediate problem was to save his official reputation from communal riots by uprooting Muslims from Mano Majra to Pakistan and “he would do that in any way he could” (1956, p. 93). So, significantly, Hukum Chand redefines Iqbal’s Sikh identity from “Iqbal Singh” to “Mohammed Iqbal”, labelling him as a Muslim of the “Muslim League”<sup>57</sup> who killed Lala Ram Lal, spreading rumours in the village to trigger Sikhs towards losing faith in Muslims, and “persuad[ing]...Mano Majra Sikhs to let their Muslims go” (1956, pp. 37, 105, 110, 92). This signifies the repression of Iqbal’s identity and the exploitation of federal power by the

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<sup>57</sup> Muslim League refers to a Muslim political party who was behind the idea of Pakistan

government authorities during Partition. The authorities also repressed Iqbal's confrontational attitude due to his unavoidable body mark as the authorities frightened him that they would inform "Sikh mob" about him (1956, p. 148). Once this was done, the "Sikh mob", associating him with a Muslim Leaguer<sup>58</sup>, would "kill" him immediately (1956, p. 148). In the circumstances, therefore, Iqbal had no choice but to remain quiet, suppressed, and a repressed subject of the federal government of India. This shows that Iqbal's position at Mano Majra and his diasporic Sikh identity is repressed, fixed and abused by the authorities who transform "a minor error into a major investment" for Hukum's Chand's gains, which shows justification for the federal government of India construction of a political discourse that resonates with the colonial discourse (1956, p. 93). This was the very reason why Iqbal, on his return journey to India, became suspended in the 'in-between' space where he continued to remain repressed.

Similar to Iqbal, Jugga's Sikh position at Mano Majra is complicated, such that he suffers the consequences of "monolithic fixed" identities constructed by his past (Bhabha, 2004, p. 4). Jugga is subconsciously repressed, and others, including the governmental authorities and the villagers of Mano Majra, fix his Sikh identity as a "criminal", "a 'number ten'", a "badmash" (gangster), "a man of bad character" (1956, pp. 59, 42, 59, 147, 17, 20, 56, 60, 61, 71, 92, 98, 99, 100, 110, 120, 146, 147, 160). As discussed earlier, he is a victim of his ancestral past where his father held a notorious legacy in dacoity in Mano Majra, which surfaced in his own criminal past when he involved himself with Malli's gang of dacoits. Since his father passed away in 1945, two years before independence in 1947, Jugga left dacoity and was on the mend. Whereas he is no longer part of any gangs, because of his inescapable criminal past, Jugga is still identified as a criminal or *badmash* (gangster). This becomes the cause of the ambivalence about his Sikh identity, which leads to his Othering and repression at Mano Majra. He is seen as a protector of the village who keeps it protected from the dangers of dacoity as "no dacoit dared come to Mano Majra", and Muslims feel safe with him in the village for "no one dares said a word against the Muslims" (1956, pp. 42, 2). When Jugga was in dacoity, he kept his own village safe from other dacoits and also never robbed from his own village which he considered his home; so, Jugga was the saviour of the village in that sense, and he knew that no one would have "dared to rob and kill in Mano Majra" because of his presence there (1956, p. 71). Therefore, he is perceived as the "district's bravest man", "a big brave man", which constructs Jugga's identity of a hyper-masculinised Sikh (1956, p. 149). However, Jugga's Sikh identity is Othered because he is portrayed as the only bad character in

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<sup>58</sup> An individual who belonged to a Muslim League party

Mano Majra, a criminal, a gangster who has “crime in his blood” which kept the villagers and the authorities anxious of him (1956, p. 43). Jugga’s Othering haunts him so much so that in accordance with the society and authorities who have fixed his identity to a criminal, he (unconsciously) considers himself a gangster even though he has mended his ways out of dacoity in the present. For example, he refers to himself in the present with his pre-fixed past identity as “I am a badmash. All governments put me in jail” (1956, p. 60). This shows that Jugga sees himself within the fixity of a *badmash*, who aligned to the government’s fixed definition for him, should be jailed. Therefore, Jugga’s identity, rigid and fixed to his inescapable past, projects him as a *badmash*, creates fear in the people about him, and results in the authorities’ imposition of a restraining order on him such that he is “forbidden...to leave the village after sunset” regardless of the fact that he has mended his ways and reports himself daily to *lambardar* (1956, p. 16). This signifies the ambivalence about Jugga’s Sikh identity, wherein it is reduced to either a criminal or a hyper-masculinised Sikh saviour of the village depending on perceptions.

Jugga’s Sikh identity is complex and dynamic which reflects that he has an ability to transform himself. For example, the transformational aspect of Jugga’s identity is visible because he has shifted away from his criminal past as a step towards mending his Sikh consciousness and therefore no longer associates with dacoity, which highlights his dynamic Sikh identity. The transformed Jugga has shifted into cross-cultural love for Noora, a young Muslim lady who is a daughter of weaver Imam Baksh (also a mullah of the mosque). Their love poses a new challenge as their relationship is considered a taboo in both the Sikh and Muslim communities, so they both keep it a secret and meet covertly in farming “fields” in the evenings for fear of being caught. (1956, p. 16). Jugga finds himself in the new ‘in-between’ existence where on one hand he is madly in love with Nooran who he “has promised to marry” but on the other hand he is aware that neither his widowed mother nor the Sikh community would approve of Nooran due to the cultural differences (1956, p. 120). Additionally, that Nooran’s Muslim community would reject her too which creates anxieties in both of them. Jugga remained in his painful ‘in-between’ existence of love, where he had to secretly meet Nooran in the evenings. As well, he had restraining orders that restricted him to leave his house in the evenings, which made things more difficult as he could only meet Nooran in the evenings; this created further anxieties in him. When Nooran is concerned about their love getting exposed, Jugga reassures her that “[n]o one in Mano Majra can raise his eyebrows at you and get away from Jugga. I am not a badmash for nothing” (1956, p. 20). This implies that

Jugga's demonised social Sikh identity benefits him in the present, for whiles word has spread out about their love in some villagers no one dares to make it a public affair; therefore, their love is kept secret from each other's widowed parents.

The transformation in Jugga's identity from dacoity to love highlights a shifted sense of identity that allowed Jugga to care for Nooran instead of dacoity, whilst ignoring everything else around him including his own repression that stemmed as a consequence of his in-between existence. For example, Jugga gets falsely arrested on suspicion of Lala Ram Lal's murder because he violated the restraining order by not being at home at the night of the murder as he was at a secret rendezvous with Noora. Jugga becomes the victim of his 'in-between' position where he could not tell police authorities that he was with Nooran, as it had to be kept a secret from his mother; therefore, he simply hands himself over to the police, who put him in jail reminding him of previous tortures in order to attain further information on the murder. It was Malli (a Sikh dacoit from a neighbouring village in whose gang Jugga was part of in the past) who had looted and killed Lala Ram Lal, who also threw women's bangles over the wall of Jugga's house shouting, "Juggia! Wear these bangles and put henna on your palms", which Jugga's mother had noticed (1956, p. 15). This highlights attempts made by Malli in feminising Jugga's hyper-masculinised social Sikh identity by associating it with the objects worn by women, as a sign of disapproval of Jugga's cross-cultural relationship with Nooran after his departure from dacoity, and therefore reducing Jugga's machismo to a feminised identity to divert his attention from Nooran back into dacoity. Jaspal Kaur Singh expresses that Jugga as an "uneducated Sikh man is represented as simple and violent at the same time. He will not react against the own oppressors, but when it comes to the oppression of others, ...he will use physical force" (Singh, 2020, p. 76). The reason Jugga does not react to his own oppression is due to his painful 'in-between' existence where he cannot disclose his cross-cultural love of Nooran to anyone, which keeps him silent and repressed, allowing him to passively succumb to the authorities, which shows Jugga remained complicit of his own oppression. Jugga was experiencing the social consequences of being in a cross-cultural love with Nooran. When the authorities eventually arrest Malli, he ends up in the same jail as Jugga, and seeing Jugga there, Malli teases him about Nooran as "all Jugga could do now was to sleep with his weaver girl", which makes Jugga furious who "behaved like an animal" in his cell (1956, p. 103). Hukum Chand decides to release Malli in an attempt to create a conflict between Sikhs and Muslims of Mano Majra, and as Malli leaves jail, he teases Jugga once again about Nooran by asking for a "love message" to convey to her (1956, p. 106). This infuriates Jugga so much so that he

physically attacks Malli. This emphasises that Jugga was truly in love with Nooran and would do anything to be with her, including not allowing anyone say anything horrible about her, which reflects Jugga's shifted consciousness and identity towards his love for Nooran rather than dacoity.

It is clear that both Iqbal and Jugga hold painful 'in-between' positions in their own disparate ways, which keeps them repressed making them unable to shift their identities, even though they both possess dynamic Sikh identities and hold ability to shift painful existences as they have done in the past. What would it take for Jugga and Iqbal to shift their identities once again and stop their sufferings and oppressions of the authorities? It appears that the local government, which kept both Iqbal and Jugga locked away whilst released dacoit Malli for their own reasons of spreading rumours at Mano Majra against Muslims, is largely in control during the Partition. Hukum Chand informs the sub-inspector to also "send word to the commander of the Muslim refugee camp asking for trucks to evacuate Mano Majra Muslims", which shows that the mastermind behind controlling people during Partition is the local federal government who misused powers to expel Muslims out of India (1956, p. 92). After the head constable spreads rumours about Iqbal being a Muslim leaguer at Mano Majra, the villagers become anxious about the retaliation of Sikh refugees and the signs of communal clashes rapidly started unfolding. Bhai Meet Singh resists associating Iqbal as a Muslim by claiming that "the young man you arrested the other day is not a Mussulman. He is a Sikh – Iqbal Singh", a "shaven Sikh" who "does not smoke", wears "iron bangle on his wrist" and has "nothing to do with the murder... It was Jugga's enemy Malli", but he is ignored both by the government authorities and the villagers (1956, pp. 111, 114). This highlights that Bhai Meet Singh's Sikh identity is also made rigid by the community as someone who lacks authority and is therefore fixed to "a simple *bhai* of a temple" who should only "pray", portraying him a naive subaltern Sikh preacher, which he considered himself too (1956, pp. 111, 114). The consequence of this fixity is that Bhai Meet Singh's opinions are disregarded by everyone even though he is honest and often correct. He makes a lot of points that are truthful, but the government authorities deliberately ignore his voice. They publicly silence and ignore him, label him mute so that villagers ignore him too, actions that seem to fix his Sikh identity. Similar to the authorities who purposely silence him, the villagers who have known him for all their lives do not listen to his appeal either. This shows that Bhai Meet Singh is repressed, not only by the government but also by his own Sikh community, who consider him incapable of understanding current affairs. So ignored and neglected, he remains a subaltern. Hukum Chand's plan of framing

Muslims for killing Lala Ram Lal by spreading rumours worked in creating communal conflict between Sikhs and Muslims who were divided into two halves for the first time in the history of Mano Majra, which further impacted the moving consciousness of Sikhs at Mano Majra, as explored next.

### **Communal conflict and the moving consciousness of Sikhs**

The moving consciousness of Sikhs during the communal conflict in Mano Majra showed signs of ambivalence towards Muslims, and vice-versa, which highlights that both communities had established conflicting perceptions of each other's identities after inspector shared Hukum Chand's concocted plans. Muslims became ambivalent about the Sikhs, as on one side they considered Sikhs to be "brothers" but at the same time they also feared "atrocities committed by Sikhs on Muslims" during Partition (1956, pp. 117, 112). Muslims considered them "stranger[s] with an evil intent" because their "long hair and beard appeared barbarous", their "kirpan menacing anti-Muslim", and "[f]or the first time, the name Pakistan came to mean something to them – a refuge where there were no Sikhs" (1956, p. 112). This highlights attempts made by Muslims during Partition to undermine Sikh identity whom they perceived as the demonised Others and culturally different subjects. Conversely, the Sikhs became ambivalent towards Muslims, perceiving them both as enemies and friends. On one hand Sikhs considered Muslims as "their brothers", referring to them as "our brothers and sisters" whom they had have lived with them for generations, however, on the other hand, Sikhs found Muslims untrustworthy and made statements such as "[n]ever trust a Mussulman" because "Muslims had no loyalties", and that they are "pigs" (1956, pp. 23, 113, 117, 124, 114). Moreover, Sikhs remembered the collective Sikh past of the pre-colonial "Muslim period of Indian history" when innocent Sikh families, including "two of their Gurus", were executed by Mughals "for no other offence than refusing to accept Islam" (1956, p. 112). This shift in the consciousness of Sikhs towards remembering their past oppressions at the hands of Muslim invaders kept them angry in the present and caused their perception of the Muslims of Mano Majra as Others. Even though Muslims were Othered, Sikhs also felt protective towards them. For example, when Banta Singh reminds everyone that Sikh refugees "who may have lost their mothers or sisters" could retaliate against Muslims, the Sikh youth angrily proclaimed, "[w]e would like to see someone raise his little finger against our [Muslims] whilst we live!" (1956, p. 115). This clearly shows that the consciousness of the Sikhs was oscillating between multiple contrasting polarities by being ambivalent towards Muslims and ambivalent towards the Sikh

refugees at the same time: “sometimes...to kill Muslims. Sometimes...to kill refugees” (1956, p. 115). The latter statement from the novel highlights how Partition made the situation difficult and split the closed knit communities of Punjab displaying both anti-Muslim and anti-refugee rhetoric in their consciousness. However, at the end of the Sikh Muslim gathering, the collective consciousness of Sikhs shifted towards *seva* since providing shelter to refugees as “hospitality was...a sacred duty” of Sikhs (1956, p. 115). That said, *seva* also meant that Sikhs could not ask Muslims to leave the village as “[l]oyalty to fellow villager was above all other considerations” (1956, p. 115). In the novel, Iman Baksh who represented Muslims explained the moving consciousness of Muslims in the following statement:

What have we [Muslims] to do with Pakistan? We were born here. So were our ancestors. We have lived amongst you [Sikhs] as brothers. (1956, p. 117)

Muslims of Mano Majra clearly wanted to stay at Mano Majra, which they considered their home and the Sikhs as their brothers. While Muslims did not want to leave India, after Hukum Chand disturbed peace in the village, they were forced to move their consciousness towards Pakistan. The Sikhs suggested to Imam Baksh to go to the Muslim refugee camp for few days until the ongoing communal conflict subsides, and the Muslims packed their belongings and waited for the army to arrive in the morning to take them to the camp. However, upon arrival the army announced that all Muslims will be sent on a train to Pakistan from the camp. Although no one had anticipated this move it was Hukum Chand’s plan right from the beginning, which demonstrated the success of his consciousness of evacuating Muslims.

The Sikhs functioned together as a community at their local gurdwara, which united them to their Sikh heritage, culture, and collective past that played a key role in constructing Sikh community at Mano Majra. The gurdwara accommodated the moving consciousness of the Sikhs who visited it more often than before for collective healing after witnessing the arrival of trains with dead bodies of Sikhs and Hindus from Pakistan. Bhai Meet Singh as a head priest of the gurdwara was stretched with increased public appearance, where he became busy with conducting “prayers” or ‘*ardās*’, carrying out religious ceremonies and attending to the “congregation” whilst focusing on the needs of the victimised refugee Sikhs who were staying there (1956, pp.10, 11, 40, 46, 133, 134, 140, 141, 151, 158, 134). Janice Faye Protopapas articulates the power of ‘*ardās*’ in invoking collective Sikh history and memory when she states:

The *ardās*, the formal prayer recited communally at the closure of all Sikh rituals, may be considered the “*memory kernel*” of *Sikh theology and heritage* [which] encapsulates the 400-year history of Sikhism. Commencing with a delineation of its founding fathers, “Gurūs,” this invocation serves as a genealogy of Sikh gurus and martyrs in their *struggle for religious identity and freedom*. The words, ritually uttered, invoke a common Sikh heritage, acting as a vehicle to bring to mind a *collective memory* and unite the community to *a common past*. (Protopapas, 2011, p. 197, emphasis added)

The Sikhs around the world would relate to ‘*ardās*’ as it is a core aspect of all Sikh prayers that acts as a reminder of the Sikh history and culture; it is the collaborative participation to ‘*ardās*’ that reminded Sikhs of Mano Majra about the atrocities of pre-colonial Muslim invasions<sup>59</sup>. For example, the Sikh congregation reflected on the ongoing Partition violence and became increasingly anxious after they found out that “gurdwaras have been burned and people massacred” in Pakistan by Muslims, which particularly infuriated the younger generation of Sikhs as they related the incident to the collective traumatic pre-colonial past when the Sikh “temples had ben desecrated... [and] the holy Granth had been torn to bits” during ‘Muslim period of Indian history’ (1956, p. 115). In turn, this kept Sikhs ambivalent towards Muslims of Mano Majra. This invoked ‘collective memory’ as Sikhs could relate to their past with the present Partition atrocities perpetrated on Sikhs and Hindus by Muslims in Pakistan, which was not different from the atrocities that they suffered during the Mughal invasion. The relationship between the past and the present atrocities acted as a ‘memory kernel’ that reminded Sikhs of their ‘struggle for religion identity and freedom’. Through actively retaliating against Mughal and Afghan rule of Indian subcontinent was the only way Sikhs historically stopped their oppressions. By remembering their traumatic pre-colonial past, a memory that was triggered by the ongoing Partition bloodshed, the conflicting consciousness of the young generation of Sikhs and Muslims of Mano Majra reflects signs of resurgence. The consciousness of the Sikhs of Mano Majra was clearly ambivalent towards Muslims, which remained ambivalent even after the Muslims had left the village. What didn’t help was further arrival of a train from Pakistan in Mano Majra filled with Hindu and Sikh corpses as well as the increasingly victimised Sikh refugees arriving in India for shelter; this further triggered the traumatic pre-colonial memories in Sikhs of Mano Majra. The consequence of these events was that Sikhs

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<sup>59</sup> The pre-colonial Muslim Mughal and Afghan invasions of Punjab is introduced in section ‘What is Sikh? Who are the Sikh people?’ of the introduction.

completely lost their faith in the national government and decided to take matters in their own hands. This is evident when a jeep with young “educated city-dweller” Sikh men entered the gurdwara of Mano Majra one night (1956, p. 136). Upon arrival, the leader of the Sikh men started downgrading the Sikhs at gurdwara by reducing them to “eunuchs” who “should be drowned” and be “dead”, which reflects marginalisation by hypo-masculinising the Sikh identity (1956, p. 136). It was an attempt to make Sikhs of Mano Majra feel ashamed of themselves by contrasting with the hegemonic hyper-masculinised identity of Sikhs. This is evidenced when the young Sikh leader announces, “[w]hat sort of Sikhs are you? ... Potent or impotent”, “you call yourselves Sikhs – the brave Sikhs! The martial class!” (1956, p. 136). The stereotypical approach of feminising Sikhs as ‘impotent’ along with reminding them about their perceived hegemonic hyper-masculinised ‘potent’, ‘brave’ and ‘martial’ social identities whilst recapping the “massacres” in Pakistan with “trainloads of dead Sikhs and Hindus”, was enough to make Sikhs of Mano Majra feel “ashamed of themselves” (1956, p. 136).

Consequently, the consciousness of Sikhs shifted towards doing something to stop the ongoing communal massacres of Hindus and Sikhs propagated by Muslims of Pakistan, as evident when Banta Singh offers to help, “[i]f our government goes to war against Pakistan, we will fight. ...do tell us what we can do” (1956, p. 136). The young Sikh leader shows his disappointment with the national government as evident below:

Government! ...You expect the government to do anything? A government consisting of cowardly bania moneylenders! Do the Mussalmans in Pakistan apply for permission from their government when they rape your sisters...stop trains and kill everyone, old, young, women and children? (1956, p. 136)

The moving national consciousness of the Sikhs is towards resolving the ongoing communal bloodshed of Hindus and Sikhs, and the Sikhs feel that Nehru’s government is passive and not doing much to resolve communal riots and have instead left it for the incompetent regional magistrates to handle the situation, who in turn are more interested in saving their own bureaucratic positions, as it is the case with Hukum Chand (as highlighted previously). This shows that the national government was not national nor did it work towards constructing a collective destiny representing all the people of India. The only space available for the Sikhs to become performative towards their moving national consciousness was the space that has been offered to them by the young Sikh leaders who propose that “[f]or each Hindu or Sikh they kill, kill two Mussalmans. For each woman they abduct or rape, abduct two. For each

home they loot, loot two. For each trainload of dead they send over, send two across. For each road convoy that is attached, attack two. That will stop the killing on the other side. It will teach them that we also play this game of killing and looting” (1956, p. 137). It appears that the moving national consciousness of Sikhs of Mano Majra has lost faith in the national government of India, which has made them shift their consciousness towards protecting the lives of both Hindus and Sikhs in their own way from the perpetrating Muslims of Pakistan during Partition, and they feel that the only way to stop the bloodshed in Pakistan is by becoming performative in India through counterattacking in a worse manner than the perpetrators.

This shift in the consciousness of Sikhs from being static to performative towards resolving ongoing communal bloodshed by any means is a sign of moving consciousness, however, the proposed means to achieve this shift is not aligned with the Sikh consciousness and identity that reflects teachings of Sikhism, which Bhai Meet Singh was aware of and therefore challenged the proposal but was immediately silenced and “subdued” by the young Sikh leader (1956, p. 137). For example, Bhai Meet Singh says, “what have the Muslims here done to us for us to kill them in revenge for what Muslims in Pakistan are doing. Only people who have committed crimes should be punished” (1956, p. 137). The Sikh leader defends by saying, “[w]hat had the Sikhs and Hindus in Pakistan done that they were butchered? Weren’t they innocent? ...Teach this sort of Sikhism to someone else” which highlights repression of Bhai Meet Singh by his own community (1956, p. 137). The lack of ability and skills to articulate Sikhism to the changed young generation of Sikhs is the main cause of Bhai Meet Singh’s repression but Bhai considered that it was because of “very bad times [of] no faith or religion” (1956, p. 137). Bhai Meet Singh operated within the pedagogies of the Sikh faith which were now challenged by the performance of the youth leader. The fact that everyone has fixed Bhai Meet Singh’s Sikh identity as an “old bhai” who should “stick to his prayers” portrays him as submissive or a person who should remain quiet and focused on his priestly duties (1956, p. 153). This represented him as unfit to understand and cope with the contemporary challenges, which in turn, subconsciously kept him repressed and in a context within which he is unable to confidently reason, as evident when “[h]is silence was taken as an admission of defeat” (1956, p. 153). The young leader continues by reminding everyone that Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, was stabbed by a Muslim, so “remember and never forget – a Muslim knows no argument but the sword” (1956, p. 137). The young Sikh leader exploits his limited knowledge of the Sikh faith to attract the support of the people in order to

construct a resurgence of a new radical form, which is against the religion. In this process, the young leader manages to raise “[m]ore than fifty” Sikhs who became part of the radical plans of killing Muslims in next on route train to Pakistan (1956, p. 139). This shows that he was able to construct a radicalised Sikh identity in some of the Sikhs of Mano Majra. Banta Singh hurried to inform police about the radicalised plans and when Hukum Chand found out, he informed inspectors to “[l]et everyone kill. Just ask for help from other stations and keep a record of the messages you send...to prove that we did our best to stop them” (1956, p. 142). This implies that Hukum was complicit in the radical plans because he felt that Sikhs like the RSS were finally doing their share. This evidences the incompetence of the national government during Partition, who couldn’t care about resolving the communal conflicts of Punjab or saving innocent lives.

Hukum Chand represents the moving consciousness of Nehru’s failed national government of India that marginalises Sikhs by appropriating and reducing their identities for his own gains. This implies the colonisation of the Sikh identity and represents Sikhs as colonised subjects of the new Indian government. Evidently, Hukum Chand who has the ultimate authority, is referred to by people as the “Government”, described as “clever”, and the one who “always kept the sahibs pleased” as a sign of his loyalty towards senior bureaucratic government officials (1956, pp. 32, 44). That Hukum Chand marginalised Sikhs is shown by his exploitation of Iqbal’s diasporic Sikh identity which he reduces to a Muslim identity in order to orchestrate communal conflicts in Mano Majra. Additionally, by spreading rumours that demonise refugee Sikhs and allow him to secure his own bureaucratic position of a magistrate (as shown previously), he is able to dominate the Partition space. The fact that Hukum Chand understands that both Iqbal and Jugga are innocent, yet he keeps them locked in jail, and releases them as he pleases for his own personal gains, reflects the colonisation of Jugga and Iqbal’s identity and presents them as colonised subjects of the Indian authorities. Towards the end of the novel, Hukum Chand exploits Jugga’s perceived hyper-masculinised Sikh identity for his own gain and once again redefines Iqbal’s Sikh identity when he decides to release them both from jail in order to meet his own interests. For example, Hukum Chand finds himself in dilemma when the inspector informs him that the very last of the Muslim refugees would be on the same train that is to be intercepted by radicalised men. This made him anxious because it meant that his Muslim mistress Haseena would also be leaving for Pakistan on the same train, and that’s when he became frantic to keep his promise to save her. When Hukum Chand found out that Jugga’s girlfriend Nooran would also be on the same train,

he realised that Jugga would do anything to save his beloved, so Hukum Chand decided to release both Jugga and Iqbal from the jail. At this point, Hukum Chand no longer refers to Iqbal as a Muslim but redefines him a Sikh by identifying with his birth name, as “Not Iqbal Mohammed...Nor Mohammed Iqbal. Iqbal Singh” (1956, p. 146). This reflects the colonisation of the Sikh identity at the hands of the government authorities of India, who reduced and represented Sikhs as colonised subjects of the newly independent India who could be used for their own gains, as we see in *Hukum Chand*. Now that Jugga and Iqbal are freed by the authorities, they both redefine their social identities in their own ways as explored in the next section.

### **Transnational consciousness and the dynamic Sikh identity**

Towards the end of the novel, the consciousness of the Sikhs is transnational because it exhibits a move beyond the nation which also reflects dynamic Sikh identity. This is evident in both Jugga and Iqbal who, after being freed from the jail, reveal their dynamic Sikh identities through being performative in their own distinct ways at Mano Majra. Iqbal finds himself in the ‘in-between’ position where his identity oscillates between multiple contrasting polarities. On one side, he felt that he should “face the mob and tell them in clear ringing tones that this was wrong – immortal”, however, comparatively, just the thought of approaching an “armed crowd” of “few subhuman species” of radicalised men who mind find out about his inescapable body mark, made Iqbal more anxious (1956, pp. 154, 155). From his experience gained at Mano Majra, Iqbal is no longer ambivalent towards India as evident when he strongly felt that “India is constipated with a lot of humbug” where “[e]thics...has been carefully removed” from its society (1956, p. 156). This shows that Iqbal has altered his consciousness about India based on his experience of India and also after realising that he has been suffering from the anxieties of ‘in-between’ existence there, where he is Othered as a diasporic Sikh subject and perceived different by his own Sikh community (except Bhai Meet Singh and Jugga who embraced him). The fact that after returning from England Iqbal struggled to fit into the Indian society and vice versa, shows that Iqbal is questioning his own sense of home and belonging once again whilst reflecting on the newly independent India as a nation and its disapproving bourgeois national culture. Even though he was born in colonial India, it is evident that India remains “mysterious” to him because he struggles to understand its culture founded on “[n]o proof, just faith” and “[n]o reason, just faith” (1956, p. 156). Since this is contrary to his experience of the west, he wonders, “[w]here on earth except in India would a man’s life depend on” his inescapable body

mark (1956, p. 156). This shows that just because Iqbal was born in colonial India, his sense of belonging cannot be assumed to be simply in India. Iqbal's sense of belonging is shifting beyond the nation of India as he "wished he could get out of this place where he had to prove *his Sikhism* to save his life" (1956, p. 150, emphasis added). The use of 'his Sikhism' shows that Iqbal still wants to be identified with Sikhism and its notion of *seva*, but his Sikh consciousness is now desiring a new place to perform this *seva*, a place where he will not be Othered for being himself. Iqbal depicts signs of a diaspora condition where sense of home and belonging is not straightforward and remains challenged, which is reflective of his diaspora Sikh identity<sup>60</sup>. The fact that Iqbal's outlook is anywhere "except in India" reflects a shift in his consciousness towards moving away from the corruption of India (1956, p. 150). That he plans to "catch the first train" out from Mano Majra symbolises that Iqbal is performative towards his changed consciousness, and therefore symbolises his dynamic and shifting identity, moving towards creating new cultural routes as signified by the 'train' that reflects a beginning of a new journey for him (1956, p. 150). According to Paul Gilroy, the formulation of new journey as transnational "routes rather than roots" is to be considered as "rethinking identity in terms of fluidity... [which has] the propensity to alter the ways in which identities are formed for all people in one location, not just those who are constructed as 'diaspora communities'" (McLeod, 2010, p. 260). This resonates with the Sikh theory of 'identity consumes identity' adopted by Iqbal, which critically shows that Iqbal's Sikh consciousness and identity is shifting which moves away from the rigidity of nations towards establishing transnational routes and going beyond the national boundaries of India. This shows that Iqbal's consciousness is transnational where his existence can be identified "in the realm of the beyond" the notion of rootedness to India (Bhabha, 2004, p. 1). Iqbal's ability to shift into various cultural locations throughout his lifetime has provided him with "the art of the present" where he has overcome the challenges imposed by his various borderline existences (Bhabha, 2004, p. 1). Thus, Iqbal's negative consciousness of living in the painful borderline existences has been consumed by the positive outlook on life towards changing his roots in India to new routes and a new beginning of performing *seva* globally, which in turn reflects the development of Sikh consciousness. This reflects Iqbal's dynamic Sikh identity, as he has moved himself away from structures of society that kept him rigid, repressed and anxious, and has freed himself up for embracing new challenges of the contemporary world ahead by performing *seva* somewhere else in the world of diaspora.

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<sup>60</sup> See chapter 3 and 4 to understand the impact of Sikh diaspora on the Sikh identity

Jugga, on the other hand, transforms his identity further in ways that portray transnational consciousness and a dynamic Sikh identity. As discussed previously, while Jugga had already transformed himself in the past moving away from dacoity towards his love for Nooran, at the same time he found himself within another new painful ‘in-between’ space where he had to keep his relationship with Nooran a secret from his mother and the society. However, after finding out about the radicalised men, Jugga was no longer worried about keeping Nooran a secret, as his “immediate concern was the fate of Nooran” (1956, p. 150). He still had a “feeling that Nooran would be in Mano Majra...hiding somewhere in the fields or would have come to his mother” (1956, p. 150). This implies that Jugga must have previously discussed with Nooran about visiting his mother in case she ever felt the need to do so, which is why Nooran went to Jugga’s house to inform his mother about being pregnant with Jugga’s child, her feelings of “belong[ing] to the house and the house to her” and said “Sat Sri Akal” before leaving to Muslim refugee camp (1956, p. 122). Nooran wanted to spend her life with Jugga at Mano Majra, however, Jugga’s mother was ambivalent towards Nooran because of cultural differences of “a Muslim...marry[ing] a Sikh” but in the end she told Nooran to “[h]ave no fear” as Jugga “will get [her] if he wants a wife” (1956, p. 122). After getting freed from the jail, Jugga shifts his identity beyond his previously held ‘in-between’ position by facing his mother about Nooran which shows that Jugga’s love for Nooran is no longer a secret and has become a public affair. That’s when Jugga realises that Nooran is on the same train to Pakistan that is to be intercepted by the radicalised men, which imposed further challenges for him. Desperate to save Nooran, Jugga heads to Mano Majra’s gurdwara late that evening and asks Bhai Meet Singh for “the Guru’s word” and to “read...a verse” from the “Granth Sahib” (1956, p. 157). This reflects signs of Sikh consciousness in Jugga of ‘knowing one’s own Self’ and ‘recognising [his] own origin’, as evident when he asked Bhai Meet Singh to also tell him the meanings of the holy verses, which startled Bhai as he knew that Jugga “never came to the gurdwara any other time” (1956, p. 157). Bhai Meet Singh elaborated on the Guru’s words when he states:

If you are going to do something good, the Guru will help you; if you are going to do something bad, the Guru will stand in your way. (1956, p. 159)

Jugga went to the gurdwara to seek Guru’s help and blessings for his plans to save Nooran along with the Muslim refugees who were on the train to Pakistan, which highlights that Jugga’s Sikh consciousness was embodied with the concept of *seva*, which in turn reflects the development of *Miri-Piri* in him. He leaves gurdwara after saying “Sat Sri Akal” to Bhai and

also asked him to “say Sat Sri Akal to [Iqbal] from [him]” who was asleep at the time (1956, p. 159). ‘Sat Sri Akal’ is a greeting used by Sikhs that has a special connotation as explained by Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh who states that:

The impulse to bring the infinite Divine into the daily rhythms is definitely alive in the Sikh community, and it serves as a motivating factor for *change* and *growth*. Their simple greetings welcome the Divine, for whenever Sikhs say hello or goodbye, they join their hands and say *Sat Sri Akal* (truth is timeless). (Singh, 2011, p. 13, emphasis added)

The fact that Jugga emphasises ‘*Sat Sri Akal*’ to Bhai and asks to send the greeting to Iqbal means that Jugga has prepared himself to do something good and is seeking God’s help towards achieving it, which reflects his way of welcoming the Divine towards the ‘change and growth’ of his Sikh consciousness and highlights his dynamic Sikh identity. After attaining blessings from the gurdwara, Jugga heads straight to the railway bridge where the radicalised men had deployed a rope to derail the departing train. Jugga, recognised as a “big man...whipped out a small kirpan from his waist” and started cutting the rope but gets shot by radicalised men, which is when “he fell. The train went over him, and went on to Pakistan” (1956, p. 164). Jugga succeeded in saving Nooran and the Muslim refugees but unfortunately it was at the cost of his own life, which Khushwant Singh refers to as the “[s]upreme act of sacrifice” and an “act of self-immolation” (1956, pp. 154, 155). This highlights Jugga’s resistance through his refusal to accept the injustice of the Muslims at the hands of radical men and the government of India. Therefore, he confronts the radical plans, which reflects an outlook of socio-moral responsibility of helping others through *seva*, even though he knew that he could potentially die. He understood that in order to save everyone all he had to do was to let the train get across the border of India into Pakistan, and in that way, he would also save his unborn child. Jugga’s perception was beyond the nation of India, which shows that he possessed transnational consciousness. It’s unfortunate that his life ended whilst saving others but clearly, he was a transformed Sikh, who also succeeded in shifting his perceived social Sikh identity from being fixed as a ‘badmash’ or criminal by the society to a saviour of others, which projects his dynamic Sikh identity. Looking at Jugga’s identity from the Sikh theory of ‘identity consumes identity’ it becomes clear that Jugga has managed to change himself from his negative consciousness in dacoity to his love for Nooran and further to the *seva* of others, which reflects development of a positive Sikh consciousness in him. Jugga was a transformed Sikh who possessed dynamic Sikh identity and if he had not died, he would have been well equipped to

materialise new routes of further options to reach out to Nooran and his child beyond the nation of India, transforming his identity along the way overcoming challenges of the contemporary world.

## **Conclusion**

Khushwant Singh's 'disenchantment with the world' is visible in *Train to Pakistan* that depicts pain, sufferings and killings due to communal conflicts resulting from the partition of India into two sovereign nations. The Sikhs, marginalised by the Indian government, remained ambivalent about the achieved independence and desired a change in the national culture that represented their moving consciousness. This raises questions on the homogeneity of nation and shows that the national culture of India didn't consider Sikhs in the diversity of whole people of India. It shows that the independence was only aimed at the rich class who benefited from it; however, the proletarian Sikhs continued to remain marginalised, oppressed and disempowered by the government. The radicalised identity surfaced during Partition because of the lack of trust in the Indian government that remained silent and didn't intervene to stop communal riots which led to the retaliation of the Sikhs by taking matters in their own hands. Bhai Meet Singh as a Sikh priest propagated truth and opposed the radicalised views while adhering to the religious practices of the Sikh faith but was subdued by reminding him to operate within the fixity of a priest. Sikhs revealed agency and the capacity to act according to a decision as evident in Bhai Meet Singh who protested against the authorities about Iqbal's Sikh identity and stood against the radicalised views of the Sikhs. While Banta Singh informs police authorities about the radicalised plans in order to protect Muslims, and Jugga sacrifices himself for the greater cause of the humanity. This is a reminder that the notion of Sikh identity cannot be approached in the rigid and inflexible way or be perceived by the identities imposed on them by the dominant society.

The Sikh identity portrayed is complex and dynamic as seen in both Jugga and Iqbal who undergo constant changes, creating new transformed identities, and adapting to the time and situation of the post-partition of India. The consciousness of Jugga and radicalised men had a different focus and goals, with one trying to save the Muslims and the other looking to destroy them; however, in the end, it was Jugga who superseded and became the saviour of humanity which reflects *seva*. Jugga and Iqbal both exhibit their dynamic Sikh identities by shifting towards transnational consciousness and keeping their identities on the move, rather

than suffering the consequences of their 'in-between' existences. This symbolises the ability of the Sikh community to traverse beyond nations and exhibits transnational Sikh identity that creates new cultural routes. As a diasporic Sikh subject, Iqbal struggles to fit into the national culture of India after independence and decides to pursue transnational routes driven from his changed perception of India gained in his return journey to India. Iqbal's diasporic position is an interesting one as it constructs his Sikh identity as incomplete, implying that he is always looking forward to new challenges. In the next chapter 3, I explore this diasporic position further as represented in Shonali Bose's *Amu*, where the concept of home, belonging and identity is displaced in a repressed diasporic subject, who pursues return journey from America to India which results in a complex reassembling of Sikh consciousness and identity through remembering the past atrocities of 1984 Sikh genocide.

### Chapter 3: Reassembling Sikh Identity in the Postmemory of 1984 Sikh Genocide in Shonali Bose's *Amu* (2004)

*Realize that your essence is within your own self*

– Guru Arjan Dev (SGGS, p. 892)

This chapter explores the generational transmission of traumatic memories of the 1984 Sikh genocide and its impact on the Sikh identity as portrayed in Shonali Bose's novel *Amu*. I will analyse the novel through a postcolonial lens, apply Marianne Hirsch's notions of postmemory and concepts taken from diasporic scholars such as Caryl Phillips, Homi Bhabha and Paul Gilroy to explore aspects of memory, identity, home, belonging and displacement that are present in the novel from a Sikh perspective. My analysis of this chapter is modelled around Said's strategy of contrapuntal reading which shows possibilities of different interpretations and conflicting voices present in the novel. I will argue that the Sikh identity which is complex, dynamic, and transforming is linked with the living generation connections of the Sikhs to their heritage. I will show that reassembling Sikh identity in the displaced subjects' repressed memories is complicated and involves a process of revelations, dreams, postmemory and self-discovery pursued as identity-journey. Finally, I will highlight limitations found in Bose's narrative and show that her novel only goes so far, as it limits the 1984 Sikh genocide which can arguably be complicit in the erasure of Sikh identity.

Shonali Bose is an Indian<sup>61</sup> writer and filmmaker based in Los Angeles (USA) and *Amu*, is her debut novel published in 2004, which was adapted into an award winning<sup>62</sup> film in 2005. Bose was a 21-year-old student at Delhi University at the time of anti-Sikh pogroms of Delhi in 1984. In the quotation below, she recalls the atrocities as:

It was exactly three days. The killing suddenly started and it suddenly stopped, because it was *organized*... It was very surreal, because on television at that time there was only the government channel, we saw only Mrs. Gandhi's body lying in

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61 She was born in Kolkata on 3 June 1965 and spent most of her young adult life in Mumbai and New Delhi. She attained graduation from the Delhi University and attained post-graduation in Political Science from Columbia University, New York.

62 Bose has won National Film Award for best feature film in English, a Bridgestone Narrative Award, and a Sundance Mahindra Global Filmmaker Award to name a few.

state and all the mourners around it. And vague little whispering, saying, “*blood will be revenged with blood*” (Walsh, 2005, emphasis added)

Belonging to a Hindu culture, Bose provides details of the 1984 genocide from her personal experience in *Amu*, which is vital to understand as it provides valuable insight into the narrative of the dominant Hindu ideology of India. The Sikh genocide of 1984 developed from a series of events that took place after the former Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, had endorsed the Operation Blue Star – a code name given to an Indian military attack carried out between 1 and 10 June 1984 on the Golden Temple (Sikhs’ sancta sanctorum) in Amritsar, Punjab. A few months after the Operation Blue Star, Mrs. Gandhi’s two personal Sikh bodyguards avenged the operation by assassinating her on 31 Oct 1984. After Mrs. Gandhi’s death, her son Rajiv Gandhi who was sworn in as the prime minister of India on 31 Oct 1984 claimed, “[w]e will avenge Mrs Gandhi’s death but in a different way” (Rajiv Gandhi, 1984 cited in Singh, 1992, p. 96). As recalled by Bose in her interview with David Walsh, Rajiv’s public announcement to avenge his mother’s death in ‘a different way’ resulted in slogans of ‘*blood will be revenged with blood*’ as heard on the national television watched by a wide audience.

A series of organised pogroms targeted at Sikhs led to the large-scale killing of innocent Sikhs between 1 Nov until 3 Nov 1984 in Delhi. In her interview, Bose expressed that:

I want people to know that this was *absolutely orchestrated by the government* and *an act of state terrorism* – not just mob rioting as typically heard in the media. This was a *planned cold-blooded massacre*. The army was told to stand out for three days and not intervene as *politicians gave kerosene to gundas* [or hired thugs] to carry out specific orders of *wiping out Sikhs*. There has never been so much hard evidence, and yet it’s *been covered up for over 25 years without any trials*. And the families of the victims are still waiting for justice. *I want people to know the truth...* (Bose 2012, cited in Sharma, 2014, p. 100, emphasis added).

Historically, the only time a Sikh holy place was directly targeted on the Indian subcontinent was during the Mughal and Afghan rule, but the Sikhs arose, fought back, and established a Sikh Empire. Such tragic incidents targeting Sikh holy places never happened during the British Raj. Bose, who has strongly identified herself with the victims in *Amu*, emphasises that Sikh genocide was an act of state terrorism rather than mob rioting as propagated by the state-controlled media. Bose states that genocide “was done to humiliate the Sikhs, to put them in

their place, so that they wouldn't dare to stand up to the Centre" (2004, p. 75). Furious with the way the government of the post-colonial nation state of India treated them, Sikhs have been raising their voices at the Centre since the independence of India in 1947, but they have been largely ignored; this has led to the periodic rise in state conflicts with the Sikhs. The Indian state has been in constant denial of the violence inflicted on the Sikhs in 1984 and has failed them as citizens with evidence 'covered up' for years without any trials. The Nanavati Commission was setup in 2002 to investigate the involvement of culprits in the Sikh riots, and the report concluded by showing evidence that certain government leaders were involved in organising Sikh riots (Shani, 2008, p. 166). Moreover, after 1984 the state imposed suppressive ordinances against the publication of genocidal incidents, which were administered with enforced bans – a form of state control and dehumanisation to cover up the evidence and suppress the victims, survivors, and witnesses of 1984. Consequently, it is no surprise that the Sikh narrative of the 1984 Sikh genocide took some time to surface in the fictional form. However, the Sikh community around the world have been keeping the memories of genocide alive using slogans, such as 'Never Forget 1984', 'Remember 1984', '1984 Amritsar, we remember' in public processions while continuing their efforts to support the families of victims. Such attempts raise awareness of 1984 and helps with the generational transmission through publicly available media and active processions, which acts as regular reminder to the Indian state that it should never be repeated.

In the Sikh Formations journal, *After 1984? Violence, Politics and Survivor Memories*, Arvind-Pal S. Mandair stated that "[t]hough it was released almost a quarter of a century after 1984, *Amu* was deemed to be politically problematic by the Indian film censors [or Indian Censor Board<sup>63</sup>] and was therefore banned from television and censored by the Indian Government" (Mandair, 2015, p. 269). Pav Singh, the English-Sikh humanist, and the author of *1984: India's Guilty Secret* relates the challenges that Bose had to face with the Indian Censor Board for the release of the film *Amu*:

*five lines* of audio referring to the complicity of politicians and police were cut...

The film was eventually given an 'A' (adult only) certificate by the censors who argued that '*young people do not need to know*' about what took place in November 1984. (Singh, 2017, p. 97, emphasis added).

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63 Indian Censor Board a regulatory body part of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of the Government of India.

The objections of the Indian Censor Board to remove the ‘five lines’ highlights state terrorism, guilt and continuous denial of 1984; this does not help in healing the trauma. Moreover, granting an adult only certificate is the state’s attempt to shield the truth from the young generation so that 1984 remains a forgotten history, which is a threat to generational transmission of the Sikh genocide. Though Bose agreed to remove the five lines, as she states below, the overall impact it had on the audience was invaluable.

When the widow is asked by the male protagonist, was it one or two ministers [who organized the atrocities], and she says, no, it was the entire state, the bureaucracy, the government, the politicians, the police, all. [The censor board] removed that line. So, what we did, we let the characters go silent at that point... Five lines removed. We thought for the *widows of 1984 to be silenced* in this manner, that their silence spoke louder than words. Ironically, that’s the first thing we get asked in India... And in the press, all the lines were reported. (Walsh, 2005, emphasis added).

The Indian censor board’s intervention in removing lines is a clear sign of the state’s oppression and control that ‘silenced’ the survivors of 1984 who were largely women and young children. Bose has no doubt raised awareness of 1984, which was appreciated by the Sikhs, but a deep analysis of her narrative of *Amu* raises many questions regarding the representation of Sikhs for the Sikhs, and attempts made by her to reiterate the memories of victims, survivors, and witnesses of the traumatic past.

The narrative of *Amu* is centred around a twenty-year-old woman Kajori or Kaju, as she is nicknamed, a Sikh protagonist (whose birth name is ‘Amrit’ or ‘Amu’) and a child witness survivor of the 1984 Sikh genocide, who at the age of three was adopted by an activist and single mother Keya Roy (a Bengali Hindu who worked in the relief camps, just as Bose did in 1984). Amu was born into a Sikh family who became victims of the Sikh genocide in Delhi – the details of which are kept hidden from her by Keya because she has to comply with her birth mother’s suicide note that wished for her daughter to have a “new identity”, “a new history” and “new life” (I explore this further in next section) (2004, p. 131). Bose shows that in accordance with the biological mother’s wish, the child surviving the atrocities of 1984 gets a “new identity” when Keya changes her Sikh birth name Amrit or Amu to Kajori nicknamed as Kaju. The adoption is shown to have rescued the traumatised child where Keya bestows Amu with a “new life” by uprooting her from India into a Hindu Bengali culture and taking her

away from her birth nation to reside permanently in Los Angeles, America. The biological mother's promise of "a new history" is fulfilled as part of her growing up in America where Kaju's birth name is forgotten. As an individual she is shown to have forgotten the traumatic past of 1984 because Keya replaces them with details that her biological "parents lived in a village in India, outside Delhi, called Chandan Hola" and "died of malaria" epidemic (2004, p. 11). As she grew into an adolescent in America, Kaju remained in constant conflict with her identity because Keya avoided discussing her past. After graduating from College, Kaju plans to return "back to India" to "rediscover her roots" and "find out about her past, about what happened to her birth parents, who they were" (2004, pp. 4, 3). Keya disagrees with Kaju's planned trip to India in fear that after discovering the traumatic past of her parents, Kaju may reject her as an adoptive mother, but Kaju remains adamant and "embark[s] on a journey of discovery" (2004, p. 6). Most of the novel is centred around Kaju's pursuit of an identity journey in Delhi where she visits Keya's relatives (October 2001 is the setting of the novel). She follows numerous quests to discover her roots and experiences epiphanic moments of repressed past before finally unravelling the hidden truth about her past that led her to reassemble her roots and the Sikh identity. The narrative conveys the absence and loss of her biological family, her desire and determination to know the truth about the past, the acknowledgement of the elusive and fragmented memories, and the urge to repair the past in the present. Bose provides a third person point of view in writing which allows readers to delve into characters' thoughts and feelings. There are similarities between Bose and the character of Keya since they both worked in the relief camps of Delhi in 1984; Keya is perceived as a reflection of Bose herself. Before I discuss Kaju's epiphanic experiences during her return journey to India, I am going to highlight her state of mind and the impact the diaspora has had on her identity.

### **Displaced belonging, repression, and the identity-journey**

Bose's articulation of a Sikh mother's desire for her three-year-old daughter to be provided with a new identity, life, and a history is an ideal case of repression of Sikh consciousness, identity, and heritage. Arguably, Bose attempted to protect Shanno's daughter because she felt that Sikhs are only safe in India if they change their Sikh identity, history and lifestyle. I wonder whether Sikhs need to change their identity, history and life to remain protected from the dominant Hindu culture of India. Whatever the reasons for Bose to articulate such changes in the life of a protagonist, it reflects the dominant view of Indian culture that

shows the repression of Sikhs as minorities in India. As part of Shanno's wish to bestow a 'new identity', a 'new history' and a 'new life', Bose allows Keya to alienate Kaju from her Sikh culture and background, which starts by repressing Kaju's childhood and her traumatic memories of 1984. In *Repressive Silences and Shadows of 1984: Erasures, Omissions and Narrative Crisis*, Parvinder Mehta stated that "Shanno's plea to Keya to erase Kaju's identity as Amu and her memories...reflects the general strategy of avoidance and *escapist forgetting*<sup>64</sup> ...[and] in following Shanno's wishes, Keya also believes that she is doing the right thing" (Mehta, 2010, p. 167, emphasis added). Right from the onset of the novel, Bose's narrative propagates passive forgetting of the traumatic past as 'escapist forgetting', which is a sign of omitting and erasing Sikh identity. Kaju's identity is overly complex, and the complexities exist from a young age in her life. She was born into a Sikh family in Delhi who were killed in 1984 and being a sole child survivor, she was adopted into a Hindu Bengali culture and grew up in America. Keya remembers that after the adoption of Kaju, the "first few years had been hard" she was withdrawn and perceived by others as "the only one sitting silent, without smiling", which shows that as a child she was significantly affected by the trauma of 1984 (2004, p. 67). Kaju's uprooting from India to America at an early age of three, into new culture, environment, and surroundings, had over time repressed her Sikh consciousness and identity by Keya since Keya made her forget about her past while transitioning her into a new Hindu Bengali culture. As a three-year-old traumatised child, Kaju had a lot to cope with after the sudden destruction of her home and the demise of her family in the genocide. She had witnessed the killing of her father, Gurbhachan Singh, and her one-year-old brother, Arjun, by mobs and later, the suicide of her mother, Shanno Kaur. So, "Kaju would have nightmares every night" which didn't stop even after migrating to America (2004, p. 67). From birth Kaju spoke her ancestral mother tongue, "Punjabi", but having to move to a new culture overseas where she "hadn't spoken a word of English when they arrived" highlights the way her ability to communicate or express her feelings was restricted during her childhood (2004, pp. 121, 15). Kaju did not learn to speak until she was around four when one day suddenly everything changed and "[a]fter that day, Kaju had never looked back", as narrated below:

It was as if something had snapped *shut inside her, closing down all the trauma and the memories*, and she had slowly *become whole under the loving care of Keya*.  
(2004, p. 67, emphasis added)

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<sup>64</sup> The 'escapist forgetting' is a form of passive forgetting that "endorses a strategy of avoidance, 'guided by an obscure desire not to know, not to be informed about, and not to inquire into atrocities committed in one's own neck of the woods'" (Mehta, 2010, p. 162).

The narrator implies that all it took to put an end to the traumatic effects of 1984 was Keya's efforts in bringing up the child, which made Kaju 'become whole' by making her forget about her traumatic memories and her biological family. Keya uses a passive forgetting strategy by avoiding to talk to Kaju about her past, which resulted in 'closing down all the trauma and the memories' of 1984 that remained 'shut inside her'. This implies that Keya succeeded in blocking Kaju's past which in turn repressed Kaju's Sikh identity. By the time Kaju was four, her memories of Sikh culture had eventually faded away and she is shown to have forgotten about her past completely. Mehta suggests, that "[a]ny silence, voluntary or involuntary, about violence/resultant trauma only creates a gap and emptiness" (Mehta, 2010, p. 167). By repressing her Sikh identity, Keya may have succeeded in making Kaju forget about the past in the interim, but Keya also ended up creating gaps and a sense of emptiness in Kaju's subconsciousness that desired a recall of the traumatic past as she grew in America.

Bose has undoubtedly expressed the dominant Hindu ideology of India about 1984 Sikh genocide, which is to forget about the traumatic past and move on by accepting a new identity, life, and history. This is the belief that aligns with what the Indian nation-state has been propagating in the aftermath of the atrocities of 1984. But can forgetting about the unresolved traumatic past heal victims? Since 1984, the Indian nation-state has been practising this with their Sikh citizens as a way of avoiding to talk about the genocidal incidents with the hope that the traumatic memories of the victims would gradually fade away to be left forgotten and repressed. It was not until August 2005 when the first Sikh in office and India's 13<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, on behalf of the Indian government and the country, "apologised in parliament to the Sikh community for 1984 riots in which 3,000 Sikhs were killed" and asked the Sikhs to forget and move on, which further disappointed Sikhs around the world (BBC News, 2005). In *I Accuse... The Anti-Sikh Violence of 1984*, the special correspondent, Jarnail Singh, states that "Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has asked the Sikhs to forget the past. It is true that when somebody dies we advise their family with sympathy to put aside their grief and move on; but this happens if the death is natural... but *how can a massacre be forgotten?* Especially when there has been *no justice...* But *forgetting is not a solution*. One learns from history but does not forget it; indeed one should learn from history so that those *mistakes are not repeated*" (Singh, 2009, p. 35, emphasis added). Bose, in the novel, may have succeeded in repressing Kaju's childhood memories to shield her from the truth but as Jarnail says "forgetting is not a solution". Indeed, Bose is also aware of this view when she states that Keya " marvelled at how the human brain could blot out painful truths and shield the present from the

past... [and deep down] knew that one day she would have to tell Kaju about the past” (2004, p. 16). As it is the case with Kaju who seeks a return journey to India to ‘rediscover her roots’ after seventeen years of repression, forgetting about the traumatic past represses the traumatic memories that would seek a recall and resurface in future to find justice. As implied by the narrator, although Kaju appears to have forgotten about her repressed past, she was far from being healed as implied by the narrator. Instead, Kaju found herself in a constant state of conflict with Keya especially after the age of eleven when Keya persistently avoided answering questions about Kaju’s past and biological parents and simply told her that they died from a malaria epidemic. Over time in America, Kaju’s gradual separation from Keya is emphasised by her closeness to her mother’s friend TQ to whom “[s]he could sometimes tell...things that she couldn’t even tell Keya: how much she wanted to find out about her past, about what happened to her birth parents, who they were” (2004, p. 3). This clearly shows that Kaju is suffering from the symptoms of the 1984 trauma and has a strong desire to know her roots and ancestral identity.

As Kaju grew, she felt displaced, unsettled and not at home, and frequently questioned her own sense of home and belonging in the diaspora. She “wished that she had ‘normal’ parents – two of them, married to each other and *biologically her own*, working regular hours, sharing leisure activities with her, like the families of many of her high school friends” (2004, p. 4, emphasis added). Kaju’s desire for a “normal” life shows the identity crisis that she experienced resulting from the pain and anxiety of feeling empty of secure roots, which in turn affected her life daily, making her feel emotionally drained and displaced in the diaspora. The feeling ‘of, and not of, this place’ that results in high anxiety of belonging that I discussed in Chapter 2 is also applicable here. In the novel, Bose allows us to observe this feeling in Kaju who felt ‘of, and not of’ America – a sense that developed from the feeling of not being accommodated by her adopted mother. Kaju’s attitudes to America as her home are complex. When she was at high school, “she had wanted to be as American as possible. Not white American: that was not cool: she was *down*” which shows that she wanted to be an American but also wanted to be cool like her “*desi*” (colloquial for Indian continental) friends, “[b]ut she did identify herself totally with the world around her” (2004, p. 4). As she grew up, Kaju “hated the fact that she was always asked where she was from. No one assumed that she was American” (2004, p. 16). She was aware that it was “because of her brown skin” that people around the wealthy neighbourhood often addressed her in Spanish assuming her to be some Latin American “maid on her way to work” which highlights her feelings of displacement and

dislocation in America (2004, p. 16). The fact that she is Indian born complicates matters further because “Kaju’s whole relationship to her identity had changed in these four years” at her university where she “found herself wanting to be more Indian”, which shows that she began identifying herself as having a strong sense of belonging to India, her birth-nation (2004, p. 4). Kaju’s desire to be “more Indian” in the diaspora and to be seen as a person who is not “totally with the world around her” highlights the anxieties and ambivalence of identity and belonging of diasporic subjects (2004, p. 4).

Devoid of secure roots, Kaju’s identity is not complete and cannot be considered in some form of conventional or received binary notions of identity and subjectivity that would attempt to fix her into belonging to either America or India. As a migrant, she appears to be living ‘in-between’ different nations and cultures, with the ambivalence ‘of, and not of’ America, feeling neither American nor Indian and therefore, and unable to fully belong to either cultural location. The emotional consequences continue to keep her consciousness repressed, making her unhappy and anxious.

Kaju’s diasporic identity as a migrant has positioned her in what Homi Bhabha perceives as occupying a “liminal space, in-between the designations of identity” – an existence that is “marked by a tenebrous sense of survival, living on the borderlines of the ‘present’” (Bhabha, 2004, pp. 5, 1). She finds herself in a liminal position living “border lives” on the edges of desperate nations and cultures, America on one side and India on the other; this requires a new “art of the present” according to Bhabha (Bhabha, 2004, p. 1). Kaju remains in this imaginary liminal in-between space, where she is torn between the notions of finding her roots and a desire to live a ‘normal’ American life – a space that has created anxiety, contradictions and ambivalence in her life which keeps her identity incomplete. Bhabha considers such liminal existence as an important threshold that deliver moments of change and transition, constructing new identities whenever “the realm of the *beyond*” is traversed, as specified below:

The ‘beyond’ is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past... we find ourselves in the *moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity*, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. (Bhabha, 2004, p. 1, emphasis added)

The ‘art of the present’ requires proactively crossing the ‘border lives’ and going ‘beyond’ in order to “initiate new signs of identity” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 1). What would it take for Kaju to go ‘beyond’ the liminal existence of the in-between diasporic identity?

Although Kaju’s liminal position, finding herself in the ‘moment of transition’, shows pain and anxieties that challenges her belonging in the diaspora, it also opens up possibilities for exploring new options that she wants to pursue, as shown below:

[Kaju] had started thinking about going back to India and *rediscovering her roots*, ...so that she could spend three to six months in the land of her birth. Getting to know India. (2004, p. 4, emphasis added)

Kaju’s long-standing desire to rediscover her roots ultimately allowed her to formulate plans for a transcontinental journey to India to explore the land of her birth with a hope to find out about her past, her heritage, and her identity. This formulation of Kaju’s pancontinental journey to India is what Paul Gilroy refers to as pursuing itinerant cultural “routes” that took Kaju, both imaginatively and physically, to the land of her birth where she contacted many people and discovered her ancestral culture and identity (Gilroy, 1993, verso). The formation of such “routes rather than *roots*” is seen as “rethinking identity in terms of fluidity...[which] have the propensity to alter the ways in which identities are formed for *all* people in one location, not just those who are constructed as ‘diaspora communities’” (McLeod, 2010, p. 260). Kaju as a displaced diasporic subject has not only managed to construct transnational contingencies of unpredictable ‘routes’ to replace her desires for ‘roots’, but has also embarked on an identity-journey to India. This shows that Kaju has finally succeeded in putting her repressed past on the move, which highlights a sense of identity that is fluid, dynamic and evolving, always looking for new possibilities to reshape present and orient ways into the future. Furthermore, this also shows that Kaju has begun to traverse ‘beyond’ the boundaries of diasporic liminal existence by creating these ‘routes’ of transnational crossings from America to India.

Bose has certainly challenged the received ideas of home, belonging, nation, roots, and identity for displaced diasporic subjects such as Kaju. When Kaju arrives at her nation of birth in India, she encounters further identity crisis that affects her perceived sense of belonging and identity. The identity crisis experienced by Kaju was her struggle to fit well within India as people at once regarded her as a foreigner, which made it hard for her to identify with them. She encountered many “alien situations” and “had a whole different sense of identity” in India, as highlighted below:

She didn't look different, but she couldn't fit in here either, no matter how desperately she tried. And so, in India too she used the camera, not just as an extension of herself, but as a way to meet the gap between herself and the alien situations she encountered. (2004, p. 16)

This articulates cultural gaps and differences in the perceived views and the reality of a native nation for displaced diasporic subjects. The phrase she 'couldn't fit in here either' implies that Kaju found it difficult to identify herself with her birth nation, where, finding herself alienated, she carried a camera as means to shield herself from the 'alien situations'. In India "people knew right away that she was a foreigner" which made her experience the same sense of 'in-between' feeling, a void of belonging to a particular place that she experienced in the diaspora – the feeling of being neither American nor Indian and therefore unable to belong anywhere (2004, p. 49).

Kaju as a diaspora subject finds herself in an identity crisis even in her nation of birth that she had considered home in the diaspora mainly, a conflict that stemmed from the fact that the reality of India didn't meet her expectations. From an early age in the diaspora, Kaju had constructed an imaginary place of her birth filled with fragmented images that projected into her mind from watching Indian TV in America, which "had stuck in Kaju's head, returning to her mind whenever she thought about her birth parents" and India (2004, p. 12). When she visited Chandan Hola with her uncle, aunt, and cousins, she "visualize[d] what her parents' lifestyle had been" but did not find any connections (2004, p. 17). Kaju then "realized that her vision of rural India was completely unreal... The reality had been more stark" which shows that the India she encountered was far from the "idyllic world" that she had imagined in the diaspora (2004, p. 17). Therefore, Kaju's sense of identity and belonging is complicated and cannot be fixed into a predefined term of belonging to her birth nation just because she was born there.

Kaju's sense of belonging, as I discussed earlier, appears to be 'in-between' different nations which become apparent when she attends her cousin Tuki's college party to see the "other side of India" (2004, p. 18). Kaju struggles to identify herself with the young generation too and sarcastically remarks at the party about "educating herself in 'the sociology of the elite twenty-something Indian'" (2004, p. 24). Hearing Kaju, Kabir, a young male around her age approaches her and says, "I suppose you're doing the whole tourist thing, camera and all. Shooting the exotic India, the ancient India, the spiritual India" and Kaju replies that she wants

to explore “the real India” (2004, p. 25). In response, Kabir remarks, “The real India. Ah. And I suppose you’ll find it through your foreign lens” (2004, p. 25). This highlights the anxieties of the diaspora subjects who find it difficult to fit into the culture of their birth nations, where they get singled out and treated as foreigners or outsiders as if to “put someone in a box”, which are attempts made to fix their identities (2004, p. 25). That she struggled to identify herself with her birth nation where she couldn’t help being treated as a foreigner even though she looked the same as others, makes her feel anxious, and keeps her identity in the ‘in-between’ state of different nations and cultures.

I thought that when I came to India I would totally fit in, because at least I look the same. Skin colour and all that...It’s not like I belong in America – I’ve always been asked where I’m from. But actually I feel even more foreign here. (2004, p. 49)

Kaju’s feeling of being ‘more foreign’ in India shows that she felt displaced in her birth nation, a feeling that made her seem to be more dislocated in India than she felt in America. This shows that as a diaspora subject her identity is incomplete and remains in an ‘in-between’ state, which Bose considers as “the poignant reality of so many second-generation immigrants to the US [or diasporic subjects]. *Being neither from here nor from there*” (2004, p. 50, emphasis added). The identity crisis and anxiety of ‘being neither from here nor from there’ resonates well with the feeling ‘of, and not of, this place’ that Kaju experienced in America, and feels the same upon returning to India. However, Kaju remains determined to experience India as evident when she sternly proclaims, “I just want to experience India because it’s a part of who I am” (2004, p. 25). This shows that Kaju’s association with India is strong because her ancestral roots are in India, however, it does highlight that her identity is in a state of flux that is fluctuating between different nations and cultures. Kaju desired to explore new options to experience India, find out about her birth parents and follow her instincts to rediscover her roots where she explores various precarious possibilities of progressing from her repressed past. That Kabir forms a liking for Kaju, helps with her identity journey and takes her to various places of significance in Delhi, which enables them to get to know each other. While exploring various places in Delhi, returning to certain places associated with Kaju’s traumatic past of 1984 triggered her childhood memories and connections with the past, leading to the rediscovery in the present, and eventually making healing difficult, as explored in the next section.

## Remembering the past and the postmemory of 1984 Sikh genocide

“Postmemory” describes the relationship that the “generation after” bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory’s connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. (Hirsch, p. 6, emphasis added)

Marianne Hirsch’s notion of postmemory aims at understanding connections of generational subjects to the traumatic past, which is experienced through a traumatic recall by them in the aftermath of a catastrophe. Hirsch focuses on the awareness and relationship of children (or the ‘generation after’) to the sufferings of their parents or ancestors (or the ‘generation before’) who were either victims, survivors, or witnesses of a catastrophe. Hirsch states that postmemory is a “structure of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience. It is a *consequence* of traumatic recall” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 6, emphasis added). The intergenerational return of traumatic past surfaces in subjects who share a “personal/familial/generational sense of ownership and protectiveness” with the ‘generation before’ who were either victims or survivors. This results in “the familial transfer of embodied experience to the next generation” known as a ‘familial postmemory’ (Hirsch, 2012, pp. 6, 8). However, the transgenerational traumatic return of knowledge and embodied experience occurs through any means that are beyond the traumatic personal and generational space of family which is known as ‘affiliative postmemory’. The main difference between the two is that familial postmemory requires the “intergenerational vertical identification of child and parent occurring within the family” while the affiliative postmemory requires the “intragenerational horizontal identification that makes that child’s position more broadly available to other contemporaries” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 8). Bose has articulated both familial and affiliative postmemory structures in *Amu* and has highlighted connections of a child survivor, Kaju, to the trauma of 1984 Sikh genocide experienced through Kaju’s compulsive pursuit of her identity journey.

Bose’s position as a writer articulating the postmemory of 1984 Sikh genocide in *Amu* is problematic and has led to criticism by various scholars. The main issue is that Bose is a subject who has no familial ties to the survivors or victims of the 1984 trauma herself but she includes familial postmemory structures in her narrative exclusively speaking from affiliative

connections to the traumatic events of 1984; therefore, she falls into the dangers of appropriation, re-traumatisation and over-identification with the victims. Her affiliative connection to the Sikh genocide emanates from her involvement as an activist in 1984 when she was a twenty-one-year-old student working in the relief camps organised by her university to help the survivors. It was in these places where she heard painful stories directly from the families of victims, which ended up in *Amu*. At the time, Bose was involved in the Uma Chakravarti's project that aimed to document the accounts of riot victims for her teacher in a book known as *Delhi Riots: Three Days in the Life of a Nation* (2004, p. 137). In one interview, she states that the core of *Amu* is based on one of the saddest and gruesome tragedy from the documented accounts of a widow, "the case of Shanti Devi whose husband and three children had been killed, and under such terrible circumstances" of genocidal riots (2004, p. 138). Bose claimed that in the relief camp, they all "worked very hard with her; very, very hard, literally visiting her all the time... and we tried just about everything we could with her" (2004, p. 138). However, Shanti committed suicide as "[s]he just lost her will to live" and left behind young daughters who had a "sense of hate...towards Shanti... And this is what everybody else also felt" (2004, pp. 140 – 142). While one of Bose's colleagues from the relief camp broke down and angrily remarked, "I feel angry with Shanti – She was so selfish, she was so self-centred" and other "colleagues also felt that way" (2004, p. 142). Whereas Bose's colleagues were not empathetic towards Shanti who was being judged and victimized after her death, she expressed her empathy and "kept telling" that Shanti Devi "could not bear her grief and that's why she died" (2004, p. 141).

Is Bose's narrative a work of "non-appropriative identification and empathy" with genocidal victims or has she slipped into appropriation and re-traumatisation of the traumatic past (Hirsch, 2012, p. 10)? Although Hirsch recognises the need for articulating trauma on behalf of survivors or victims through narrative, a style that is known as "witnesses by adoption" or "foster writing" such as what Bose follows in *Amu*, Hirsch also warns about the dangers of "imitating or unduly appropriating" and over-identifying with the victims that results in "retraumatization" or "rememory" (Hirsch, 2012, pp. 10, 6). Hirsch states:

For postmemorial artists, the challenge is to define the aesthetic based on a form of identification and projection that can include the transmission of the bodily memory of trauma without leading to the self-wounding and retraumatization that is rememory. ...What do we owe the victims? How can we best carry their stories forward, without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves,

and without, in turn, having our own stories displaced by them? How are we implicated in the aftermath of crimes we did not ourselves witness? (Hirsch, 2012, pp. 10, 6)

Hirsch emphasises that a “delicate balance between identification and distance” from victims is needed for “adopt[ing] the traumatic experiences of others as experiences we *might ourselves have lived through*...inscrib[ing] them into our own life story” in the postmemorial work to avoid the dangers of appropriation and retraumatisation – a balance that Bose has struggled to achieve in carrying the story of Shanti Devi forward (Hirsch, 2012, p. 8). Even though Bose expresses her empathy towards Shanti Devi, her postmemorial work in *Amu* is of appropriative identification because Bose has adopted the traumatic experiences of Shanti Devi’s accounts in her own narrative by creating a character Shanno who is in fact Shanti, and then inscribing the fate of Shanno’s daughter Amu by giving her a Hindu identity and culture in Kaju. Is this the best way to carry victim Shanti Devi’s story forward? How would Shanti Devi feel about Bose’s owing Shanti’s daughter a non-Sikh identity? Bose unduly calls attention to herself by highlighting that she and her colleagues at relief camp helped Shanti, got “clothes for her”, “arrange[d] rations” and did “all kinds of things for her” but Shanti “was just not able to recover” as she suffered from “unbearable sense of sorrow [and] grief” and “[f]or her literally it was easier to die than live and bear that any more” (2004, p. 140). How can Bose as a support worker say that Shanti found it easy to die than live? Doesn’t this reflect lack of adequate support in the first place? Or if Bose and her fellow relief workers were so sure that Shanti was going to die, then shouldn’t Shanti have become a high priority case to provide further support? How many more Sikh widows have died in vain like this? Bose remembers very well that her colleagues were angry towards Shanti after her death, which doesn’t make much sense as to why would someone be angry and not empathetic? Perhaps angry because Shanti ‘was just not able to recover’ within the expected time period of the relief support? Also, the structure of surrogating functions in *Amu* where the writer, Bose, through Keya, takes the position of a surrogate victim as if she “has a right to the victim’s voice or subject position” and affiliatively adopts the familial narrative of victims as her own and in this process, she unduly calls attention to herself and ends up producing postmemorial work that is appropriating and at times producing rememory as well, as I show later on in this chapter (Mehta, 2010, p. 164). Bose chooses Keya to take the role of a surrogate mother who controls what is good for the adopted daughter Kaju and maintains Shanno’s wish to suppress Kaju’s Sikh identity by giving her a Hindu identity. This is a promise that signifies the appropriation of the ‘victim’s voice and

subject position', that of victim Shanti Devi, which Bose inscribed in her narrative through Shanno, and later, through Keya. In adopting Shanti Devi's case, Bose's strategy of either using 'witnesses by adoption' or 'foster writing', for and on behalf of Shanti, and dictating an outcome for Kaju in her own way, is what one could describe as the "colonization of victims' memories and identities" (Crownshaw, 2004, p. 216). Bose has ended up colonising the memories and identity of Shanti Devi by changing it to construct a Hindu identity in her daughter in an attempt to reduce Sikh identity, culture and heritage. This is no different to the Hindu Arya Samaj discourse of the colonial period that attempted to reduce Sikh identity to Hindus, which was defended by the internalist Tat Khalsa discourse, as discussed in the Introduction of this thesis.

As a member of '1.5 generation', a term given to the child survivors who share the collective pain and sufferings of the traumatic past, Kaju has no memory of her own childhood in Delhi since it was erased in childhood by Keya. Kaju's past is a secret kept by the adopted family and no one talks about it, and she didn't even know about her dead little brother while she lived a displaced life in America. The loss of the biological family, roots, home, belonging, displacement, and identity are some of many symptoms that depict Kaju's suffering; she strongly desires to repair and redress her past by rediscovering her roots. Bose uses narrative as a media of transmitting the traumatic past of Sikh genocide and as a narrator she takes the side of the adopted mother Keya. Arguably, Bose and Keya appear to be the same people in many ways since they both worked in the relief camps helping families of victims in 1984; Keya is a projection of Bose's own identity and beliefs. *Amu* functions as the "narrative of return" where Kaju as a child survivor pursues a root-seeking identity journey by returning to her parents' home country and her birth country after seventeen years – the narratives that are "quest plots holding out, and forever frustrating, the promise of revelation and recovery" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 17, emphasis implied). Bose has expressed Kaju's rediscovery of her roots as an obsessive desire to know the past and her impulse to return to her birth nation hoping for a revelation and redress of the past. According to Hirsch, the return journeys "to the spaces and objects of past" made by displaced people "can have the effect of such a reconnection of severed parts, and, if this indeed happens, they can release latent, repressed, dissociated memories, which metaphorically speaking remained behind, concealed within the object. And, in so doing, they can cause them to surface and become reembodyed" (Hirsch, 2012, p.17, emphasis implied). In the novel, Bose allows us to experience these effects of postmemory in Kaju whose roots-seeking return journey to spaces and objects of past in Delhi reconnects her

to the traumatic past of 1984 triggering her remembrance to release latent, repressed, and dissociated memories, which embodies her in the present towards uncovering her roots and identity.

Hirsch notes that the “embodied journeys of return, corporeal encounters with places, do have the capacity to create *sparks of connection* that activate remembrance and thus reactivate the trauma of loss” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 17, emphasis added). Besides, the objects can “carry memory traces from the past...but they also embody the very process of transmission” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 15). The process of the transmission of memory produced from the spaces and objects of past is complicated and unique to the individuals. As it is observed in Kaju, it opens questions through traumatic recalls and haunts the present. Hirsch lays emphasis on the remembrance leading to the return of traumatic knowledge and allowing subjects to reconnect with the trauma of the ‘generation before’ either “through an imaginative investment, and creation” or through unmediated means in survivors who are directly connected to the catastrophe (Hirsch, 1997, p. 22). Bose articulates that the postmemory of 1984 through a combination of imaginative investment and direct connection to the past since Kaju, eager to rediscover her roots is also connected to the past in the form of child survivor’s memory. Bose shows that Kaju’s past is located in objects, images, documents, the Sikh heritage, in the fragments of train stations, streets, a bridge, traditional Punjabi wear, and a private building of Trilokenagar. Kaju’s remembrance of the past is creative and very particular to herself. It enunciates the unconscious memory transmissions when she pursues her identity journey and visits important spaces and objects or encounters remnants of her past, which is embodied in “*déjà vu flashes*”, “*visual flashes in dreams*” and “*terrifying nightmares*” that haunt her afterwards (2004, pp. 94, 126, 107).

Though Keya managed to erase Kaju’s Sikh consciousness and identity during childhood, it existed in Kaju’s subconscious memory and the return journey to India finally allowed Kaju to anchor her latent memories to specific places and objects of the past that triggered the revival of the Sikh consciousness. One of the first encounters that activated remembrance in Kaju is related to a space that connected her to the Sikh heritage. This happened inadvertently while she was photographing a political campaign. On this occasion, she was taken aback by a comforting background sound that felt “*vaguely familiar*”, as outlined below:

[Kaju] became slowly aware that she was hearing the strains of music on a loudspeaker. It was *a low, sing-song chant that sounded vaguely familiar*. She moved along...trying to figure out where the music was coming from, when all at once, between the trees, she saw a *golden spire* catch the noonday light. For a moment, *she stopped and stared*. Then she walked towards it. (2004, p. 20, emphasis added)

The 'sing-song chant' and the 'golden spire' are connected to the Sikh heritage which were significant objects of Kaju's past that "provoke[d] deep body memory" and enunciated unconscious transmission from her childhood (Hirsch, 2012, p.17). The process of transmission of memory began as soon as Kaju heard familiar music and then allowed herself to trace its source which revealed the 'golden spire'. Kaju 'stopped and stared' at the golden spire which had concealed memory traces from her childhood, which in turn created a sense of familiarity and drew her to walk towards the golden spire. Upon finally reaching the source of the music, "Kaju learnt that this was the Bangla Sahib Gurdwara" and she "walked slowly into the gurdwara [and] found herself totally absorbed in the scene" (2004, p. 20). The "music she had been listening to was Gurbani, the teachings of the Sikh gurus", which triggered the deep-rooted remembrance and activated the transmission of her dissociated childhood memories of the Sikh heritage (2004, p. 20). In *Sikh Sabad Kirtan as a Musical Construction of Memory*, Janice Faye Protopapas states that "*Sabad* (word) and *Kirtan* (song)...excite and activate powerful memories", which serves a socio-religious function "to invoke a communal and inherited memory" (Protopapas, 2011, pp. 9, 1). It is also "a common Sikh heritage, acting as a vehicle to bring to mind a collective memory and unite the community to a common past" (Protopapas, 2011, p. 197). Kaju found the sounds of Gurbani familiar because listening to it invoked her "deep memories and emotional experiences", which related to her Sikh heritage that involuntarily created a sense of Sikh consciousness in her (Protopapas, 2011, abstract). The 'sing-song chant' or *kirtan* of Gurbani acts as what Protopapas refers to "pedagogical memory" that "infuses communal identity and memory into the participants" and "listening to it transforms one's consciousness", playing a key role "in the construction of Sikh identity and memory" (Protopapas, 2011, pp. 22, 201, 73, 148). That Kaju listens attentively to the sound of Gurbani and tracks its source afterwards symbolises the "deep listening in which the listener is "necessarily influenced by the place, time, the shared context, and the intricate and irreproducible details of one's personal biography"" (Protopapas, 2011, p. 165). It was her act of listening deeply to, and being 'totally absorbed' into, the familiar music of Gurbani played

at Bangla Sahib Gurdwara that subconsciously reproduced the effects of personal connections to the Gurdwara from her memory as it was the same holy place that she visited regularly as a child with her biological family in Delhi.

Protopapas claims that “[t]he hymns of *Gurbani kirtan* become a crucible where the recollection of suffering and oppression which the Sikhs endured throughout their history, ignites a deep spiritual energy” (Protopapas, 2011, p. 22). The exile’s re-encounter with Gurbani at her childhood Gurdwara ignited a deep spiritual energy in Kajju that embodied the feeling of *déjà vu*, where visual flashes of her past surfaced into her present and then later into her dreams and nightmares, in which she experienced the same chanting “as the Gurbani she’d heard in Bangla Sahib” (2004, pp. 42, 44, 51, 94). Bose creates a link with the sound of Gurbani to Kajju’s suffering and oppression of 1984 by showing her “respond[ing] familiarly” to a process of memory transmission which stems from a “familial” connection to the traumatic past which occurs in “the children or relatives of survivors” (Hirsch, 2012, p.8). This familial connection of Kajju’s memory is rooted in the traumatic time and events of 1984 when her biological father, Gurbachan Singh, “finally overpowered by the mob [...] started quoting from the Granth Sahib, reciting the Gurbani that, many years later, his daughter would hear floating down from the Bangla Sahib Gurdwara and into her nightmares” (2004, p. 123). At the age of three, Kajju as a child survivor of genocide had witnessed her father being burnt and killed by the mobs outside her house in Delhi where she heard his dying voice of reciting Gurbani. It was these traumatic memories of 1984 that remained concealed deep inside Kajju, and their release seventeen years later, was triggered after she subconsciously drew towards the Gurbani that led her to the Gurdwara connected to her childhood. Furthermore, this confirms that the connections of Sikhs to the Gurbani and their heritage embeds a lasting sense of Sikh consciousness that can be reignited in future from memories, initiating a process of transformation towards reconstructing Sikh identity, as it is the case with Kajju.

Kajju’s spontaneous rediscovery of her Sikh heritage marked a crucial step towards her identity journey, which continues further through a complex process of memory transmission comprising of *déjà vu*, dreams, nightmares, and revelations which ultimately result in rediscovering her roots. Like the recall of Gurbani and the Gurdwara, Kajju went through various other spaces and objects of past. As Kajju approached Trilokenagar and the streets leading to her childhood house, the landscape looked familiar; this “trigger[ed] bodily responses that are not exactly memories, but reenactments and reincarnations of the events of the day” or postmemory of genocide that she suffered and witnessed as a young child (Hirsch,

2012, p. 17). Hirsch states that during journeys of return “the more passive “*mich-Gedachtnis*” (me-memory) ...appeals to the body and the senses” which is “the site of involuntary memory that is often activated and mediated by the encounter with objects and places from the past”, and indicates that:

though objects and places do not themselves carry qualities of past lives, they do hold whatever we ourselves project onto them or invest them with. When we leave them behind we bring something of that investment along, but part of it also remains there, embedded in the object or the place itself. (Hirsch, 2012, pp. 6, 17)

Bose shows how Kajju experiences this passive me-memory or *mich-Gedachtnis* connections with spaces and objects at “Trilokenagar” of Delhi, such as the “blue bridge”, the “brick house” (her childhood home), “railway lines”, “sound of a train”, “the red chunni” (headscarf worn traditionally by Sikh women) (2004, pp. 62 – 64). Kajju’s postmemory remembrances are triggered through the notion of “punctum” or “points of memory” within the images, objects, and spaces of past – which signifies “points of intersection between past and present, memory and postmemory, personal remembrance and cultural recall” (Hirsch, 2008, p.9). Hirsch argues that “punctum” or ““points of memory” ...tells us more about our own needs and desires, our own fantasies and fears, than about the past to which they supposedly bear witness” (Hirsch, 2008, p. 6). The point of memory is so sharp that it “pierces or punctures...through layers of oblivion, interpellating those who seek to know about the past” and “are useful for *purposes of remembrance* – in order to help generate recall” (Hirsch, 2008, p. 9, emphasis implied). Since Kajju strongly wants to know about her past, the notion of punctum interpellates her every time she stares at the objects and spaces of past, which subconsciously pierces through layers of latent memories to generate a remembrance of the embodied 1984 trauma. Hence, she experiences a sense of *déjà vu* and/or flashbacks in the present, followed by nightmares afterwards. In her connection with the Gurdwara, it was the golden spire that acted as a sharp point of memory or punctum that triggered remembrance which subconsciously drove her towards the Gurdwara of her childhood. However, *mich-Gedachtnis* “may not release full accounts of the past, but they can bring back its gestures and its affects” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 17). So, whenever Kajju visited the objects and spaces of traumatic past, she felt a sense of connection to them which activated postmemory, but she remained unsure of her complete past associations with them.

Bose has depicted Kaju's *déjà vu*, flashbacks, and nightmares as signs of her familial postmemory that haunts her in the present through fragmented remembrances of the traumatic past. In her feeling of *déjà vu*, Kaju feels that "she had truly lost it" after continuously "hearing trains" without seeing any (2004, p. 62). The sounds of trains are associated with her traumatic genocidal past of 1984 that haunts her in the present while she is exploring the surroundings of Delhi. As Kaju and Kabir walked on the streets of Trilokenagar, Kaju suddenly "heard the sound of a train" but felt relieved to spot "railway lines" thinking "she wasn't crazy after all" but her eye was fixed on a "*sky-blue bridge* running across the railway station" and "[f]or a minute, she *stood rooted at the spot, staring at the bridge*" (2004, p. 62, emphasis added). The sound of trains accompanied with the objects such as 'sky-blue bridge', the train tracks within Trilokenagar's familiar landscape, all worked together activating points of memory towards remembrance that reconnected Kaju with the past of her family as victims of the Sikh genocide. As Kaju was transfixed on the 'sky-blue bridge', Bublee, the three-year-old daughter of Gobind and Leelavati accompanying Kaju, pulled Kaju's arm before running ahead to join others across "the train tracks" (2004, p. 63). Bublee's encounter at the bridge by running ahead of Kaju on the other side of the train tracks simulated same steps that Kaju took as a child in 1984 when she was desperately chasing her mother; once again, this triggered a sense of *déjà vu*. Kaju reanimates her childhood steps by following Bublee across the train tracks when suddenly "a train passed by, forcing her to wait a little longer", which triggered her latent memories to generate remembrance as she stared at the punctum of "the gaps between the carriages" (2004, p. 63). So,

As she reached the tracks, a train passed by, forcing her to wait a little longer. She watched it hurtle by, then suddenly, *through the gaps between the carriages, spotted a woman with a dupatta over her head*. She was standing almost with her back to Kaju, in slight profile. Staring with great intensity, Kaju did her best to see more, but when the train had passed, there was no one left there. (2004, p. 63, emphasis added)

Hirsch states that "[o]rdinary objects mediate the memory of returnees through the particular embodied practices that they recall. And these embodied practices can also revive the affect of the past, overlaid with the shadows of loss and dispossession" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 17). After returning to the familiar landscape and associating with the objects of past, Kaju subconsciously re-elicited a particular childhood embodied incident that happened in 1984 when she chased her mother, Shanno, across the train tracks after witnessing her father being

burnt alive by mobs. Just as she ran after Bublee in the present time, she ran after her mother in 1984 who climbed up “the blue bridge” after “crossing the railway tracks” towards the train tracks (2004, p. 123). This reoccurrence of past incident in the present time created a sense of *déjà vu* in Kaju and Bublee acted as a mediation that revived these traumatic effects. The gaps between the carriages of a passing by train represents a punctum that pierced through layers of Kaju’s repressed past. Similar to the way Kaju got separated from Bublee by a train between them, in 1984 Amu (Kaju’s nickname at birth) also got separated while chasing her mother when “a train came rushing down the tracks, separating them”, and visible through the gaps of carriages was “her mother’s head in slight profile, turning towards her, covered in chunni” – a memory that remained concealed in Kaju since childhood but was revived with her return to Delhi (2004, pp. 124 – 125).

The narrator reveals that in the present “flashes, [Kaju saw her mother] Shanno turning, looking desperately at her” (2004, p. 125). The re-eliciting of a familial embodied practice in the present time in a familiar landscape kept Kaju ‘between past and present’ and produced the feeling of *déjà vu* or flashback while reviving the past in the present overlaying with the revelation of a loss of mother from her repressed memory. Because of *mich-Gedachtnis*, Kaju remains confused with the revelation and doesn’t know that it’s a memory projection of her biological mother. In Trilokenagar, Kaju feels a “strong physical reaction” where she then encounters a “brick house...with trellis-like openings between the bricks...[and] stared” before claiming, “I know this place” (2004, pp. 71, 63). This brick house was Kaju’s childhood house, but Bose keeps Kaju quiet after the revelation and diverts the reader’s attention to Gobind-uncle’s house where Kaju remains “silent, taking in her surroundings”, and the narrative shifts to Gobind’s accounts (2004, p. 63). This reperformance of the familial embodied practices by Kaju certainly revived the affect of the past, overlaid with the shadows of loss of mother and the dispossession of her childhood home. Is keeping Kaju silent a sign of suppression by Bose? It appears so as Kaju is shown to be confused by the flashbacks, suffering from nightmares in a way that shows her as vulnerable to the affects of the past. In this way, Bose attempts to keep Kaju’s agency and identity suppressed. In fact, Bose has gone into a considerable number of details in establishing victims’ associations with the objects and spaces of the traumatic past of 1984 in her narrative, which may have slipped her into “over-identification” with the victims since writing from a position of being a non-Sikh and a ‘witness by adoption’ she often uses her own imaginations to corroborate associations with objects of traumatic past (Hirsch, 2012, p. 10).

While it is a good attempt of communicating an untold story of 1984 Sikh genocide, according to Mehta's critical perspective, Bose's narrative has limitations. To Mehta, "references to the pogrom eventually show formation of objects rather than subjects", which act as "ways of limiting the domain of 1984 history" and "*authorities of delimitation* that delimited, designated and referred to 1984 within excuse, non-responsibility and avoidance" (Mehta, 2010, pp. 165 – 167). Bose's practice of associating with objects limits the domain of 1984 Sikh genocide. Arguably, as Crownshaw says, the writing is "appropriative and colonizing, both of objects/images that provoke memory work and the lives to which they refer" (Crownshaw, 2004, p. 232). Because Bose writes from a position of being a non-Sikh and a 'witnesses by adoption', she is left with her own imaginations to corroborate associations, which in turn shows that Bose acts as a colonial agent consciously or unconsciously (Crownshaw, 2004, p. 232). That Bose's portrayal of Kaju as suffering from endless melancholia and anxiety increases with each association to the objects of traumatic past, in one way it acts as a diversion for readers from the domain of 1984 history.

In addition to the use of objects and spaces of the past to portray postmemory of 1984, Bose makes use of images by textually narrating photographs in order to communicate affiliative postmemory of the genocide. Hirsch considers photographs important for recollecting traumatic past as stated in her interview below:

More than oral or written narratives, photographic images that survive massive destruction and outlive their subjects function as *ghostly revenants from an irretrievably lost past world*. Photographs, analogue photographs, in particular are *evidence of past presence*. They have an indexical relationship to the object that was before the lens. But they also quickly acquire symbolic significance and thus they are more than themselves. (Columbia University Press, 2016, emphasis added)

Bose doesn't provide any visual images or photographs within her text but instead she describes them in writing while articulating the narrative of victims of 1984 genocide. For example, Kaju appears captivated by a "picture of an older Sikh man" displayed at Gobind's house and "felt a strange contentment" towards it (2004, p. 42). She initially assumed that the photograph of a turbaned Sikh was of Gobind's father but found out from Gobind's accounts that his family "weren't Sikh" and the picture was of "Balbir Singh", who owned a restaurant in Trilokenagar where "Gobind used to work with him" in 1984 (2004, pp. 42, 95 – 96). The reference to Balbir Singh's photo acts as a memory signal for the witness that initially constructs every viewer as

a familial subject “by the forms of mutual *recognition* that define family images and narratives”, which is why Kaju assumed the photograph to be of Gobind’s father (Hirsch, 2012, p. 8, emphasis implied). Balbir’s image “symbolize[s] the sense of family, safety, and continuity that has been hopelessly severed” from Kaju’s own life, and therefore, her feeling of “strange contentment” towards it (Hirsch, 2012, p. 8). Its adoption at Gobind’s house acts as a measure of Kaju’s personal desire for finding out about her own father. However, as noted above, while Balbir’s photograph has no familial relationship to either Kaju or Gobind, it performs as an affiliative post memorial act at Gobind’s house, which opens a dialogue within the characters to discuss the historic accounts of the photograph in order to establish the ‘indexical relationship’ with Balbir. Bose makes affiliative connections to the traumatic past of 1984 through Gobind’s accounts of Balbir’s photo. The photograph of Balbir Singh quickly acquired ‘symbolic significance’ and functioned as a ‘ghostly revenant’ that communicated ‘irretrievably lost past world’ of 1984 to Kaju which led to the discovery that Balbir lost his life as a victim of the Sikh genocide at Trilokenagar (2004, pp. 95 – 96). Balbir’s photograph also exposed Kaju to a secret of Gobind’s guilt as a scared teenager in 1984 who showed Balbir’s hideout to Krishan Kumar or KK, a neighbourhood Hindu thug who “dragged Balbir out of the house” and burnt him alive in front of a “huge crowd yelling out bloodthirsty slogans, baying for Sikh blood” (2004, p. 96). The turbaned photograph of Balbir represents a narrative of the massacre of the genocidal destruction of Sikhs at Trilokenagar, a landscape where Kaju felt a strong sense of familiarity with. Balbir Singh lost his life to the anti-Sikh massacre, but his imprints and traces remain forever with Gobind to represent the genocidal past of 1984. Therefore, Balbir’s photograph acts as the “ghostly revenants, [providing] indexical traces of a past projected into the present, seen in the present as overlays of memory” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 14). This also acts as “evidential force” that “illustrates the integral link photographs provide for the second generation, those who in their desire for memory and knowledge are left to track the traces of what was there and no longer is” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 12). Balbir’s photo was the evidential force that projected traces of genocidal past into the present which provided the seed of thoughts for Kaju to find out more about this unspoken history of the Sikh genocide. Soon after the account of Balbir’s photograph, Kaju’s memory is overlaid with genocidal past to experience “a sense of *déjà vu*”, as described below:

She sat tentatively...feeling herself overcome by a sense of *déjà vu*... suddenly heard loud male voices yelling. A boy jumped out of nowhere... [followed by] two

men, screaming, ‘*Pakdo harami ko! Bachne na paaye!*’ She knew what that meant.

Catch the bastard; don’t let him escape. (2004, pp. 42 – 43)

Kaju had a “strong reaction” to the photographic image of Balbir which triggered a process of memory transmission that manifested into *déjà vu* and later into nightmares that showed Kaju places and objects from her past, such as “Gurbani she’d heard in Bangla Sahib”, “a woman”, “a red chunni” (2004, pp. 43 – 44). The familiar ‘loud male voices yelling’ – ‘Catch the bastard; don’t let him escape’ – were connected to the events of 1984 that Kaju as a child had witnessed mobs yelling and chasing Sikhs in the same manner. Kaju was “shaken by her experience” but at the same time was eager to know more as she “recently developed a burning need to find out more about her origins, ever since she’d come to India” (2004, pp. 43, 61). The photographic image of Balbir acted as a ghostly revenant that triggered Kaju’s flashbacks and nightmares and kept the postmemory of 1984 Sikh genocide alive and drove Kaju forward towards obsessively pursuing her identity journey.

To Hirsch, the photographs are the ‘evidential force’ that represent a visual testimonial which gives the feeling of “the having-been-there, of the past” and becomes “a privileged link between memory and postmemory, a vehicle of the *productive* look that can supplement the active listening of postmemory” (Hirsch, 2012, pp. 12, 10). Though the textual description of the photographs representing the victims in the narrative provide affiliative associations to the traumatic past of 1984, nonetheless, Bose could have provided some visual photographs of the genocide that are available in the public archives. There are no visual photographs in the text. The front cover of the text includes two photographs of actresses from Bose’s film, first one is of a three-year-old Amu whose facial expression shows melancholia and second photograph is of a twenty-years-old Amu absorbingly looking at the surroundings of the Bangla Sahib gurdwara, but neither of these photographs are of real victims or represent the actual postmemory of 1984. While Bose could have made use of real photographs from the public archive of the genocidal past to facilitate the identification, imagination, and projection for the victims and the affiliative postmemory of 1984, she decided against it, which again brings back the question of appropriative identification and finding ‘delicate balance between identification and distance’ with the victims.

Bose’s failure to include real photographs of 1984 in *Amu* symbolises the oppression of victims and the deletion of historic visual representation since she considered them to be unimportant to be included; this further symbolises omission of the Sikh history of 1984. Is

Bose intentionally restricting the use of historical evidence in order to suppress Sikh identity? Whether Bose has done this intentionally or not, it certainly reflects the limitations of the novel. Bose sticks to the textual description of photographs in the narrative of *Amu* even when it concerns the characters making intensive use of the internet to search for the public images of the genocidal past. For example, Kabir is shown to use his father's computer to find general information on 1984 along with the "lists of victims and their survivors" while helping Kaju out with her identity journey, as shown below:

[Kabir] found a website on 1984...[which] presented a list of names and an endless, scrolling sequence of photographs... The photographs, on the other hand, consumed his attention. Swollen, weeping faces alternated with gutted homes and charred bodies. It was difficult to look. (2004, pp. 62, 89).

Here the inclusion of visual photographic evidence from the public archives would have provided Bose with the much-needed balance between identification with, and distance from, the victims.

Bose has certainly described the effects of shock from traumatic photographs experienced by spectators which leaves a lasting impression in their minds, like what is observed in relation to Kabir who found them 'difficult to look [at]' and was affected by them so much that he confronted his father, a senior government official, regarding his involvement into the events of 1984. Bose is clearly aware of the impact the real photographs of 1984 would bring to the viewers as shown in Kabir's reaction, but she fails to include them in the text. As Hirsch argues, the "repetition" of images of the traumatic past "connects the second generation to the first, in its capacity to produce rather than screen the effect of trauma that was lived so much more directly as compulsive repetition by survivors and contemporary witnesses" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 12). She states that the repetition of images acts as "helpful vehicle of transmitting an inherited traumatic past in such a way that it can be worked through" in the postmemory (Hirsch, 2012, p. 12). It is this articulation of the repetitive visual landscape readily available in public records that is needed for the productive look to supplement the descriptive articulation of postmemory, which is missing in Bose's postmemorial representation of 1984. Therefore, Bose has restricted the generational transmission of inherited traumatic past of 1984 by excluding these visual identifications and photographic traces of 1984 in *Amu*. The consequence of this is that she has also restricted the working through process that visual representations would have brought into the production of

affiliative postmemory, which in turn, is an indirect suppression of the Sikh identity, restricting Sikhs from working through process of their collective postmemory of 1984. Perhaps Bose takes this position because as a non-Sikh, she does not have as much empathy with the victims as the Sikhs do. Therefore, Bose's narrative of 1984 genocide is not about producing but rather screening the effects of 1984 trauma for Sikhs, which identifies Bose more with the dominant Hindu ideology of erasing and forgetting the traumatic past of 1984 and moving on.

Through Gobind's accounts, Kaju finds out about the 1984 Sikh genocide and its impact on Sikhs at Trilokenagar as "one of the most badly affected areas...almost 5,000 Sikhs had been killed. They killed everyone with a *turban* and *beard*" (2004, p. 64, emphasis added). Bose shows that the turbaned identity of Sikhs, one of the symbols of the Sikh faith, was targeted and became a symbol of negative connotation, presenting Sikhs as "terrorists", disseminated not just in India but also overseas, as evident when she compares treatment of Sikhs in India to the aftermath of 9/11 in America:

There are so many striking parallels in what is happening in both countries; how *terrorism is being used to justify state terrorism*... There was this young Sikh... [who was] beaten almost to death by some men who blamed him for 9/11. *The turban is now a symbol of Osama*... It is ironic that both these men escaped to America for better lives, but they *couldn't escape their identities*, which have been *manufactured as those of terrorists*. (2004, p. 60, emphasis added)

In Chapter 1, I highlighted the ambivalence of the turbaned Sikhs through exoticization and demonization of turbaned Sikh identity that occurred during Second World War – a legacy of colonialism that has continued in the contemporary period; critically, Bose expresses the same stereotypical colonial discourse here. The turbaned Sikhs were demonised as a threat to the society and treated as 'Others', they were different from 'Self' or the mainstream Hindu culture in India. During 1984 Sikh genocide, the turbaned Sikhs were easily spotted in the crowd and targeted by mobs who dragged them out of their houses, vehicles, and trains to kill them. Some of these accounts are highlighted in *Amu* as incidents that took place in trains during 1984 riots, where mobs scanned train carriages for Sikh families while shouting "*Koi Sardar hai? Nikalo harami ko!*", literally another way of – asking "if there were any Sardars [or turbaned Sikhs in the train and if so] just reveal them" (2004, p. 93). This highlights that Sikhs, once targeted because of their turbans which portrayed them as 'terrorists', were easily identified by mobs during killings in 1984. Bose highlights that it was the Indian state that appropriated Sikhs by

labelling them as ‘terrorists’ as means to justify Operation Blue Star in 1984, as highlighted below:

Had it been simply an issue of terrorists, the army would not have done a frontal assault but would have gone in from behind and captured them. The gurdwara was attacked in such a way so as to *make a point*. Otherwise, why would it have been nationally televised?... It was *done to humiliate the Sikhs, to put them in their place, so that they wouldn't dare to stand up to the Centre*. (2004, p. 75, emphasis added)

The Indian government appropriated and reduced Sikhs to terrorists and portrayed them as a threat to the dominant Indian society, which gave state justifications of military operations to eliminate the threat leading to Operational Blue Star and the Sikh genocide. On the one hand, Bose highlights the global struggles of Sikhs and how their turbaned identity is being victimised by associating them with terrorists, which raises awareness to the repression of Sikhs. Highlighting such affiliative postmemory of 1984 is important as it helps with the collective and generational transmission of traumatic past. Bose narrates that although Sikhs escaped from India for better lives overseas, they couldn't ‘escape their identities’, which implies that the only way for Sikhs to escape the demonisation of turbaned Sikh identity and avoid being classified as terrorists is through escaping from the turbaned identity itself. Critically, Bose neither provides any other way out of this crisis and nor highlights the significance of the turban for Sikhs, which shows that her narrative has limitations and hints towards erasures and omissions of Sikh identity. Similarly, erases Kajju's Sikh identity through acting as a ‘witness by adoption’.

The effects of postmemory create anxieties in subjects, as it is observed in Kajju who indicates various symptoms of negative consciousness and remains anxious to find out the truth. Moreover, her identity journey gets complicated as the past is revealed to her slowly in fragments at various stages of her journey. Although the flashbacks that Kajju experiences are short lived, the process of transmission of memory continues within her subconscious since it embodies her dreams and nightmares providing her clues, from which she wakes up with mixed feelings. She is as anxious to find out the truth as she is determined to chase the clues to enable her to discover her roots. This whole experience creates anxieties which pushes her to do things that she wouldn't normally do, such as, visiting strange places, engaging in helpless and pointless searches, and even secretly searching within her grandmother's personal trunk where she finds an archived document inscribing her past – her birth biological mothers' death

certificate. The discovery of the death certificate marks a testimonial object that links Kaju with her past, but it was partially unreadable with smudged name of her mother as “S-H-A-N” with few missing letters and “last name started with K and ended with R” who lived in Trilokenagar (2004, p. 90). Whereas she found out about the link of 1984 with Trilokenagar through Gobind’s accounts, finding out that her birth mother was connected to the same neighbourhood unnerved her. The options for missing letters on death certificate were “Shanti, Shanno, Shanta, Shannu” and “Kanwar, Kaur, Kakkar, and Kumar”, however “a Hindu name” Shanti Kumar stood out immediately to everyone helping Kaju with her search (2004, pp. 90, 94, 104). Bose does not narrate any possibility of exploring female Sikh last name ‘Kaur’<sup>65</sup> that would have connected Kaju to her biological mother, Shanno Kaur, which shows that the dominant Indian ideology is based on religious segregation. So, Kaju’s parents must be Hindu since she is adopted by a Hindu family. The thought that her biological parents were Hindus of Trilokenagar made Kaju dread their involvement as potential perpetrators in the 1984 genocide. This furthered her anxieties and kept her in a “conflicted” state, as shown below:

Kaju tried to explain how *conflicted* she felt. ‘I don’t want to know and yet I don’t know how to stop myself,’ she said. (2004, p. 102, emphasis added)

Kaju’s conflicted feeling of “don’t want to know” and “don’t know how to stop myself” places her emotionally into the polarities of ‘in-between’ state, in the middle of two contrasting thoughts that influenced her consciousness in the present and kept her anxious.

As discussed before, Kaju occupied a complex liminal existence in the diaspora which she started to traverse by creating routes to pursue her identity journey. However, while pursuing her identity journey she found herself further entangled within the complexities of ‘in-between’ feeling which created anxieties beyond her imagination. She was now torn between the notions of finding out about her parents and not wanting to know the truth. On one side, she established that her parents were somehow connected to the Sikh genocide of Delhi, and on the other side, she dreaded to find out more about them, as thinking she belonged to a Hindu Kumar family, she feared for her parents’ involvement as perpetrators in the massacre. This new in-between state was created at a pinnacle point of Kaju’s identity journey which challenged her further to face the harsh realities of her identity journey’s association with 1984. However, Kaju once again allowed herself to traverse and overcome this ‘in-between’ feeling by deciding to pursue her journey regardless of the complexities surrounding the truth, which

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<sup>65</sup> “Sikh women have the surname ‘Kaur’ (meaning princess) ...As ‘Kaur’, a woman retains her own identity for her whole life” (Kaur Singh, 2011, p. 14)

shows that she is maintaining the aspect of the fluidity of her identity and therefore exhibits a dynamic identity. As Kaju probed Gobind further about the whereabouts of her mother, the process of elimination linked her to an auto rickshaw driver Krishan Kumar, alias KK, the Hindu thug who led mobs in killing Sikhs at Trilokenagar in 1984 including Balbir Singh. The thought of KK potentially being her father both disappointed and overwhelmed her.

Postmemory does not necessarily lead to conclusive findings and could complicate situations, creating further anxieties, and it “always risks sliding into rememory, traumatic reenactment, and repetition” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 10). Recalling a trauma in survivors can result in confusing and perilous consequences as it is the case with Kaju who was regrettably convinced that KK was her father (even though he was not). What didn’t help was the fact that Kaju was relying heavily on the embodied memory transmission of traumatic past which kept showing her a particular “pockmarked” faced person that terrified her in the nightmares, as portrayed below:

A man with a pockmarked face was laughing maniacally, dropping down a lighted match on something or someone. (2004, p. 107)

When Kaju went along with Gobind and Kabir to encounter KK, she immediately noticed that “KK’s face was deeply pockmarked” from a distance which created a sense of familiarity with her nightmares (2004, p. 109). KK’s face was the figure that had populated Kaju’s daydreams and nightmares and the familiarity of KK’s ‘pockmarked’ face resembling her flashbacks and recurrent nightmares made her convincingly assume that it was a recall that has led to a reveal that she dreaded. Kaju heard KK talking about his daughter whose whereabouts were unknown. Since KK’s wife Shanta had died, it gave Kaju the impulse to establish a past connection with KK. Kaju’s intense desire of discovering an association with her biological parents makes her associate with the perpetrator’s mark on his face; indeed, her fantasy of discovering her past is so strong that she believes KK is her father. This type of postmemorial association that Hirsch considers as “traumatic reenactment” and “the appropriations of rememory” results in “self-wounding and retraumatization” of the traumatic past for the subject (Hirsch, 2012, p. 10). Kaju desperately wanted to be identified with the traumatic past, and therefore assumes KK as her father, which exhibits a form of identification that is self-wounding and rememory of the trauma. Kaju identifies herself strongly as the daughter of the perpetrator, which is exhibiting a relationship of ““identification as” that is closer to rememory”, rather than the “identification with” which is a sign of postmemorial identification (Hirsch, 2012, p. 10). When Kabir probes

KK about the “84 riots”, KK reacts that “he had nothing to do with the riots; he was just following orders” and instead blames the politicians at the time (2004, pp. 109 – 110). Projecting the perpetrator’s perspective into the narrative also provides insight into the affiliative postmemory of 1984 from a perpetrator’s viewpoint to get a holistic view of the traumatic past. However, Bose shows that the perpetrator KK carries no signs of remorse or guilt even after twenty years after the atrocities of 1984, which implies that perpetrators have not learnt from the traumatic past and remains in continuous denial, which in turn further highlights traumatic re-enactment and retraumatisation of 1984 for the victims. It also gives the impression that Bose is finding justifications to side with the perpetrators. Parvinder Mehta argues that “Bose brings well the pervasive rhetoric of denial” in the portrayal of perpetrator as “just following orders” (Mehta, 2010, p. 167). KK is portrayed to be proudly proclaiming that in 1984 incidents “[e]veryone wet their pants in Trilokenagar when my name was mentioned”, which lacks empathy and is a sign of rememory for victims depicting the victimisation of Sikhs and the Sikh identity (2004, p. 109).

The encounter with KK had furthered Kaju’s anxieties that manifested into a mixed sense of emotions experienced by her, making her suddenly “absent and desolate[d]” from people around her (2004, p. 116). For instance, Kaju felt “lost and vulnerable” but also experienced “anger flaming up inside her” after she left KK’s auto stand with Gobind and Kabir (2004, pp. 112, 113). Kaju again finds herself in a conflicting ‘in-between’ existence, torn between the two polarities – on one side, she badly wanted to confront KK because a part of her was “still undefeated, still courageous, still searching the truth”, while on the other side, she “felt terrified of meeting that evil gaze again – of looking into his eyes, hearing the truth, and knowing that she was his daughter” (2004, p. 116). These mixed emotions and fluctuations of disparate thought processes, once again, put Kaju in a painful space of liminal existence. The consequences of these mixed emotions were such that whenever she noticed a Sikh person in public, she felt a great sense of collective pain, remorse, and sorrow for Sikhs due to their traumatic past of 1984 while she had “an unbearable thought” that KK, her presumed father, was one of the perpetrators (2004, p. 115). Bose shows that Kaju’s rememory is a form of traumatic reenactment of the past, which exhibits bodily symptoms through which she experiences the feeling of pain and trauma again and consequently puts herself to harm to deal with her emotional anxieties by involving into a strenuous physical exercise regime as she “went for another of her tormented, gruelling runs, punishing her body beyond exhaustion” (2004, p. 115). Once again, she finds herself in the conflicting state of liminal existence and

finds ways to traverse it. Later that evening, she pondered over her situation and decided that “[s]he would do it” – which is when she took a taxi alone on her way to confront KK (2004, p. 116). This shows that Kaju is yet again able to keep her identity on the move regardless of the outcomes, which confirms that she is maintaining the fluid and dynamic aspect of her identity (2004, p. 116).

As Kaju’s identity journey progresses, she is represented as someone who is in less control of her situation and shown to get rather increasingly anxious, compulsive, helpless, and vulnerable to the effects of her traumatic recollections. After finding out about Kaju’s recurrences of nightmares, Keya travels to India and discovers Kaju’s precarious conviction of assuming KK as her father, which concerns her, but she realises that Kaju is “strong enough to know the truth” and discloses details about her biological family (2004, p. 119). Kaju discovers from Keya that her father was “Gurbachan Singh” who drove an auto-rickshaw, her mother was a housewife, “Shanno Kaur”, and she had a little brother, “Arjun, who was just a year old in 1984” and her birth name was “Amrit” but “everybody had known her as Amu”, a nickname given to her by Arjun (2004, pp. 119 – 120). Bose then allows the narrator to provide details of the events of 1984 that affect Amu and her biological family; this connected with her flashbacks, dreams, and nightmares. For example, her father is shown to have fought a lone battle and “died wielding his kirpan” while she tried to save him (2004, p. 126). Her baby brother died when their house was set on fire by the mob led by KK, which is why she remembered his pockmarked face. She tried her best to save her brother and even “bit hard into [KK’s] arm” (2004, p. 124). A three-year-old Amu is portrayed as a brave girl who fought hard trying to save her father and baby brother, but only mother and daughter survived the 1984 massacre. Bose then shifts her narrative to focus on Keya and her efforts to support the survivors of 1984, laying emphasis on her efforts of working in the relief camp with Amu and her mother Shanno. With the shift of attention to Keya from Amu, Keya becomes the central point and is presented to be in control of the generational transmission of familial postmemory that she “heard in bits and pieces from Shanno” in 1984 (2004, p. 126).

Bose shows that all accounts of Kaju’s revelations along with the traumatic knowledge of 1984 are held by either herself as a narrator or by the adoptive mother Keya, who are also in control of Kaju’s agency; this symbolises a form of repression. Kaju as a three-year-old known as Amu had a fighting spirit but the twenty-year-old Kaju is portrayed with a mixed set of feelings. Bose has depicted her as a confused and vulnerable woman who lacks agency when it comes to the effects of her traumatic past and is a passive receiver of the traumatic

knowledge. It is Keya who rescues Kaju from KK and directs the postmemory as a surrogate mother to her. In *Violence and Resistance in Sikh Gendered Identity*, Sikh scholar Jaspal Kaur Singh states that Bose's "appropriation of the 1984 trauma leads her to identifying too closely with the victims – "overappropriate identification" – such that she becomes the surrogate victim... The representation, therefore, doesn't allow Sikh viewers to work towards healing, as it precludes narrative witnessing; the narrative doesn't allow identification for Sikhs" (Kaur Singh, 2020, p. 149). Bose bore witness to the genocidal trauma while she was part of the relief camp and through her representation of Keya, she shows Keya as an extension of herself, who takes the role of a surrogate victim. This representation is based on overidentification as I highlighted before. In one interview, Bose explains that she was traumatised by the pain, sorrow, and sufferings of Sikhs, and is lastingly consumed with the un-forgetful memories of their bloodbath, badly burnt houses, and the stench of blood on the streets (Walsh, 2005). Bose is an affiliative witness of 1984 Sikh genocide by adoption and writes solely from her experiences of the relief camp, which reflects into her narrative often as rememory rather than postmemory. She has failed to include the required distancing devices that would discourage appropriative identification with the victims. She allows Kaju to experience the trauma again which symbolises rememory through over-identification with victims. Although the text creates a promise of revelations, Bose has made Keya to be the agent of transmission of memory here, rather than the daughter herself. By diverting attention from Kaju to Keya, Bose constructs Kaju as an unexamined symbol of vulnerability and repression and constructs Keya as "a surrogate victim: "the 'it could have been me'" (Hirsch, 2012, pp. 166 – 67). For example, Keya acts as a surrogate victim when she shifts focus on herself and her guilt that she "lived with for nearly twenty years" while providing details to Kaju about her mother's suicide and blaming herself for Shanno's death, therefore this unduly calls attention to herself, not the victim, as detailed below:

It's not just that I was late that day. Because the truth is, it would have happened some other time. I was so close to her, how could I not have seen it coming? Why didn't I do more? It was all my fault. I'm sorry. So, so sorry. And I can understand if you blame me. I blame myself. (2004, p. 132)

Bose has not paid attention to keeping her own process of knowledge separate from the postmemory of 1984 to provide witness for the family of victims. Relating that Shanno would have died regardless of whether she was late on the day lacks empathy with the victims and a sign of rememory. In an attempt to give voice to the victims of 1984 Sikh genocide, Bose has

trapped herself into suffering from melancholia produced by 1984, a process that results in repeating the trauma for victims again through her appropriative identification. Perhaps because Bose belongs to a dominant Hindu majority, she uses the narrative space to depict the dominant ideology, portray herself as a traumatised surrogate victim who represents the sympathetic public of India, who during 1984 were helpless and unable intervene on behalf of the Sikhs. Bose appropriates identification further by showing Kaju accepting the received accounts from Keya, who takes them at face value and embracing her at the end as “two of them held on to each other for a long time, their tears melting away all the years of pain” (2004, p. 132).

### **Reassembling Sikh identity**

Though Bose’s narrative embraces the need for the identity journey and for repair of the traumatic past, her idea of repair for Sikhs hints towards forgetting the past and moving on. This – is not the type of reassembling desired by the Sikhs and, therefore, her narrative lacks identification for Sikhs. Her narrative works towards the retraumatization of the Sikhs rather than healing the trauma when the narrator remarks “1984 was finally over” and Kaju felt “whole” and “renewed” after passively receiving the generational transmission of postmemory from Keya, as detailed below:

Kaju woke up that day feeling, for the first time, whole rather than fragmented.

Despite her new painful knowledge, she actually found herself renewed (2004, p. 133)

Bose shows that Kaju was suddenly healed regardless of how painful her traumatic past was before deflecting the focus to Kabir, once again making Kaju disappear from her narrative in the concluding chapter of the novel. Kabir feels pity towards his father, “How trapped he was in the framework of his system. It was hard to blame him: he had no way out” (2004, p. 135). Bose shows sympathy towards the government officials who were involved in 1984 and instead blames the government “system”, which highlights that she wants Sikhs to forget and move on and even stop blaming the government officials for the trauma. Bose is simply propagating a dominant Hindu perspective; however, for the Sikhs, ‘forgetting is not a solution’ as Jarnail Singh and other scholars points out. As Mehta notes,

evasive, passive approach in the context of 1984’s anti-Sikh violence is similarly encouraged in contemporary arguments about moving on and forgetting a dark

chapter of history for the Sikh community... It is not too late to memorialize rather than hide the political machinations, to resist the repressive acts of ignoring or forgetting rather than encourage it under the façade of generous forgiving. (Mehta, 2010, pp. 161, 170).

Bose's solution for reassembling the repressed past for the traumatised victims' of 1984 hints towards the repressive acts of ignoring and forgetting of 1984 trauma only. She encourages this dominant contemporary view towards the end when Kabir calls Kajju after noticing her contemplating alone by a tree near her birthplace in Trilokenagar and looking "[l]ost in her thoughts, she didn't hear him say her name" (2004, p. 135). Kabir then calls her 'Amu' when she looks at him, both then brush their shoulders with fingers intertwined "but nothing was said", as "[t]here was no need for words, nor for tears. Only silence" (2004, p. 136). According to Kaur Singh, "it is suggested, there is no need for words, retribution, forgiveness or reconciliation" and such narratives create "narrative obstacles" providing "indirect point of view, that block the reader from understanding the psyche of the character" (Kaur Singh, 2020, pp. 149 – 150). Also, the writings show "neither witnesses to nor transmits to the narratee nor to the readers the site of transgression" (Kaur Singh, 2020, p. 150). The type of collective reassembling of Sikhs that Bose depicts just encourages narrative of ignoring and forgetting of the traumatic past of 1984, representing repression of Sikhs by silencing the voice of victims under the garb of "no need for words, nor for tears", which is again a sign of rememory and appropriative identification of victims, the one that is aligned to the dominant Hindu ideology rather than the one that provides justice for the Sikhs (2004, p. 136). Therefore, as far as the representation of collective Sikh identity is concerned, a message to forget and move on is far from repair of the traumatic past.

The reassembling of Sikh identity at a subjectivity level for a displaced subject with repressed 1984 memories such as Kajju is complicated, as I discussed before concerning the challenges she experienced while pursuing her identity journey. Though Bose ultimately silenced Kajju in the narrative, there is one aspect that speaks louder than words, which is showing Kajju embracing 'kara' at the end of the novel as "[t]he sunlight glittered on the steel kara around Kajju's wrist" (2004, p. 136). The 'kara'<sup>66</sup> is an article of the Sikh faith worn by Sikhs as one of the Sikh's Five Ks that Kajju is shown to have incorporated into her daily life.

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<sup>66</sup> "Kara means link or bond; the kara is a steel bracelet worn on the right wrist. It is a continuous band with no beginning and no end, just as God has no beginning and no end, and signifies a Sikh's link to the Sikh community and teachings. The *kara* serves as a reminder to do no harm" (<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/bridges/workshop14/handout6>)

Indeed, *kara* is an important article that constructs Sikh identity as it reminds Sikhs to stay united with the god and to remain focused on performing good deeds. This representation of the ‘kara’ symbolises Kaju’s acceptance of her Sikh heritage and the adoption of her past into the present. The reader can only assume that Kaju must have attained ‘kara’ from revisiting Bangla Sahib Gurdwara which signifies that Kaju wants to hold onto her Sikh culture and its articles of faith. Protopapas states that “[t]he very act of entering the *Gurdwara* and prostrating in front of the Guru Granth Sahib immediately positions one within a group consciousness” which means that Kaju positions herself as a Sikh after renewing her personal connections to the Bangla Sahib Gurdwara (Protopapas, 2011, p. 163). I discussed earlier, Kaju was attracted to *Gurbani*, which played at Bangla Sahib Gurdwara where she acted as a deep listener getting fully absorbed within the music of *Sabad Kirtan*. It was revisiting this holy place that made Kaju ‘know her own Self’ and ‘origin’ allowing her to connect to her ancestral “historical consciousness and social and emotional identity that is renewed during each” visit, which is reconstructing Sikh consciousness within her (Protopapas, 2011, p. 163). Protopapas states that “[t]he oral experience of *Gurbani* through recitation, singing, chanting and listening to it transforms one’s consciousness” and “deep listening leads to a place where semiotic meanings of identity are developed, realized and contested” (Protopapas, 2011, p. 163). This suggests that Kaju is working towards developing, realising, and contesting her identity by reconnecting to her roots in Sikhism and its core principle of *seva*. The ‘kara’ around her wrist shows that she wants to preserve the significant object of her inherited past by wearing it in the present with pride. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh states that “Kara (bracelet) around the wrist is the sign par excellence of *krita nasa* – an annihilation of hereditary occupations that determine one’s place in society” (Singh, 2011, p. 11). So, that Kaju has adopted it in her daily life implies that she wants to be recognised as a Sikh in the society; therefore, she also wants to not hide or forget about her past but rather remind herself daily of the annihilation of Sikhs that took place in 1984. Her sitting quietly contemplating by a tree outside her birth house shows that she desires to reflect on her traumatic past in familiar surroundings of her childhood. Though she has been a repressed subject at the hands of surrogate mother, narrator, and Bose herself but Kaju’s ‘kara’ and reacting to her birth identity ‘Amu’ are symbols of repairing her repressed Sikh identity at a personal level. So rather than forgetting the traumatic past and moving on as Bose has implied on numerous occasions in her novel, the representation of ‘kara’ along with the identification in ‘Amu’ symbolises remembering and holding onto the past and seeking a repair of the 1984 trauma that would be acceptable for Sikhs. Moreover, Kaju’s ‘kara’ “is a symbol of *Miri*, of the iron will, the steel which will crush the enemies of the good” and her

*Piri* is discovered through her association with Sikhism, which shows that Amu reflects *Miri-Piri* (Kaur, 2010). This also reflects that Kaju found her agency by wanting to be identified as a Sikh and to be associated with the Sikh culture; therefore, this is a step that shows the development of Sikh consciousness and reassembling of Sikh identity at a subjective level. This development is important at an individual level since it acts as a route to reconstruct collective Sikh identity going forward.

Kaju shows signs of developing Sikh consciousness and identity as proposed in the Sikh theory of ‘identity consumes identity’, where her negative consciousness of suffering from melancholia and symptoms of repressed identity, devoid of roots, and past is being absorbed or consumed into her performance of identity through visiting Gurdwara, wearing ‘kara’, embracing her birth name, and living a life inspired by her past in Sikhism. This shows that Kaju’s negative consciousness is consumed and replaced with positive consciousness, bringing transformations in her identity. Therefore, Kaju’s identity is a transforming identity, which is ready to face any challenges of the contemporary world that may come along her path. The fact that Kaju refused to accept the fabricated accounts about her biological family right from the beginning evidences her determination to find the truth shows resistance. Kaju’s identity journey marks a new beginning for her – a beginning where she understands her past, a beginning that allows her to embrace her Sikh culture and identity, and a beginning that shows that her identity is dynamic, as symbolised by the moment when, while walking with Kabir “[a]bove them, the kite bobbed and soared, almost dancing” (2004, p. 136). The kite taking flight above her symbolises that Kaju is free from her repressed identity bestowed by Keya and looks forward towards a new future by preserving the discovered past through reassembling Sikh consciousness and identity. She remains on the move which shows that she is ready to face new challenges and her identity remains fluid and dynamic throughout.

## **Conclusion**

Bose has depicted Sikhs suffering from endless melancholia and anxiety at the hands of dominant Indian ideology of ignoring and forgetting the traumatic past of 1984 Sikh genocide. Her fragmented narrative is an adoption of the traumatic experiences of others inscribed into her novel and she has struggled to find a delicate balance between identification with the victims and maintaining distance so to avoid appropriation and over-identification. She slips into rememory rather than postmemory on many occasions and while her message of

repair of the traumatic past is not aligned with the desires of the Sikhs, many aspects of postmemory of 1984 Sikh genocide are also present. Therefore, her work is a testimony that writing about generational transmissions of traumatic memories of 1984 Sikh genocide is not straightforward because 1984 is a complex matter for Sikhs who are still seeking for justice to heal the trauma. The Sikh identity has been portrayed to be complex, dynamic, and transforming, which can be reassembled at an individual level with investment into the identity-journey as it is the case for Kaju. Bose has highlighted the liminal existence of the repressed diasporic subjects suffering from the feeling of displacement and not belonging to a particular place, constructing their identities as incomplete, who are much likely to form new identities. The Sikh consciousness reassembles after Sikhs find associations with their past, by holding onto their rich culture and heritage in the present as we find in Kaju, rather than forgetting and moving on as Bose implied. Kaju embraces her Sikh past, her Sikh heritage, and her Sikh articles of faith at the end and remains on the move, which represents her Sikh identity to be dynamic and transformational, the one where desires of roots are transferred into endless possibilities that opened new routes of her Sikh culture and heritage. In the final Chapter 4, I explore Sikh diaspora identity of the contemporary Britain to highlight challenges that Sikhs face in the diaspora that impacts their consciousness and identity.

**Chapter 4: British Sikh Diaspora: The Construction of Sikh Identity in J.K Rowling's  
*The Casual Vacancy* (2012)**

*Center your awareness on seva-selfless service-and focus  
your consciousness on the Word of the Shabad*  
– Guru Amar Das (SGGS, p. 110)

This final chapter is concerned with the British Sikh diaspora, the notions of home, belonging and identity, and their relationship to the construction of diasporic British Sikh identity. I aim to answer questions, such as, how are Sikhs as minorities treated in the diaspora by the dominating host culture? Do they have agency allowing them to position themselves in the diaspora? What makes their identity complex, dynamic and transforming in the diaspora? Although some of these questions are relevant to the wider diaspora debate, my focus is on the British Sikh diaspora. I analyse J.K. Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy* (2012) through a postcolonial lens incorporating concepts taken from the diaspora writer Caryl Phillips, and various scholars on diaspora and migrations, such as Homi Bhabha, Avtar Brah, Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall, along with concepts of Sikh identity and Sikhism introduced so far, to critically examine the assimilation, conflicts and conditions of Sikhs in Britain as portrayed in the novel. I argue that the diasporic Sikh identity is not rigid but fluid, flexible and producing identity, which exhibits the transforming possibilities of Sikhism. I will show that Sikhs have agency and use it as an effective strategy to contest the ideas of a diasporic home and sense of belonging, and actively construct identities while resisting marginalisation and contributing to the well-being of humanity in accordance with the tenets of Sikhism tempered by the diasporic experience. I show that while Sikhs in the diaspora live in a displaced position due to cultural differences and marginalisation, the diaspora also provides them with opportunities to explore new alternate modes of belonging allowing them to reposition and reconfigure their identities.

I am interested in the British Sikh diaspora because of Britain's colonial association with Sikhs in the Indian sub-continent that dates to the period of Sikh Empire, which later resulted in the displacements of Sikhs to Britain. British colonisers encountered Sikhs in the Indian sub-continent within the kingdom of Punjab, "the Sikhs' homeland", that was part of the Sikh Empire (Myrvold, 2016). The British authorities fought hard against the Sikhs in Anglo-Sikh Wars, strategically exploiting the last remaining heir, His Highness Maharaja Sir

Duleep Singh<sup>67</sup>, which eventually led to the annexation of the Sikh Empire in 1849 (BBC Four, ‘The Stolen Maharajah: Britain’s Indian Royalty’, 2018). After annexation, the Maharaja was separated from his mother and exiled into Britain as a teenager by the British colonisers where Queen Victoria became his godmother in 1854. The Maharaja was “put under pressure to present the legendary Koh-i-Noor diamond, allegedly freely, to the Queen as a gift...[which] was as emphatic a mark as could be of the Punjab’s subservience to the British throne” (Boehmer, 2015, p. 89). In the UK, he was befriended by the leaders of British Raj where he spent his adult life as a tremendously wealthy<sup>68</sup> English gentleman named the ‘Black Prince of Perthshire’; however, his relationship with Britain in the latter stages of his life turned sour (BBC Four, 2018). Since the beginning of the British Sikh diaspora in the nineteenth century, Sikhs have had a rather complex relationship with Britain. This relationship was underlined by the painful displacements of Sikhs in the European landscape who helped Britain in the great wars (as discussed in my Chapter 1) and contributed to the post-war reconstruction period of Britain. That said, the displacement of Sikhs into Britain has shaped the contemporary British society today, where Sikh identity, values and cultural beliefs have been celebrated and maintained by Sikhs as part of multi-cultural ethos of Britain. Eleanor Nesbitt, researching on the context and evolution of the Sikh diversity in the UK, relates the complex colonial relationship of Britain with the Sikhs, which has ultimately led to the formation of UK Sikh diaspora:

The complex interactions between Britain and the Sikhs in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries concern not only colonial India but the British Empire more widely, and relate directly to the UK Sikh diaspora. (Myrvold, 2016)

As the UK Sikh diaspora is a consequence of the British Empire, it becomes crucial to examine the contemporary treatment of Sikhs in Britain from the postcolonial perspective as observed through the analysis of *The Casual Vacancy*. All my chosen novels have elements of diaspora in them and most of them are associated to the UK Sikh diaspora itself. For example, in Chapter 1 on Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*, the Sikh protagonist, Kirpal Singh, lived in England helping in the Second World War, before he moved to Italy and then ultimately back to India to join the nationalist struggle fighting for the freedom of India. In Chapter 2 on Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, the educated central Sikh male character, Iqbal Singh, who lived in

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67 His Highness Maharaja Sir Duleep Singh was a five-year-old boy (fifth and last ruler of the Sikh Empire) guided by his mother on the throne carrying his father, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh’s legacy of the Sikh Empire.

68 The Maharaja lives a “life of a British aristocrat at his orientalised country estate Elveden on an India Office pension, and was frequent guest at Osborne House” (Boehmer, 2015, p.89)

England and later returned to India during independence, witnessed the pain and suffering of the Partition and is seen forming new transnational routes towards the end. In Chapter 3 on Bose's *Amu*, the 21-year-old American protagonist Kaju plans an identity journey by tracing transnational routes to India to uncover the truth about her forgotten parents and ends up reassembling her Sikh identity through the postmemories of the traumatic events of the 1984 Sikh genocide. Therefore, the examination of Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy* allows me to conclude the study as the novel depicts challenges of assimilation for Sikh migrants and their descendants within the contemporary British culture.

After J. K Rowling's enormous success with the children's novels<sup>69</sup>, she continued her writing targeting the wider adult audience and produced her first novel for adults in 2012, *The Casual Vacancy*, which sold over 1 million copies worldwide and won the Goodreads Choice Awards 2012 in Best Fiction category. Due to the success of *The Casual Vacancy*, it was adapted into a British television drama miniseries broadcast on BBC in 2015. Rowling focuses on various themes in the novel, such as hypocrisy, racialism, social issues, politics, death, responsibility, morality and religion. She revealed in her interview with James Runcie (2012) that 'responsibility' was the title she had initially thought of for the novel, but later changed it to *The Casual Vacancy* because of its multiple meanings. One of the meanings of the title relate to the casual vacancy of a Parish counsellor that is created following the death of a councillor in the novel. However, the other meaning is to do with the weaknesses and emptiness in the lives of the characters, who seem to be filling their vacant lives by indulging in immoral activities. Misunderstanding one's responsibility leads to a vacancy within that creates an inner conflict, which, in turn, is seen in most of the characters. In an interview with Jennifer Byrne (2012), Rowling explained that while some characters fill their inner vacancy or emptiness with drugs, others fill it with bad relationships, and the rest try to fill it with food, drink, or irresponsible behaviour.

Rowling explained that in her novel, the family of colour "had to be Sikhs" and she wanted them to be "a complex family" of "second generation Britons (Wagner, 2012). So, they are insiders and outsiders simultaneously" (Wagner, 2012). Further, she claims that "[i]n the book, it is Sikhism that provides religious morality, not the Church of England" (Firstpost, 2012). Why did Rowling portray second-generation British Sikhs as 'insiders and outsiders

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<sup>69</sup> Rowling is a British author, screenwriter, producer and philanthropist, globally renowned for her work on children's Harry Potter series of fantasy novels, which have won many awards and sold over 500 million copies worldwide. She was born in Yate, Gloucestershire, where she attended school before graduating from the University of Exeter with a Bachelor of Arts in French and Classics in 1982. She started her career working as a researcher and bilingual secretary in London at Amnesty International and later in Manchester at Chamber of Commerce, before she conceived the idea for the Harry Potter series.

simultaneously'? What makes the Sikh family complex? Why is Rowling keen to emphasise the religious morality of Sikhs? What is it that has fascinated her about Sikhism as a native English writer? These are some of many questions that come to mind, which makes her novel particularly interesting for research as it provides a valuable perspective of the UK Sikh diaspora from the position of a British native writer. Rowling portrays British Sikhs as victims of 'corrosive racism', an aspect that she feels 'very much' exists in the British society. Writing about the Jawandas, the Sikh family in the novel, she states:

The Jawandas in this novel are the *middle-class dream* in many senses: they represent the new *upper echelons of society*. You have two very high-achieving parents, you have three beautiful children, things are going wrong in that family – but one of the reasons is that there is a *huge amount of pressure* from many different places – on the mother in particular. One of the pressures upon her is a form of *corrosive racism; racism that's unacknowledged* – and that's why it's corrosive, *because it's very much there*. (Wagner, 2012, emphasis added)

Rowling uses the idea of 'corrosive racism' to highlight the pressures of British society on Sikhs as minorities, depicting conflicts with the dominating subjects, which reproduces both colonial and racist discourse. She highlights the Eurocentric views of the society that negatively emphasises cultural differences of multicultural Britain, which poses an assimilation challenge for minorities. Out of the total 34 characters, the few who stand out include the Jawandas, a wealthy Sikh family of five. The identity of the Sikh family is questioned and made rigid by some white native English locals which articulates racist discourse committed by the dominant factions of Pagford. While the demographics of fictional town Pagford is majority white English, the neighbouring fictional city of Yarvil is shown to be multi-cultural. Rowling not only highlights conflicts and issues experienced by British Sikhs when integrating with the dominant culture, but she also shows that the actions of Sikhs in Britain allow them to rise above the racism that exists in the British society. The novel presents Sikhs who adopt diverse ways to contest and negotiate their diasporic position at Pagford. In the process they transform their identities, therefore, demonstrating that Sikh identity is complex and dynamic, and transforms depending on the cultural context and the circumstantial needs.

After its publication in 2012, the novel stirred a ruckus within the Sikh community across the world leading to the involvement of Avtar Singh Makkar, the head of SGPC<sup>70</sup>, the central authority on Sikh religion at Amritsar (Suroor, 2012). The main concern was around complaints over the derogatory language used in the book, and the portrayal of a female Sikh teenager as ‘hairy’, which was collectively perceived by the Sikh community as being disrespectful towards the faith. Makkar reiterated Indian media’s concerns with Rowling’s negative representation of the Sikhs through her teenage Sikh character; he demanded an urgent review of the novel by the Sikh intellectuals. This controversy attracted a worldwide attention of the Sikhs, many of whom, after reviewing the novel, were thankful to Rowling for portraying Sikhs in narrative and highlighting the discrimination faced by minorities in the diaspora. Indeed, according to the author of sikh24.com, RSK, it is a “literary masterpiece” (RSK, 2012). The editor of sikhchic.com, T. Sher Singh, writes that the attack on the novel by Indian media “hits a new low... I think this is a landmark book for us. From a social engineering perspective, it changes things in the story-telling about Sikhs forever ... by moving it several notches higher” (Singh, 2012). After analysing the novel, it becomes clear that Rowling has indeed carried out a “vast amount of research on Sikhism”, as she claims, which makes it a landmark book that represents the contemporary Sikh diaspora of today’s as I show in this chapter (SikhNet, 2012). In response to the ruckus, Rowling states that:

Sikhism is fascinating. I was friendly with a girl, young woman, in my twenties when I was living in London and she was from a Sikh family. We had one big conversation about Sikhism that I can remember, and it planted this seed in my head. In its founding principles, Sikhism is about the *most egalitarian religion* I have ever stumbled across. She told me that expressly in the Sikh religion women are given equal billing, if you like, to men. So anyway, when I came to Pagford, and I very deliberately wanted a family of colour in the book, *Sikhism was an interesting counterpoint* to the fact that clearly this is a parish council, we have a beautiful little church to which no one really goes, *unless if someone dies*. Meanwhile, across the road, you have a Sikh family whose morality is very interesting to me, the *Sikh version of morality is very interesting* to me. (Rowling, BBC Front Row, 2012, emphasis added)

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<sup>70</sup> Head of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee which is an organization in India responsible for the management of gurdwaras, Sikh places of worship.

Rowling's fascination with Sikhism comes through strongly in her interview and she uses it to highlight religious and cultural differences in the British society, that I will explore throughout the chapter. In the middle of the British society, Rowling has provided 'an interesting counterpoint' through a Sikh family, Jawandas, who own the grandest of the Victorian houses in Pagford. Dr Parminder Jawanda, a female GP, and also one of the sixteen elected Parish Councillors, supports the Fields<sup>71</sup> and is a force to be reckoned with by that the anti-Fielders feel threatened. Parminder, who along with Barry Fairbrother, campaigned in the local politics supporting the Fields, is shocked by Barry's sudden death. She is a shrewd woman originally from Birmingham but has lived in Pagford for sixteen years. Her husband, Dr Vikram Jawanda, works as a cardiac surgeon at a hospital in Yarvil and keeps himself out of the politics of Pagford. Both Vikram and Parminder represent second-generation Sikhs while their three children, Jaswant, Sukhvinder, and Rajpal, are the third-generation Sikh teenagers. Rowling shows that Jawanda's oldest daughter, Jaswant, and their youngest son, Rajpal, both excel in their studies at Winterdown school, while their sixteen-year-old daughter, Sukhvinder, is dyslexic and underperforms. Sukhvinder's mother does not accept the fact that she has a learning difficulty and compares her with other siblings and in the process treats her badly. Sukhvinder's father, who lovingly calls her "Jolly", remains busy with his work and watches TV in the evenings with Rajpal (2012, p. 146). At school, Sukhvinder is a victim of racial abuse and bullying suffering at the hands of her classmates Fats Wall and Dane Tully who target her because of her race and looks. Therefore, she is conscious of her appearance and considers herself to be "ugly and [possessing] disgusting body" (2012, p. 145). Sukhvinder does not have many friends but recently gets befriended by a new mixed-race girl, Gaia Bawden, who "had taken such an unaccountable fancy to her", recently relocated from London to Pagford where she is distinctively recognised "[d]ark" (2012, pp. 145, 95). Sukhvinder is also one of the three hackers who posts lies on website as 'The Ghost of Barry Fairbrother' to damage her mother's reputation for neglecting her. The reader finds that Rowling has portrayed only Sukhvinder and Parminder most out of other Sikh characters, both represented at an equal footing with other main characters, who can be considered as protagonists in the novel.

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<sup>71</sup> Pagford is engulfed with the local politics of 'the Fields', which has divided the people into two factions – the Fields supporters and the anti-Fielders. The Fields is named after the most deprived council estate on the outskirts of Yarvil but has remained part of Pagford. It has rising social issues, crime rates, and is shown to be "a memory of nightmare" (2012, p. 46). Anti-Fielders refer to it as "bloody Fields" and look down on the people who live there and their children interacting with natives of Pagford (2012, p. 48).

## Home, belonging and the ‘in-between’ identities

Avtar Brah refers to “home” as “a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no-return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origin’... [and] home is also the lived experience of a locality” (Brah, 1996, p. 192). Though Brah identifies diaspora with displacement and dislocation, her main focus is on the everyday experience of people of their displaced diaspora locations. She is interested in establishing how the diasporic subjects position themselves in their ‘home’, which marks a physical as well as an emotional location filled with “experience of the pain and pleasures, the terrors and contentment, or the highs and humdrum of everyday lived culture” (Brah, 1996, p. 192). She further states that:

The question of home, therefore, is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances. It is centrally about our political and personal struggles over the social regulation of ‘belonging’... Diasporas are places of long-term, if not permanent, community formations...[and] potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings. They are contested cultural and political terrains where individuals and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure. (Brah, 1996, p. 193)

Brah’s concepts of ‘home’ are applicable to the Sikh family who are portrayed as victims of ‘corrosive racism’ and are fashioned as ‘insiders and outsiders simultaneously’ allowing them to feel both accepted and rejected in Pagford. This is akin to the condition of diaspora Sikhs as discussed in my Chapter 3 where the protagonist felt a sense of displaced belonging towards India which she initially considered her home upon return from America. In this novel, the Sikh identities of the Jawanda family clash with the dominating groups of the Walls, the Mollisons, the anti-Fielders, etc, at Pagford, who make them uncomfortable which challenges their sense of home and belonging and provides the family with an opportunity to reconfigure their diasporic positions at Pagford. Rowling has mainly shown the victimisation of Parminder and Sukhvinder by Pagfordians<sup>72</sup> while leaving the other three Sikh characters in a non-conflict location. The British born Sukhvinder is a complex character who remains in constant conflict with her identity and sense of belonging. She feels excluded by the dominant groups of teenagers who are racist towards her. Her mother’s position as a councillor and GP is disavowed and interrogated by the dominant groups of adults – the anti-Fielders. Some

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<sup>72</sup> People of fictional town Pagford

characters make them feel at home in Pagford while others aggressively challenge, exclude and do not accommodate them due to being threatened by their cultural differences. Both mother and daughter suffer differently from the emotional consequences of the racist discourse targeted by dominant groups allowing them to contest their sense of home and belonging in Brah's concept of diaspora and its multiple complexities. This opens up a question whether their sense of home and belonging to exists in Pagford or elsewhere?

Before I explore 'home' as the 'lived experience of a locality' in the context of Jawandas, I would like to examine their current desire for their ancestral place of 'origin' Punjab, where they also "owned a patch of ancestral land...which, Parminder, the oldest, had inherited from their father in the absence of sons" (2012, p. 316). Jawanda's farm in Punjab was a major place of desire in the diasporic imagination of Parminder's father and symbolises a place of 'no-return'. The desire of returning to the ancestral place of origin is a depleting diasporic imagination especially in the second and third generation Sikhs who prefer to associate with ancestral place of 'origin' through a visitor/tourist relationship in the form of setting up new routes (rather than roots), as evident from Jawandas below:

The farm occupied a place in the *family consciousness* that Jaswant and Sukhvinder had *sometimes discussed*. To their slightly *amused astonishment*, a few of their older relatives seemed to live in the expectation that the whole family would move back there one day ...The farm caused regular arguments among her mother's family. (2012, p. 316, emphasis added)

The farm only existed in the imagination of the 'family consciousness' and was 'sometimes discussed' between third-generation Jawandas but is associated with the 'regular arguments' that the second-generation Parminder has with her paternal family in Birmingham. This shows that the farm is more important to Parminder than her children, therefore, it occupies a diminishing space in the generational consciousness. Besides, that the narrative of visiting the farm is completely missing in the novel shows that it plays an insignificant role in their lives in Britain. The arguments that Parminder has with her mother hints that parts of the farm are being sold off by her cousins in Punjab as "Harpreet still wants to sell off that bit for the road" (2012, p. 317). This further emphasises that farm resides in the fading consciousness and is a place only explored when Parminder has arguments with her mother. Parminder's children have associated this ancestral place of origin with their mother's anxiety, as evident when Jaswant talks about her maternal grandmother as "Nani's gone off on one again...[and]

Sukhvinder wished that her mother had not been bothered about the farm tonight of all nights [by Nani]; it never put her into a good mood” (2012, p. 316). This shows that Parminder kept getting dragged into ‘her mother’s family’, matters which the children did not like as it had always affected Parminder’s mood at home. The Jawandas appear to associate Punjab with a place for visiting as visitors or travellers, so, they hold a stranger’s relationship with it. For example, when Vikram discusses visiting Amritsar during summer, Parminder at once dismisses it entirely on the grounds that it is a “big tourist trap”, but she feels guilty afterwards (2012, p. 436). This shows that places in the Punjab are unknown territories; hence Jawandas identifies as strangers to the country. This further symbolises that the farm carries a painful association, and Punjab remains a place of ‘no-return’, which shows that Jawandas’ sense of home and belonging does not exist in the desires of an ancestral place overseas in Punjab.

This invites me to explore Jawandas’ concept of ‘home’ in the ‘lived experience of a locality’ of Britain by considering ideas of the diaspora writer Caryl Phillips, who has written about the emotional consequences and the challenges of living in a place where one experiences the feeling ‘of, and not of, this place’<sup>73</sup>; mixed sentiments of being included and excluded from a place. Phillips argues that difficulties of living in such a displaced state results in “high anxiety” of belonging leading to difficult emotional consequences (Phillips, 2001, pp. 1 – 4). Rowling allows us to experience this feeling in Sukhvinder who feels ‘of, and not of’ her native town of Pagford, which shows her displaced sense of belonging in the diaspora. Sukhvinder’s relationship with Pagford as ‘home’ is complicated. The memory of regular racial bullying in the form of name-calling directed at her at school has created a sense of ‘Othering’ that makes her feel isolated. Moreover, she does not get the support that she needs from her family at home, who are oblivious to the abuse that she is receiving at school. On one hand, the daily racial violence and bullying that she suffers from, which results in inflicting self-harm and a feeling of being suppressed by her mother, makes her identify with the ‘another world’ where she desires to ‘belong completely’, as evident below:

The idea of having *another world where you belonged completely*, where you had a footballer boyfriend and a gang of cool, devoted friends, seemed to [Sukhvinder], even if you had been forcibly removed from it all, an awe-inspiring and enviable state of affairs. (2012, p. 304, emphasis added)

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73 I have explored this feeling in the protagonists of Chapter 2 and 3 as well.

The notion of belonging completely to ‘another world’ is constructed by Sukhvinder through her interactions with Gaia, her new friend, after learning about the cultural differences in her ex-lifestyle of London that she has left behind by relocating to Pagford. This creation of ‘another world’ is not tied to a particular geographical location or a physical place as such, but rather to an imaginary space that exists only in Sukhvinder’s mind – a space where she desires to experience a new way of being and where she wants to be welcomed by ‘cool, devoted friends’, unlike her present experiences of Pagford. On the other hand, Sukhvinder’s feeling ‘of, and not of’ Pagford complicates further when she visits “her mother’s family in Birmingham, to the streets where nearly everyone was brown, and the shops full of saris and Indian spices, [which] made Sukhvinder feel dislocated and inadequate” (2012, p. 302). This implies two things – Birmingham is more alien to her than Pagford and secondly, her ‘displacement’ into Birmingham ‘where nearly everyone was brown’ would never work due to greater cultural differences compared to Pagford. From this I can say that if she was to be uprooted to her ancestral farm in Punjab in India (for the sake of the argument), such experience of displacement could make her more anxious due to even greater cultural differences that would exist there as compared to Birmingham. For example, her reasons for feeling ‘dislocated and inadequate’ in Birmingham partially stemmed from her interactions with cousins, who live a culturally different lifestyle from hers. Along with many other differences, one of the major ones is their ability to speak her ancestral mother tongue of Punjabi – “Her cousins spoke Punjabi as well as English; they lived a cool city life; her female cousins were good-looking and trendy”, while Sukhvinder could not speak Punjabi, lived a boring West Country town life and considered herself to be “ugly and disgusting” (2012, pp. 302, 146). In addition, her cousins “laughed at her West Country burr and her lack of fashion sense, and Sukhvinder hated being laughed at” (2012, p. 302). Rowling not only highlights variations in the social Sikh identities in culturally different locations within Britain, but she also shows that speaking the ancestral language of Punjabi fluently is an important desire within British Sikh diaspora. Since Sukhvinder didn’t know Punjabi, she was not considered to be a proper Sikh. The language became a major factor for Sukhvinder’s identification as ‘Other’ by her cousins, as someone who does not fit in her cousins’ idea of Sikh identity, which shows multiple views within British Sikhs and therefore articulates complexities in the Sikh identity. From her visits to Birmingham, Sukhvinder “had always liked returning to Pagford”, which shows that she identifies herself with Pagford only, but it is not the Pagford of present but rather the one imagined from her past memories (2012, p. 302). She reflects to a time when Pagford truly “felt... like a haven”, which was “[b]efore Fats Wall had begun his regime of *daily* routine,

[and] before...she had found herself in *daily* contact with Dane Tully” (2012, p. 302, emphasis added). This shows that the major cause of Sukhvinder’s identity crisis with her sense of home and belonging in Pagford (which she refers to as “the world of oddness that lived insider her”) was to do with her ‘daily’ pain and suffering of racist bullying perpetrated by Fats and Dane who didn’t accommodate her there, which created the present feeling ‘of, and not of’ Pagford in her (2012, p. 231). Sukhvinder’s identity is complex, the one that is “far from fixed or pre-given” identity that is defined by the society and Othering (Brah, 1996, p. 444).

Sukhvinder has constructed few imaginary spaces of desires in the diaspora created from her feelings of being ‘an insider’ – first, is in her nostalgic feelings of ‘*haven*’ constructed from her past memories of Pagford, and second is her sense of belonging completely to ‘*another world*’, a desire constructed subconsciously inspired from Gaia. Sukhvinder’s ‘*world of oddness that lived inside her*’ was a subconscious dark space of her ‘self’ that was formed as a consequence of marginalisation and experiences of being ‘an outsider’ or excluded, which lead to construction of negative space of pain and sufferings; thus, inflicting self-harm and emergence of suicidal thoughts in her. Her identity is therefore split between the multiple polarities of being excluded and included; the ambivalence ‘of, and not of’ Pagford; the mixed emotions of being an insider and outsider; the new friendship of Gaia along with desires of ‘another world’ and ‘haven’ over the contrasting experience of her daily racist bullying, mother’s suppression and self-harm. She remains split in-between the cultural differences of being a Sikh within the culture of Pagford versus the culture of Sikhs in Birmingham and undergoes ‘highs and humdrum of everyday lived culture’ of Britain. The feelings of living ‘in-between’ these multiple levels of polarities influence her daily emotions and sense of belonging in Pagford, which Homi Bhabha refers to as occupying “a liminal space”, as discussed in my previous chapters that has characteristics specified below:

liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between...black and white...prevent[ing] identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. (Bhabha, 2004, p. 5, emphasis added)

Sukhvinder stands at this ‘in-between’ liminal position where she is emotionally drained by multiple contrasting cultural identities and experiences, distinctively recognised by fluctuations in her feelings of being an ‘insider and outsider’. Her racist bullying and introvert representation at school kept her an outsider while her newly formed friendship with Gaia

maintained an insider status. The same is true of her experience at home. The treatment by her cousins from Birmingham locates her as an outsider, while her experience with everyone else except her mother at home made her feel an insider. In this liminal existence, her identity remains in constant conflict, moving between multiple conflicting experiences and diaspora spaces, which constructs the difference between being an 'insider and outsider' where her identity is continuously challenged and ends up belonging to neither experience completely. Bhabha considers living in such a 'liminal space' for minorities to be "marked by a tenebrous sense of survival, living on the borderlines of the 'present'...[or] current" which he recognises to be a space of both anxiety and privilege (Bhabha, 2004, p. 1). This anxiety is clearly a result of living in such existence; but Bhabha argues that the in-between spaces also "opens up the possibility of" new identities so should not be dismissed but considered a privileged space of existence because of its potential to construct new forms of identities (Bhabha, 2004, p. 5). Bhabha's proposed solution for getting out of anxieties of such existence is to go "beyond" and cross the borderlines to an "unknowable, unrepresentable [space] without [considering] a return to the 'present'" and carve out a "passage through a Third Space" of "cultural hybridity" created from cultural difference by merging aspects of two contrasting cultures (Bhabha, 2004, pp. 5, 53). The question that arises is whether Sukhvinder would be able to travel beyond the temporalities of the liminal existence and create this new Third Space or go beyond overcoming liminal anxieties in a different way transforming herself through cultural difference by shifting her identity within multiple diasporic polarities. I will explore these ideas later, but for now it is clear that Sukhvinder is standing at the borderline of conflicting liminal space hoping to transit to a place beyond to conceive her imaginations, and therefore experiences moments of identity crises in the ambivalence 'of, and not of' Pagford, which exhibits a painful and unstable sense of in-between identity in her.

Like Sukhvinder, Parminder's attitude to Pagford as 'home' is also complex. But unlike Sukhvinder, Parminder makes her presence felt in Pagford, contesting and transgressing the boundaries of the dominant culture while standing firmly and authoritatively as a councillor in support of the Fields, which shows that she has agency. She is originally from Birmingham, has lived in Pagford for the past sixteen years, and is known for challenging the status quo of Pagfordians especially when standing against the dominating old guard – Howard and Shirly Mollison; but "Parminder [does] not have defenders [and] was unpopular with the Pagford's old guard" (2012, pp. 37, 128). She suffers the consequences of the racist discourse, which makes her feel excluded and an outsider. A few characters such as Colin and Tessa Wall

supported her and made her feel included and an insider. So, “stern, self-contained”, Parminder only showed “compassion” to Colin, who was “her dogged champion” who supported and considered her “[a]n excellent GP...[and] would snap at anyone who dared to criticize her” (2012, pp. 95, 128). Tessa, who nicknamed her Minda, always felt that the Mollisons were unfair to her, as shown below:

Tessa thought, grossly unfair: Parminder *worked hard at every aspect of her Pagford life*: school fetes and sponsored bakes, the local surgery and the Parish Council, and her reward was *implacable dislike* from the Pagford old guard; (2012, p. 291, emphasis added)

Parminder’s ‘implacable dislike’ of the dominating faction made her anxious, and allowed her to experience the feeling ‘of, and not of’ Pagford. On one hand, she identified herself as belonging “somewhere beyond” – an imaginary space that resides only in the nostalgic past “memories of her gang of school mates back in Birmingham...and the medical colleagues with whom she had studied and trained” (2012, p. 128). On the other hand, she identified herself strongly with Pagford, actively proclaiming her diasporic position, ‘working hard at every aspect of Pagford life’, constantly contesting her position as a councillor, interrogating the accepted norms, and after Barry’s death it is Parminder who puts up a good fight against anti-Fielders. This also shows that even though Parminder experiences the feeling ‘of, and not of’ Pagford, she associates herself more in Pagford than Birmingham. However, Parminder’s existence is also in the liminal space, split ‘in-between’ multiple polarities of her experience of being an insider and outsider while living in between two cultures, Sikh on one side over English on the other, with her identity fluctuating between the ambivalence of ‘love and hate’ during conflicts, as shown below:

*Love and hate*, Parminder thought, a little frightened by her own honesty. *Love and hate, that’s why I’m here.* (2012, p. 370)

Part of her identity resonates with the feeling of ‘love’, inspired from aspects of Sikh identity and belief, such as “Bhai Kanhaiya, the Sikh hero who had administered to the needs of those wounded in combat, whether friend or foe...[giving] aid indiscriminately... [due to his strong belief that] *the light of God shone from every soul*, and that he had been unable to distinguish between them” (2012, p. 342, emphasis added). She is trying to follow the footsteps of Bhai Kanhaiya but is challenged by anti-Fielders which brings conflicts in her, which creates

ambivalence of love and hate. The other part of her identity resonates with the feeling of hatred when she thinks about anti-Fielders. She questions the ideology of Bhai Kanhaiya and feels that “[s]he was not Bhai Kanhaiya, who could not see a difference between the souls of allies and enemies; she saw no light of God shining from Howard Mollison. She derived more pleasure from the thought of Howard losing” (2012, p. 369). Although she had mixed feelings about Bhai Kanhaiya’s philosophy, she does not discount it or replace it with another culturally different philosophy, which shows that she does not occupy a Third Space of cultural hybridity. Therefore, Parminder’s existence in Pagford is in the in-between space where she moves around bestriding two cultures, while experiencing the feeling ‘of, and not of’ Pagford, where her identity echoed ‘love’ towards the Fields and everything that Barry stood for, but then shifted her ‘hatred’ towards Mollisons and the anti-Fielder. This implies a moving sense of consciousness. Even though her sense of identity and belonging altered regularly in the ambivalence of ‘love and hate’ in the diaspora, she was able to cope better than Sukhvinder in her liminal position. This was due to Parminder’s ability to shift between multiple polarities rather than remaining static at the liminal existence like Sukhvinder. Parminder’s ability to cross the borderlines of a liminal position bestriding both cultures, without losing her own Sikh cultural values shows that she has a sense of shifting or transforming Sikh identity, which allows her to contest her position in Pagford.

What is interesting is that Parminder’s husband, Vikram is treated like an ‘insider’ by Pagfordians including the anti-Fielders mainly because of the benefits everyone gets from Vikram working as a surgeon at the hospital. He receives “a barrage of jocular banter” and special treatment from Howard because he saved his life by performing a “quadruple bypass, seven years previously” (2012, p. 96). Whenever Howard saw Vikram entering his delicatessen, he made him jump to “the head of the queue... [, offered him] free samples and a little extra of everything he bought”, but these antics had embarrassed Vikram to a point that he rarely visited the deli (2012, p. 96). This indirectly implies that if a circumstance had never arisen for Vikram to save Howards’ life, then the Mollison most likely to have not spared Vikram from the racist discourse either. Although this is hard to quantify especially when Rowling has not given much narrative to Vikram, but she emphasises this subtly in the difference of treatment that he receives in comparison to Parminder. Perhaps Rowling is highlighting gender inequalities by showing that Parminder as a female gets targeted rather than Vikram to emphasise Howard’s old fashioned and patriarchal English ideology to help justify his dominance and Parminder’s subordinate place as a female in Pagford. The difference

Mollison applies between his treatment of Vikram and Parminder raises many questions which are out of the scope of this research, but it highlights that there is a huge expectation from descendants of migrants in Britain to be included in society. Vikram was in a privileged situation due to his social class and education, being a doctor and saving Howard's life that collectively made him become an insider: however, a large number of migrants and their descendants would not be in such a situation. Vikram was "spoken of with proprietary approval" even though he "rarely joined or participated in anything", which shows that his sense of home in Pagford was proclaimed and accepted by both himself and the Pagfordians (2012, p. 291).

### **Racist discourse and fixing Sikh identities**

I showed earlier that both Parminder and Sukhvinder were marginalised as victims of the 'corrosive racism' and they suffer its effects in their liminal existence. I will discuss this further to show how this affects their ability to contest their position in Pagford. Rowling recognises the 'corrosive racism' as a form of racism that very much exists in the society but is not accepted, recognised, acknowledged or admitted to. Paul Gilroy argues that diasporic people of culturally different 'races', religions and ethnicities, such as the British Sikhs, continue to suffer due to the rise in the 'new forms of prejudice and divisions' that have been forming in the metropolitan countries since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001. The speech that denigrates and discriminates against minorities is conventionally referred to as 'hate speech' and is labelled as "politically incorrect"—a term typically used in western democratic systems of United States, United Kingdom and Europe (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352). The critical representation of Rowling's 'corrosive racism' is visible in the contemporary criticism of the multicultural British society. For example, the crime case of Stephen Lawrence, a black ethnic minority, who was murdered in an unprovoked racist attack in London, when investigated proved to be a case of 'institutional racism' in senior police officers who failed to provide service to the people "because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin" (MacPherson, 1999, p. 34). This was 'corrosive racism' caused by "discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people" (MacPherson, 1999, p. 34). Today global movements have formed to protest racially motivated violence and the incidents of police brutality against ethnic minorities (such as Black Lives Matter, Sikh Lives Matter, etc). Sikhs as ethnical minorities in Britain also undergo such

marginalisation and Rowling highlights these in her portrayal of ‘corrosive racism’, which invites the application of Teun A. van Dijk’s racist discourse as below:

Racist discourse is a form of discriminatory social practice that manifests itself in text, talk and communication... [and] contributes to the reproduction of racism as a form of ethnic or “racial” domination... by expressing, confirming or legitimating racist opinions, attitudes and ideologies of the dominant ethnic group. (van Dijk, 2004, p. 351)

van Dijk highlights two major forms of racist discourse – “1 racist discourse directed at ethnically different Others; 2 racist discourse about ethnically different” Others (van Dijk, 2004, p. 351). Rowling has illustrated both forms of racist discourse while highlighting the corrosive racism of Sikh characters who are seen as ‘ethnically different Others’ by dominant groups. The effect of such corrosive racism on Sikh identity results in the British Sikhs feeling culturally excluded and marginalised by the dominant culture, which in turn, results in anxieties impacting their sense of home and belonging in diaspora. In the first form of racist discourse, the dominant in-group of characters, such as the Fats Wall, Dane Tully, Shirley and Howard Mollison, “verbally interact with members of dominated groups”, Parminder and Sukhvinder, “blatantly by using derogatory slurs, insults, impolite forms of address ...that explicitly express and enact superiority and lack of respect” (van Dijk, 2004, pp. 351 - 352). In the second form of racist discourse, the same dominant characters demonstrate racial bias “about ethnic or “racial” Others” in order to “avoid or mitigate a positive representation of Others, and a negative representation of our own group” (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352). The difference between the first and second form of racist discourse is the level and type of interaction of the dominating in-group with the dominated out-group. For example, the first form of racist discourse portrays “everyday racism” that involves verbal racialist interactions between the dominant and dominated groups, whether direct or “more subtle and indirect”, occurring mainly due to the visible differences of dominated minorities, as highlighted below:

...minority group members *daily* are confronted with such racist talk, and not because of what they do or say, but only because of what they are: different. (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352)

The second form of racist discourse describes the “focus on or [implication of] negative stereotypes” of the dominated minorities or out-group which may involve the use of “topics of conversation, news reports, political debates” etc (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352). This emphasises

“the negative portrayal of Them” (i.e., the dominated minorities or out-group), “often combined with a positive representation of Our-selves” (i.e., the dominant in-group) (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352). van Dijk foregrounds that the ‘topics’ cluster around three classes: the first “emphasize[s] the difference of the Others, and hence their distance from Us”; and the second “takes polarization between Us and Them one step further and emphasizes that the behavior of the Other is deviant, and hence breaks Our norms and rules”; and within the third category “the Other may be portrayed as a threat to Us” (van Dijk, 2004, pp. 352 – 353). Rowling has demonstrated both forms of racist discourse covering all three aspects to highlight the racial treatment of Parminder and Sukhvinder, who as ethnically different Others experience, suffer and contest their in-between diasporic space in their own ways.

After applying van Dijk’s racist discourse on Parminder, one can see that Pagford’s dominating old guard (the Mollisons) are reducing and fixing Parminder’s identity into a new form of stereotypical discourse through exhibiting both ‘directed at’ and ‘about’ on her. After Parminder’s first attendance as a parish councillor, Howard dubbed her as “Bends-Your-Ear Bhutto”, which remained a “popular joke among the anti-Fielders” (2012, p. 70). This falls under van Dijk’s second form of racist discourse – a ‘more subtle and indirect’ form of corrosive racism. Rowling has shown that anti-Fielders felt threatened by councillor Parminder Jawanda, who looked different, was highly intelligent, spoke her mind and stood firmly contesting the Fields as part of a group of Fields supporting councillors, whom Howard had dubbed “the Obstreperous Faction” (2012, p. 180). Her fight was against, Howard, a type of character who would do anything for Pagford as he “thinks that Pagford is the epicentre of the universe...[and] wouldn’t swap being chair of Pagford Parish Council for being Prime Minister” (2004, p. 214). This shows how much Pagford meant to him. Howard’s comparison of Parminder to Benazir Bhutto, the first female prime minister of Pakistan, shows that Howard felt weak in Parminder’s presence. The fact that Howard and anti-Fielders repeatedly called her “Bends-Your-Ear” behind her back shows that they were wary of Parminder being a strong force who has the energy and drive to make the Fields better and they wanted to stop her from doing so (2012, pp. 95, 96, 97, 180, 277, 332, 335, 348, 392, 387). Howard’s repetitive gendered stereotyping in various ‘topics of conversation’ was his strategy of imposing his superiority amongst his peers and weakening Parminder’s agency to get support for his son, Miles, as Barry’s replacement for the casual vacancy. So, he interrogated and disrupted Parminder’s diasporic position as a councillor and portrayed her involvement negatively, which implies racist discourse as shown below:

Thus, topics of conversation...about minorities or immigrants may be biased in the sense that they focus on or *imply negative stereotypes*. This, immigration may be dealt with in terms of an *invasion*, a *deluge*, a *threat*, or at least as a major problem, instead of as an important and necessary contribution to the economy. (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352, emphasis added)

As a dominant anti-Fielder, Howard, jealous of Parminder's "professional class" and "brownness, cleverness, and affluence" outlook, saw her as "an invasion... occupying [Pagfordian's] space, running down [their] neighborhood, and taking [their] jobs or houses"; therefore, they treated her as "the Other...[and] portrayed [her] as a *threat* to" Pagford (2012, pp. 339, 212; van Dijk, 2004, p. 352). This shows how within the third aspect of the racist discourse Parminder is portrayed as a threat "the moment [she] arrived" and made "her first attendance as a parish councillor" (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352; 2012, p. 95). Howard also portrayed Parminder "as a hypocrite" and "making trouble for fun" labelling her from a "proper professional class... [who does not have] any right to be on the side of the Fields" (2012, pp. 338 - 339). This highlights van Dijk's first class of 'topics' of racist discourse that "emphasize[s] the difference of the Others...[which]...may have a seemingly positive slant...however, the difference is evaluated negatively: the Others are portrayed as less smart, beautiful, fast, hardworking, democratic, modern, etc. than We are" (van Dijk, 2004, p. 353). Howard uses a 'seemingly positive slant' of Parminder's professional class to highlight a form of racist discourse by negatively evaluating social class difference between her and the Fields, and emphasising that she is not best suited to represent and speak on their behalf due to her elite social class status (due to high earning); this has an undertone of Howard's practice of patriarchal powers to defend his own supremacy. Parminder is also aware of the fact that Howard felt threatened by her presence, and she was referred to by his dubbed names, which made her even more determined and strong to fight back for the Fields, which shows her agency and position of resistance.

The "blatant forms of verbal discrimination" directed at Parminder are from Catherine Weedon (daughter of Terri Weedon and grandmother of Krystal Weedon) who publicly calls Parminder – "Paki cow" and "Paki bitch", while visiting her at the GP surgery, which shows first form of van Dijk's racist discourse (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352; 2012, pp. 126, 148, 259, 410). Catherine even asks to see another doctor instead of Parminder just because she is of another race, "I wanna see someone else! I wanna see Dr Crawford"; this shows an indirect form of corrosive racism (2004, p. 125). Terry Weedon's sister, Cheryl Weedon, continues the racist

discourse by talking about Parminder behind her back as “Paki bitch”, which shows that the Weedons had fixed Parminder’s identity to a colonial stereotype to belittle her diasporic space of Pagford (2012, pp. 125, 410). Avtar Brah states that the discourse of ‘Paki’ is constituted “as a racialised insider/outsider, a post-colonial subject constructed and marked by everyday practices...[that] signific[s] the inferiorised Other right here at the core of the fountain head of ‘Britishness’” (Brah, 2005, p.20). Thus, Parminder’s identity was reduced by Weedons to signify colonial inferiority in the lived culture of Pagford. The Weedons were socially deprived and lived in the Fields, and Terry was a drug addict who needed regular support from the Bellchapel Addiction Clinic. The anti-Fielders wanted to terminate the clinic’s lease as a strategic move to force the clinic out of Bellchapel to disconnect Pagford from the Fields (2012, p. 396). Even though Parminder experiences regular racial harassment by Weedons, she remains determined in making sure that lease is not terminated and fights for the people of the Fields, which reflects her ability to make decisions and shows agency.

Rowling has shown ‘corrosive racism’ through Howard’s wife Shirley as well by explaining that she “belonged to a section of Pagford that quietly lamented the fact that the Old Vicarage, which had been built long ago to house a High Church vicar...was now home to a family of Hindus” (2012, p. 156). Analysing this with van Dijk theories shows that there exists a large part of Pagford that disliked Jawanda’s occupation of the “grandest of the Victorian houses” which “emphasize[s] the difference of the Others, and hence their distance from Us” (2012, p. 38; van Dijk, 2004, p. 352). That the Jawandas, seen as Others, portrayed as wealthy, educated, different and a modern family presently occupy Pagfordian’s historical space, changes its previous identity and meaning to a new place of Hindus. Shirley continues the racist discourse by taking the “polarization between Us” as Pagfordians and “Them” as Jawandas “one step further and emphasises that the behaviour of the Other is *deviant*, and hence breaks Our norms and rules” – stressing second class of ‘topic’ of racist discourse (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352). Parminder is shown to wear both western and traditional Indian clothes, attend parties and gets involved in various socials and cultural activities. When deciding on what to wear on Barry’s funeral, she thought in Barry’s voice – “*Wear a sari. It’ll upset Shirley Mollison. Go on, wear a sari*” (2012, p. 143). Afterwards she goes for *sari* (traditional Indian womenswear) that she had last worn to “the Fairbrother’s New Year’s party” (2012, p. 143). Upon seeing Parminder in a *sari* at Barry’s funeral, Shirley’s “eyes were fixed respectfully on her knees, and her hands were clasped, apparently in prayer” (2012, p. 156). This body language that conveniently “avoid[ed] eye contact...[portraying] lack of respect” shows first form of racist

discourse (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352). Howard, on noticing Parminder's *sari* said, "I always think those frocks look comfy; are they", to which Parminder did not respond as she considered Howard "A bully and a megalomaniac" (2004, p. 292). Therefore, Parminder's resistance is underlined by her act of ignoring Howard. Shirley takes the racist discourse 'about' Parminder 'one step further' not only by emphasising differences between Pagfordians and Jawandas ('Us' and 'Them') but also making racist statements, such as "[t]hey do not, but should adapt to Us" (2012, pp. 156, 292; van Dijk, 2004, p. 353). That Shirley does not come to terms with Parminder wearing *sari* in church and Shirley it is a sign of a "double standard" since she gives nor "thought for the disrespect it showed to their religion" (2012, p. 156). Rowling highlights issues of cultural differences that migrants and their descendants face in the British society through characters like Shirley who refers to the Jawandas as Hindus, which also implies reducing the Sikh identity and fixing to an imposed Hindu identity, or more likely, a generalized Other. Alternately, Rowling, as a native British writer, could be twining Sikh identity to an enforced Hindu identity to imply that the British society did not care to understand the differences. For example, Shirley did not care to know about Jawandas, even after sixteen years that they have lived there. Shirley was threatened and saw them as invading their English heritage town, changing its culture and history through the exhibition of different cultures in the form of colourful outfits that Parminder wore, which she took as 'double standards':

[Shirley] thought that if she and Howard went to the temple, or the mosque, or wherever it was the Jawandas worshipped, they would doubtless be required to cover their heads and remove their shoes and who knew what else, otherwise there would be outcry. Yet it was acceptable for Parminder to flaunt her *sari* in church. (2012, p. 156)

Shirley emphasises "negative portrayal of" Jawandas and their place of worship, while emphasising "positive representation of" Pagfordians implying that Christians do not have any imposing rules unlike other places of worships (van Dijk, 2004, p.352). This also shows that Shirley is not only highlighting religious differences but sees every non-Christian as the Other who are invading English space, as observed from her reference to different places of worship. Moreover, whereas Shirley considers Parminder's western clothes that she wears to "work every day" as "normal clothes" when she wears the '*sari*' her action is seen as deviant behaviour (2012, p. 156). This portrays Parminder as someone is inadequate, and who, by dressing inappropriately at the church, is also disrespectful to the Pagfordians. Rowling exposes corrosive racism as a form of a 'more subtle and indirect' racist discourse that exists

in the British society about professional Sikhs as seen through the context of a 'sari', which becomes an issue of cultural difference. This highlights some of the pressures of assimilation that ethnic minorities face in Britain and shows the marginalisation of minorities instead of working with the differences. This also proves van Dijk's point of racist discourse that "even when they totally adapt, the Others will still be seen as different" by dominant groups as it is the case for the Jawandas who have adapted and contributing to the society in Pagford but still remain marginalised (van Dijk, 2004, p. 353).

The application of van Dijk's analysis of racist discourse on Sukhvinder shows that her identity has been fixed to various forms of colonial and stereotypical discourse, which created conflicts and anxieties in her. She suffers from "blatant forms of verbal discrimination" and racist harassment propagated by her dominant teenage classmates Fats Wall and Dane Tully, who torture her mentally by hurling objectionable racist remarks daily and forcing her to self-harm (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352). The racist discourse verbally 'directed at' her is found in words, such as "great hermaphrodite..., Moustachioed, yet large-mammared...hairy man-woman", "bearded, bra-wearing herd...wondering whether it would suit a goatee", "a hairy ape", "Tash 'N' Tits. Hermaphrodite (2012, pp. 120 - 121). The "Bearded Dumb-bell", "Paki bitch", which buzzed in Sukhvinder's ears daily (2012, pp. 145 - 147). They were engrossed deeply in her psyche that it affected her self-esteem to a point that she felt belittled, confused about who she was and who she wanted to be, and had a depressing outlook on life. As a Sikh minority and an ethnically different teenager, she experiences 'new forms of prejudice and divisions', which started in her primary school because as the "only brown person in the class" she was targeted by Andrew, Fats and other boys, who regularly pulled her long plait when playing tag (2004, pp. 220, 120). Being picked on from an early age and letting bullies get away with the abuse, gave the bullies sadistic pleasure allowing them to torment Sukhvinder daily in her teenage years, both at school and outside of school in the form of cyber bullying. One of her "dreadful daily rituals" was to check her Facebook page and remove abusive posts from unknown senders, comprising of "pictures about hirsutism...[or] a quotation or an image a day" or "nineteenth century circus poster. *La Veritable Femme a Barbe, Miss Ann Jones Elliot*" (2012, pp. 120, 145). From the nature of these posts and their similarities to the targeted racial bullying at school, she suspected it was either Fats or Dane (it was actually Fats). A character like Fats Wall helps Rowling to highlight the pain and suffering of 'culturally different 'races', religions and ethnicities' who remain dominated because of their visible differences; Sukhvinder becomes a victim of Fats's 'new forms' of racial bullying because of her ethnic difference and

passive demeanour. Dane Tully, however, helps Rowling project corrosive racism both directed at and about ethnically different people of brown skin, as shown below:

Dane Tully and his friends...*made soft, grunting ape-like noises* whenever she spoke in English. They would have done it to *anybody of her colour*; they were hardly any brown faces at Winterdown. (2012, p. 144, emphasis added)

The blatant racist discourse directed at Sukhvinder and ‘anybody of her colour’ made her realise that she was different mainly due to the colour of her skin. She knew that she could not do anything about the fact that her colour was ‘brown’ but “realized that she was laughable and strange” due to it (2012, p. 146). She felt demeaned by the ‘ape-like noises’ and “humiliated and stupid, especially as Mr Garry never told them off” (2012, p. 144). Rowling shows that Sukhvinder’s teacher appears to be condoning the behaviour of disruptive children as he must have heard these ape-like noises too, but he ignores them. His silence makes Sukhvinder feel that maybe he also thinks that “Sukhwinder Kaur Jawanda was an ape, a hairy ape” (2012, p. 145). van Dijk underlines hidden forms of racism where “white speakers may refuse to yield the floor to minority...ignore the topics...avoid eye contact... Some of these verbal inequities are more generally a problem of multicultural communication; others are genuine expressions of racial or ethnic dominance of white speakers” (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352). In a way, in her novel, Rowling draws attention to such hidden forms of racism that exists within teachers towards ethnically and culturally different people. The racist discourse directed at Sukhvinder by dominant in-group Dane, which impacted Sukhvinder and her state of mind daily is seen as “everyday racism” by van Dijk, (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352). As a third-generation British Sikh who was born and had lived in Pagford all her life, Sukhvinder’s spoken English would have been the same as other native speakers of Pagford, but she still becomes a victim of this abuse. To Homi Bhabha, such stereotyping has its roots in colonialism when the objective of dominant colonisers tended “to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish system of administration and instruction” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 70). What Ann McClintock says, about the pitfalls of colonialism that it “returns at the moment of its disappearance”, is evident in the British society of Pagford in the form of racist stereotyping discourse (McClintock, 1992, p. 86). Dane repeatedly uses negative stereotypes on Sukhvinder to ridicule and denigrate her as he would do to ‘anybody of her colour’, identifying them all as inferiors while imposing his own white English superiority, with an agenda to bring people of colour down, while bringing himself and his status up in front of his friends. Un/knowingly Dane was performing and repeating the

English colonial hierarchy of a political power in the contemporary British setting and worked on fixing Sukhvinder's identity to a suppressed colonial identity. This clearly shows that the effects of colonialism still surface in the so called 'post-colonial' era.

Fats' racist bullying was "more subtle and indirect" which Sukhvinder considered worse than Dane, as it "fashioned a fresh, tailor-made torture every time he saw her, and she could not shut her ears. His every insult and jibe was branded on Sukhvinder's memory, sticking there as no useful fact had ever done" (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352; 2012, p. 146). This implies that Sukhvinder's mind was consumed by Fats unique form of narcissistic torture. Fats always only picked on Sukhvinder as "she seemed a very easy target" instead of directing "his savage tongue towards figures of authority, the pretentious or the self-satisfied" (2012, p. 120). Therefore, Fats himself was a weak person who also saw right through Sukhvinder's dissatisfaction with her 'hairy' looks and was "able to penetrate [her world of oddness] with such terrifying ease" that he had fixed her identity to stereotypical racist remarks which impacted her psychologically (2012, p. 316). Due to this, her confidence in the classroom was extremely low as she remained passive, introvert and in the state of being oppressed and made "absolutely no noise. With her back hunched and her head bent low over her work...appeared to be cocooned in concentration" (2012, p. 120). She was hiding herself from the bullies. She carried a submissive identity as she hardly spoke, mostly nodded, obscured her face, remained hunched up over her work, "quivering...her shoulders" when she was crying, "wiping her eyes surreptitiously" and always "sank back into obscurity" but never resisted the bullying (2012, pp. 120 - 121). Oppressed by the dominant groups, she was traumatised at school, suffered racist bullying which affected her outlook on life, and she simply feared no other but Fats. For example, whenever Fats was not around, she "sometimes dared put up her hand to answer questions", which shows it was Fats who had oppressed her to a point that her confidence was completely knocked down in his presence (2012, p. 146). That Fats took advantage of her quiet and unreceptive demeanour shows compliance to his threats, which he considered "her cowardice, as he knew her every worst thought about herself, and was able to articulate it for the amusement", therefore reducing her identity to a submissive identity as someone who remains obedient accepting the torture (2012, p. 146). She didn't understand why Fats was so cruel to her even though their mothers were friends with each other. She "concluded that he knew that she would not give him away" (2012, p. 146). This implies that Fats felt that Sukhvinder was subservient who lacked agency to confront his bullies or report them to anyone, which made her an easy target.

Rowling portrays that racism has remained hidden in the British culture as it is experienced by third-generation migrant Sukhvinder. Fats had singled her out which had made her life hell in Pagford, to an extent that she wished “with all of her being that she was dead” (2012, p. 145). Around Barry’s death, she thought that she should have “swap[ped] places” with him, which would have allowed her to “simply slip into non-being: wiped out, wiped clean” (2012, p. 145). Her state of mind was filled with negative suicidal thoughts, such as of “drowning, of sinking down into cool green water, and feeling herself slowly pressed into nothingness” (2012, p. 145). Rowling shows that racist bullying had caused depression in her, that in turn, lead to suicidal thoughts and “[i]f she could have achieved suicide, simply by willing it, she would have done it without hesitation” (2012, p. 145). This implies that even though she gets suicidal thoughts, deep down in her mind there is something that stops her from acting on it, and the same thing is acting as a form of check in her consciousness, which has its roots with her upbringing in Sikhism (that I explore later in the chapter). Anyhow, on such bad days (seem to occur daily) at night-time after everyone was asleep, she stayed awake to carry out her routine sessions which was “one and only thing that helped” (2012, p. 145). She found a dark place in her room after getting “the razor blade out from a hole in the ear of her old cuddly rabbit” (2012, p. 149). She rolled her sleeves up to find a space on her forearm and sliced into her flesh, after examining all “the marks left by her last session, still visible, criss-crossed...but healing”, which shows that she was regularly self-harming (2012, p. 149). Sukhvinder was emotionally affected by racism that she found “blessed relief” in her self-harm as it was the only thing that took the “pain away from her screaming thoughts...relief and release in every cut” (2012, p. 149). This implies that daily racist bullying has reduced her world and she is left to find comfort in the darkness of self-harm. This is “unhomely” especially when she keeps darkness hidden from everyone else around her including her family since “the habit of secrecy was very strong in her these days” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 13; 2012, p. 316). In the public sphere she was known for always keeping the “sleeve[s] of her jumper down so that it completely covered her hand”, and that people considered it as ‘eczema’ and was flagged by Shirley “a hygiene issue with the eczema she was hiding under the long-sleeve[s]” (2012, p. 119, p. 417). Bhabha states that “[t]he unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence” and argues that such unhomely human actions in the social world needs to be understood well, which may be “something...beyond control, but it is not beyond accommodation” (Bhabha, 2004, p. 15, 17). What’s disturbing is that the lack of cohesion in the family unit meant that Sukhvinder’s self-harm was only known to her and even her family didn’t notice it. Sukhvinder’s attempt to

replace her emotional pain of racist bullying with the physical pain so that she could forget racist trauma displays unhomey and uncanny world, which makes the reader empathise with her.

According to Van Dijk, “accumulating and aggravating form of racist harassment... is a direct threat to their well-being and quality of life”, which is visible in Sukhvinder who suffers from trauma, high anxieties and inflicts self-harm in the in-between existence (van Dijk, 2004, p. 352). Elsewhere, Jeffrey C. Alexander discussing the lay trauma theory in *Trauma: A Social Theory* suggests that “the trauma experience occurs when the traumatizing event interacts with human nature. Human beings need security, order, love, and connection. If something happens that sharply undermines these needs, ...people will be traumatized as a result” (Alexander, 2013, p. 9). Further, Alexander comments about the “psychoanalytic perspective” of lay trauma theory when he states:

When bad things happen to good people, ...they become so frightened that they can actually repress the experience of trauma itself... Traumatic feelings and perceptions, then, come not only from the originating event but also from the anxiety of keeping it repressed. Trauma will be resolved only by setting things right in the world, but also by setting things right in the self. (Alexander, 2013, p. 9).

In this context, Sukhvinder is a good person whose sense of well-being has been shattered from her childhood due to being unable to fulfil her needs for security, order, love and connection at Pagford. Her continual self-harm is a sign of suffering from high anxieties and the effects of traumatic past events that she has kept repressed in her memory. The emotional consequences of racist harassment are so traumatic that they remain in the postmemories, resurfacing from her past to haunt her present (taking some Hirsch’s concepts from Chapter 3). For example, she reflects on her past when Krystal Weedon “out of nowhere” called her “silly Paki bitch” (2012, p. 148). Barry Fairbrother immediately contested Krystal after hearing when she declared that it was just a joke. The traumatic effect of this incident is recollected when Sukhvinder remembers the feelings that she had at the time. She was “conscious of her face falling, and experienc[ing] the familiar sliding, scalding sensation in her stomach”, which shows that it had immensely impacted her life (2012, p. 148). Whereas Barry’s intervention at the time had put it to an end and Krystal never used such remarks again, it still shows that like her mother, Sukhvinder’s identity was also fixed to ‘inferiorised’ identity of colonial stereotype as ‘Paki’, an attempt to reduce her Sikh identity. Both Sukhvinder and her mother’s identity

were defined in negative terms by those who are in a position of power at Pagford. The fixity of identity to a racist slur based on the colour of the skin has rendered both mother and daughter as “object[s] of derision” in the society (McLeod, 2010, p. 22). In *Postcolonial Traumas*, Abigail Ward outlines that such reductive behaviour of dominant culture is seen as “internalised racism” that leads to the “annihilation of subjectivity” in victims; therefore, it must be resolved to set things right in the world (Ward, 2015, Trauma theory section). Ward quotes Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* to explain the effects of internalised racism on identity, for “[t]hrough the call of the other, the black person is stripped of subjectivity, and becomes conscious of himself as merely an object “in the midst of other objects”. (Ward, 2015, Trauma theory section). As a victim of postcolonial trauma, Sukhvinder is stripped off her Sikh identity or subjectivity, made to feel self-conscious of herself as merely an object of derision for others, and is “forced into the internalisation of the self as an ‘other’” (McLeod, 2010, p.23). Sukhvinder as a teenager remained submissive and scared to confront Fats and Dane and it was Gaia who stood up for her and confronted Fats who claimed that his racist treatment was just a joke (2012, p. 427). Gaia further questioned Fats’s racist bullying by contesting his friend Andrew who said that Fats was not racist (2012, p. 353). This implies that children do not fully understand the emotional consequences of racism on a person’s life and they get away with it by claiming that the whole act was just a ‘joke’. This is the reality of contemporary British society that the migrants and their families have to face. Such incidents leave lasting marks on the people’s lives and identities just like how Sukhvinder remained traumatised by them. However, there is some hope too with people like Barry who stand their grounds while questioning the racist discourse ensuring it does not happen again.

The racist harassment that Parminder experiences has affected her well-being and quality of life, made her anxious and impeded her attempts to bond with her daughter Sukhvinder. What made matters worse between mother and daughter was when Sukhvinder went for work experience waitressing at Howard’s deli. It was obvious that Parminder did not like Howard at all and working for him had kept their relationship apart. Parminder considered it “the girl’s betrayal” and did not accept her working for the person who bullied her; additionally, she thought Howard “must have absolutely loved it – my daughter going cap in hand for a job” (2012, p. 295). Parminder’s anxiety is clearly visible when she tells Tessa and others about it over dinner, “what was she thinking?... And why does she need to work at all? ...Don’t we give her enough money?” (2012, pp. 295 - 296). Thus, Parminder, simply thinking about herself, too engrossed in anger, and consumed by the hatred of Mollisons, did not care

about her daughter's emotions. This shows that Parminder's well-being was affected by the Mollisons, and she simply took her anger out on Sukhvinder, which further shows the knock-on effect of the racist discourse that impacted the lives of the Jawandas.

### **Sikh morality and the diasporic Sikh identity**

As I discussed earlier, Parminder bestrides two different cultures in the 'in-between' space of liminal existence, which does not come without anxieties. As well, Sukhvinder is unable to bestride different cultures in her liminal existence and her experience is more painful than her mothers. The feeling 'of, and not of' Pagford in both characters is created through suffering the consequences of racist discourse, which has impacted their relationship too. As Bhabha states, "[t]hese 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 2). In this section, I will show how Parminder and Sukhvinder deal with the conflicts and develop their diasporic Sikh identities. I argue that during such conflicts Sikhs look inwards as well to attain inspiration from Sikh religion, culture and heritage in order to reconfigure their Sikh consciousness and identity. Rowling allows us to experience this in Parminder and Sukhvinder, who both undergo a process of identity formation in their own ways inspired from their Sikh background and upbringing. This allows them both to reposition themselves with the dominant factions as evident in Parminder's resistance to marginalisation and Sukhvinder performing self-sacrifice and selfless acts of kindness to accommodate herself in Pagford, allowing them both to reconfigure and transform their Sikh identities accordingly.

As I have discussed in earlier chapters, Sikhs deal with conflicting situations by attaining guidance from their respective holy text, religion, heritage, historiography, culture, family and community and in this process, they recreate their Sikh consciousness from varied sources of inspiration, which ends up in multiple transformations portraying a dynamic sense of Sikh identity. Apart from the Sikh holy text, the information available to Sikhs from their own culture is so wide-ranging that it becomes the very factor that creates this multiplicity and complexity in the Sikh identity. British Sikh scholar, Opinderjit Kaur Takhar found that "not all Sikhs are the same" within the Sikh community and with regards to diaspora Sikhs, "ethnicity informs Sikh identity", therefore the preservation of Punjabi language and ethnicity is more important part of the diasporic Sikh identity (Takhar, 2016, pp. 187, 185). She further

emphasises that for the “survival of Sikhism in the diaspora...ethnicity provides the necessary nurturing of the next generation, making the younger generation more aware of its Punjabi ethnicity” (Takhar, 2016, p. 185). I believe that this idea, the ‘necessary nurturing’ of Punjabi ethnicity, is also a necessary step of decolonisation, as it opens many opportunities for diasporic Sikhs to establish new routes and reconnect to their history. Rowling has depicted some of these diasporic Sikh concerns in the *Jawandas*. She has shown Parminder and Vikram as parents performing the ‘necessary nurturing’ of Sikh identity by teaching their children about Sikhism, the common Punjabi language of Sikhs, visiting gurdwara, educating on Punjabi culture, recreating “family consciousness” of ancestral farmland, and planning visits to Golden Temple in “Amritsar” in order to maintain connections with Sikhism, Punjab (the Sikh homeland) and the “Punjabi praxis” (2012, pp. 316, 436, 436). Moreover, at their house they have a “sweet visage of Guru Nanak”, and their sitting room has a “volume of the *Sainchis*” (part of the Sikh holy book) that Parminder opens at random and reads (2012, p. 39). At the time of Barry’s death, she “silently intoned the night-time prayer, the *kirtan sohila*” while reflecting on “*Guru Granth Sahib*” (2012, pp. 133-144). The *Jawandas* have created an environment at their home that shows aspects of both Sikh religion and Punjabi ethnicity, in which they bring up their children. In the case of Sukhvinder, Parminder feels that the ‘necessary nurturing’ has not quite worked as she could not learn Punjabi due to her dyslexia; this adds to Sukhvinder’s previously highlighted anxiety of being seen as an outsider by her cousins in Birmingham (2012, p. 317).

Takhar states that the “younger generation of diaspora-born Sikhs are of the opinion that one should not idly participate in something that is not understood or aspired to” and this is visible in Sukhvinder as she is confused about the sensitive issue of caste related prejudice that exists within the Sikh community, even though it has been strongly prohibited in the faith (Takhar, 2016, p. 183). For example, the *Jawandas* rarely visited their nearest *gurdwara* in *Yarvil* because it was dominated by “*Chamars*, a different caste from their own. Sukhvinder did not even know why that mattered, because she knew that Guru Nanak explicitly forbade caste distinctions. It was all very confusing” (2012, p. 301). Takhar states that “[u]nfortunately, caste is so deeply embedded in the Indian psyche that it never had, and still has not been eliminated from the *Panth* [or Sikh Community]. It is because of continued discrimination from higher *zat* [or caste] Sikhs that lower *zat* Sikhs broke their ties with both Sikhism and Hinduism and...formed their own distinct identities”, which shows complexity in the Sikh community (Takhar, 2016, p. 94). This subtle but ‘continued discrimination’ from higher to lower *zat* Sikhs

is visible in the Jawandas (one of the surnames that belongs to the *Jat* Sikh farmers caste), which highlights their imposing superiority over other Sikh castes, which Sukhvinder does not agree with. Sukhvinder appears to be torn between the Sikh faith and the Sikh community, therefore, he occupies this in-between space of a Sikh. Takhar states that culturally “the question of who is a Sikh depends largely on one’s *zat* background, as well as the Punjabi ethnicity” which is a reason why caste has remained to exist in the Sikh community as “different *zats* within Sikhism have their own traditions and customs”, which are quite different from each other, and therefore “caste distinctions were, and continue to be, preserved through the practice of endogamy”, which highlights some of the complexities of the Sikh identity (Takhar, 2016, pp. 94, 95, 185). Rowling has emphasised such sensitive and complex aspects of a Sikh so much so that it appears to a Sikh reader that someone well versed into Sikh culture has written the novel, since to understand such complexities are not easy. This provides justification that Rowling has indeed researched on Sikh culture for the novel.

The identities of the diaspora born Jawandas exhibit a sense of moving and shifting identity, the one that moves across both cultures – English and Punjabi. For example, Vikram and Parminder communicate using elements of Punjabi language by adopting Punjabi words into English, such as, “*gora*” (white person), “*bebe*” (paternal grandmother), “*goras*” (group of white people), etc, hence maintaining this shift between two languages (2012, p. 338). The fact that Sukhvinder is dyslexic, she struggles with learning her ancestral language which becomes the basis of her Othering by her cousins as highlighted previously. The Jawanda family celebrate British festivals of Easter and Christmas since Sukhvinder “continued to enjoy Easter eggs and decorating the Christmas tree”, and equally go to gurdwara (2012, p. 301). This shows that they are shifting between multiple cultural positions and incorporating diverse cultures into their diasporic lives in Britain. The Sikhs in diaspora show such shifting sense of identity but their identities continue to uphold Sikh cultural components. Therefore, they form transformations without reducing Sikh pedagogical wisdom, which is why I consider diasporic Sikh identity to be dynamic and a transforming cultural identity. As Stuart Hall states, “[d]iaspora identities are those constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference”, which is the type of transformation seen in diaspora-born Sikhs (Hall, 1990, p. 235). As this identity is produced as part of cultural formation through difference, it creates new ‘routes’ rather than roots, which implies a moving and changing identity. The Jawandas’ identities are on the move, transforming with every

experience and challenge faced in Pagford. Takhar raises concerns about identity transformations in the diaspora-born Sikhs, as outlined below:

Sikhs of the diaspora, arguably on a marginal basis, are undergoing some kind of an identity transformation that, I suggest, has every possibility of becoming an identity crisis in a few generations. Values held by immigrant parents are not necessarily those *maintained with rigidity* by their diaspora-born offspring. The latter are caught between twin cultures, being diaspora-born but ethnically Punjabi. (Takhar, 2016 p. 185, emphasis added)

Takhar's concerns imply that the generational identity transformation in diaspora-born Sikhs is reducing Sikh values that have been upheld by earlier generations due to being "caught between two cultures associated with their ethnic origin and with their country of birth" (Takhar, 2016, p. 185). However, the next generation's maintenance of the Sikh values with rigidity creates challenges and is usually counterproductive. Therefore, the 'necessary nurturing of the next generation' of Sikhs is important in making new generation conscious of their ancestral ethnicity, culture, and heritage. So, maintaining a constructive dialogue with the young generation of Sikhs is important as new generation brings new ideas, which enhances the values and provides new meanings, more specific to the time and context of the changed situations. As discussed in the introduction to the thesis, 'Sikhism is an evolutionary theory about the spiritual empirical development' through 'identity consumes identity', so, Sikh values are continuously formed as a process of combining the spiritual elements to enrich the empirical life in readiness to face changing challenges of the world. Critically, this is an aspect that makes the Sikh identity dynamic.

Daljeet Singh uses the concepts of *manmukh* or 'ego-conscious being' (possessing negative traits) and *gurmukh* or 'God-conscious being' (possessing positive traits) from Guru Granth Sahib to explain internal transitions and developments within the consciousness of Sikhs with an aim to "follow the path of altruistic deeds to reach the next evolutionary stage" (Singh et al, 2008, p. 125). I consider this as a process of developing Sikh consciousness as propounded in the Sikh theory of 'identity consumes identity', which confirms that negative consciousness can be repeatedly absorbed or consumed by the performance of a positive consciousness as inspired from pedagogical wisdom of Sikhism, allowing Sikhs to transform their Sikh identities. This theory shows that Sikh consciousness and identity is a transforming and changing process. So, if the Sikhs are focused on developing their Sikh consciousness, then

the identity transformations that occur in this process would not reduce Sikh values in the world of diasporas. However, if the Sikhs are developing a negative consciousness (by falling into a *manmukh* trap) then the identity transformation from this process would show diminishing Sikh values. Sikhism gives flexibility for Sikhs to reconfigure and reassemble their identities at any time even if they are consumed by negative consciousness. It is the upward lift of Sikh identity towards a *gurmukh* path that is considered as developing Sikh consciousness. That Takhar's concerns are relevant can be addressed through 'necessary nurturing' of the next generation of Sikhs by working towards developing a collective positive Sikh consciousness and identity. So, by maintaining links with the Sikh culture, ethnicity and heritage, the diaspora-born Sikhs are likely to create new evolutionary forms of Sikh identities, but the essence of spirituality would remain the same, which is we see in the Jawandas. Even if the third generation Sukhvinder has a different style and approach of developing Sikh consciousness and identity to her second-generation mother Parminder, both have created new forms of transforming Sikh identities in their own different ways, without reducing the Sikh values.

Parminder is driven by the Sikh concept of *seva*<sup>74</sup> and the pedagogical wisdom of Bhai Kanhaiya but occupies a conflicting 'in-between space' of consciousness where she gets mixed feelings about this philosophy. She is guided by it towards a path of resistance where she is seen to transgress the cultural boundaries of Pagford by putting up a good fight against the dominating anti-Fielders. Howard, on one hand, believed in the Christian concept of "Love thy neighbour as thyself" but he was far from it in practice as he hated the Fields and remained opposed to its people as an anti-Fielder (2012, p. 340). Parminder, on the other hand, found its similarity with the Sikh egalitarian concept of *seva* as "*The light of God shines from every soul*" and followed through with it by practically supporting the Fields, "told Barry the story of Bhai Kanhaiya, the Sikh hero" which shows performance of Sikh pedagogical wisdom of *seva* (2012, pp. 342, 497). What Bhabha explains when he states "restaging the past [that] introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition", resonates with Parminder's performative act of the exchange of knowledge, for with she reinscribes the inherited knowledge and gives a new cultural meaning to Pagford (Bhabha, 2004, p. 3). Rather than being restricted to a fixed place of cultural application or locality, Sikhism has a universal appeal. The actual Sikh concept of Bhai Kanhaiya is to help the needy without any discrimination as the same light of God is in everyone, which symbolises the Sikh concept of *seva* that is of *Sarbat-da-phala* or Welfare-of-all, without any prejudice over race, caste, colour,

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74 The notion of *seva* is discussed and applied in Chapter 1 and 2 as well.

creed and background. So, when Sukhvinder finds Howard obstructing her performance of helping the Fields, she transforms her identity into resistance to fight with Howard in order to continue supporting the Fields, which is when she found new meaning to the concept of Bhai Kanhaiya. In this process she is transforming herself, developing Sikh consciousness and identity, finding new meanings of Sikh pedagogical wisdom relevant to the challenges and context of Pagford.

Parminder's wearing of the *sari* at church is also transgressing the cultural boundaries of Pagfordians and a sign of resistance against the control and dominance of the Mollisons and the Pagfordians who were racist towards Jawandas. This is akin to the resistance of Kirpal that I discussed in Chapter 1, resistance of Jugga in Chapter 2 and the resistance in Kaju discussed in Chapter 3, which shows that Sikhs are continuing to express their resistance as socio-moral responsibility to fight against racist and colonial discourse throughout history. Parminder knew that wearing it would "upset Shirley Mollison" as she thought in Barry's voice which felt "like a private joke between herself and Barry" (2012, pp.142-143). As discussed previously, the *sari* became a form of racist discourse of Mollisons; however, Parminder's act of exhibiting it in public was a statement in the form of resisting the corrosive racism and protecting her ethnic Sikh identity that she was proud of. Parminder's resistance is also clear in her heated contestation with Howard during a council meeting where the fate of Bellchapel Addiction Clinic was being decided. Howard proposed to shut it down and explore "better ways to spend money than on a bunch of criminals" but Parminder opposed the idea as it served and supported the disadvantaged people of the Fields (2012, p. 387). He conveyed that people from Fields need to "take responsibility for their addiction and change their behaviour...Before they cost the state any more money" (2012, p. 387). Upon hearing him, Parminder could not keep herself calm and without worrying about herself, she exploded at Howard accusing him of his own irresponsible behaviour that has costed National Health Service (NHS) "tens of thousands of pounds" due to his own "total inability to stop gorging" (2012, p. 388). She transgresses the boundaries of patient confidentiality and publicly confronts him, "[d]o you know how much your bypass cost, and your drugs, and your long stay in hospital? And the doctor's appointments...which are all caused by your refusal to lose weight" (2012, p. 388)? As a result, Parminder gets suspended from her work as the Mollisons had made a formal complaint to every professional medical body. The account of the incident was published in the local news so everyone in Pagford knew about it, reported as "serious allegations' and 'criminal activity' [ , which] disturbed Howard even more", however, Parminder "felt strangely liberated" (2012,

pp. 389, 395). Howard, who held central position in Pagford, remained disturbed. This shows that in response to the racial domination of anti-Fielders, Parminder adopted a strategy of resistance that reflected her Sikh identity which traces its origins in *Miri-Piri* – “the concept of resistance against injustice as a moral value [of Sikhs]” (Singh et al, 2008, p. 149). Inspired by her religion, Parminder performs her moral value and stands against injustice and discrimination of the dominating Mollisons. Her liminal existence gave her the space and opportunity to contest and incorporate her pedagogical wisdom of Sikhism into a new diaspora context. As Bhabha suggests, such juxtapositions construct new identities; therefore, in Parminder’s context, she negotiates her space with the dominant groups through the active performance of her Sikh pedagogical wisdom in Pagford. Interestingly, as a diaspora-born Sikh, Parminder does not reduce her Sikh values. She has a Sikh consciousness that helps her transform her identity in such a way that she does not fall under the trap of racist discourse and rises above it all to position herself in Pagford. Even though the negotiation of the Fields does not go in her favour, she does not step back from the pedagogical wisdom of Sikhism.

Moreover, Sukhvinder has been developing Sikh consciousness from a young age which is evident from her recollection of a time when at primary school she “told the story of the Sikh religion’s founder Guru Nanak, who disappeared into a river, and was believed drowned, but re-emerged after three days underwater to announce: ‘There is no Hindu, there is no Moslem’” (2012, p. 300). She remembers children laughing at Guru surviving underwater for three days but didn’t have the “courage to point out that Jesus had died and then come back to life” too (2012, p. 301). This shows that she had Sikh consciousness but all she lacked was courage and self-confidence to face others and unable to learn Punjabi due to being dyslexic. Sikhs are aware of the fundamental principle of Sikhism, which is the privilege of human birth as an opportunity for soul to connect with God; so, seeing that she is aware of complex issues such as caste-based prejudice, Sukhvinder must have known this too. As a teenager, when she started to self-harm herself her Sikh consciousness was keeping a check on her negative suicidal thoughts, ensuring that she does not fall into its trap. However, it is clear that things were not easy for her as she carried on self-harming, but with each harm she was subconsciously undergoing an identity transformation, attempting to kill her old thoughts of racist bullying but replacing them with temporary physical pain (which gave her some emotional relief) but she was repeatedly instructing her consciousness the experience of pain, replacing her ‘self’ with pain and suffering only. So, Sukhvinder suffered from the symptoms of negative consciousness which gave her pain and anxieties, where her consciousness

struggled to shift towards a state of positive consciousness, therefore, giving rise to the identity conflict within her. This shows that she was in a dilemma and did not know how to get out of it, which had hindered her evolutionary development of Sikh consciousness. So, until and unless she starts experiencing new feelings to replace the old identity of pain and suffering, her consciousness would remain consumed in the old identity itself. The new experience of her friendship with Gaia certainly brings changes to her identity; however, it is not enough to replace pain and sufferings encountered through racism.

Although Sukhvinder does not directly challenge the dominant groups like her mother, but her approach of positioning herself is different, which help deconstruct her negative consciousness of a low self-esteem, suppressed and self-harming Sikh, to reconstruct new transformed Sikh identity of a self-sacrificing, selfless and a courageous teenager, therefore finds “peace, doing *seva* (selfless service)” (SGGS, p. 25). This is visible when Sukhvinder wandered around walking on the outskirts of Pagford, avoiding being seen by anyone, as she was skiving from work in an attempt to avoid facing Gaia because Gaia kissed her torturer Fats when she was drunk; Sukhvinder took that as a sign of her betrayal. As Sukhvinder wondered, she spotted Krystal who was in a panic looking for “Robbie” (2012, p. 462). She spotted Fats too who was smoking and casually watching Krystal running. Sukhvinder immediately tried to hide away from them “terrified that one of them might notice her” but when she suddenly spots Robbie in the river and “before she had thought about what she was doing”, she jumps into the river in an attempt to save his life after yelling “[h]e’s in the river” (2012, p. 462). She dropped feet first into the water, and her leg was sliced open by a broken computer monitor but unfortunately Robbie did not survive and Sukhvinder ended up in the hospital. Here, Rowling is emphasising the morality of Sikhs as an interesting counterpoint, for Sukhvinder did not hesitate to save Robbie’s life. Fats was partially responsible for his death as he pressured Krystal to send him away and did not proactively look for him afterwards. Other people could have helped save Robbie too as Samantha had noticed lonely Robbie playing in the field earlier by himself through a hole in the hedge but ignored him. There was another woman who heard Robbie yelling for his life calling for Krystal, but she did nothing. Shirley also neglected him even though she heard Robbie crying with pain, but she carried on minding her own business and walked off in the opposite direction. The moment Sukhvinder heard Krystal yell for Robbie, she proactively looked around and found him in the river and straightaway jumped in to save him, which reflects *seva*. Her usual thought process of being scared, hiding and working out possibilities of what may happen was replaced with a single thought of saving Robbie’s

life. She was no longer timid when she subconsciously completely offered her life as a form of self-sacrifice towards saving Robbie. Impulsively, her old identity took a new form and changed into an identity that brought her hidden confidence, courage and resistance out, which has its roots in the Sikh pedagogical wisdom and its concept of self-sacrificing – a selfless service or *seva* for the greater good of humanity. Finding Sukhvinder at hospital was a wakeup call for Parminder who finally noticed her self-harm scars on the forearm and felt disappointed at herself, realising that she had been neglecting her. The entire Pagford regretted Robbie's death, but Sukhvinder was seen as a heroine, recommended for a special award to honour her bravery, as shown below:

Just as Robbie had come out of the river purified and regretted by Pagford, so Sukhvinder Jawanda, who had risked her life to try and save the boy, had emerged a heroine... [She was recommended] for a special police award..., Sukhvinder knew, for the first time, what it was to eclipse her brother and sister. (2012, p. 495)

Even though Sukhvinder experienced new feelings of being socially at par with her siblings, deep within her, she was devastated by Robbie's death and remembers struggling with Robbie's weight in her arms "dragging her towards the deep; she remembered the temptation to let go and save herself, and asked herself how long she would have resisted" (2012, p. 495). After Robbie's death, Krystal, traumatised, took her life. The news of her death had an alarming effect on Sukhvinder "but she had not cut herself once since being pulled from the river" (2012, p. 495). Through performing this brave act, Sukhvinder had gained new and unique experience and subconsciously furthered her Sikh consciousness which gave her a purpose in life in helping others in the form of *seva*. After she heard rumours that Robbie and Krystal's mother Terri did not have money to bury them and would have to get the cheapest coffin, she wanted to help her. Sukhvinder told her parents that she wants to "try and get people to give money" in order to raise funds to help organise a funeral service (2012, p. 496). Parminder and Vikram looked at each other, both "instinctively opposed to the idea of asking people in Pagford to donate to such a cause but neither of them said so" (2012, p. 496). Parminder thinks of Bhai Kanaiya again that "[t]he light of God shines from every soul" so she gave Sukhvinder a go ahead with her idea (2012, p. 496). Sukhvinder raised funds and insisted to speak to Terri in person by going to her house in the Fields and even though Parminder was exceptionally worried for her to go there alone she agreed to it again. Sukhvinder "had done nearly everything; organizing, choosing and persuading" Terri and choosing bright pink coffin for Krystal (knowing she would have liked it) (2012, p. 495). This also shows that Sukhvinder's

barrier for development was her mother and as soon as their bond was mended, she was able to go 'beyond' the borderlines of her 'in-between' space, which allowed her to plot new cultural routes through contacting and persuading various people, organising fundraising, speaking to Terri and creating a new culture in Pagford. The Sikh values upheld by the diaspora-born Sukhvinder shows practical implementation of Sikh concepts that exhibits Sikh consciousness, which further shows that Sikhism does not reduce or decrease in the next generation of diaspora-born Sikhs as Takhar was rightly concerned about, but Sikh values adapt to suit a new diaspora context, as it does for Sukhvinder.

Parminder's attitude towards Sukhvinder had changed too with "no snap in Parminder's voice anymore when she spoke to her" (2004, p. 496). Moreover, Parminder's identity also changed who reconstructed her Sikh identity to follow the footsteps of Bhai Kanaiya to mend her broken bond with Sukhvinder (2012, p. 495). Sukhvinder finally confided in Parminder about Fats's racist bullying which made Parminder furious towards Tessa. Tessa phoned Parminder to tell her that Fat has accepted "full responsibility for The\_Ghost\_of\_Barry\_Fairbrother's posts" (2012, p. 499). Fats had also stopped the racist bullying and other teenagers started "treating Sukhvinder with coolness" (2004, p. 368). Moreover, Dane Tully, who was Kyrstal's cousin, found out that Sukhvinder had tried to save Robbie's life, so he also "had stopped grunting at her in English, and had stopped his mates from doing it too" (2012, p. 496). Sukhvinder's brave act had stopped racist and stereotypical discourse, instead she was welcomed and was accommodated in Pagford. It has put Sukhvinder on the motion, establishing and pursuing new routes allowing her to bestride multiple cultures at ease. Sukhvinder transformed herself, her identity and her perspective on life both personally and at the social level and her development is an example of a bildungsroman. Her journey that started off with depressed childhood, sufferings of racist bullying, displaced diaspora home, finally through Sikhism evolved her into a heroine, ready to take on any challenges of the dynamic world.

The Jawandas as a family have reconstructed their Sikh identities by spending more time for each other as a family. Vikram has suggested to visit Amritsar and pay respects to "The Golden Temple, the holiest shrine of the religion", which shows that the entire family is taking steps towards furthering their Sikh consciousness, *Miri-Piri* and reconstructing their diasporic Sikh identities (2012, p. 436). Moreover, this shows that transnational routes are being constructed collectively with the journey planned to Punjab, which shows that Sikh identity is always on the move.

## Conclusion

Rowling depicts the second and third generation diaspora-born British Sikhs as 'insiders and outsiders simultaneously' and uses 'corrosive racism' to highlight issues of assimilating into British society in *The Casual Vacancy*. She highlights postcolonial legacies of colonialism in the form of racist and stereotype discourse that attempt to fix Sikh identities portraying them as rigid and inflexible and reduce their view of world. Moreover, as a writer she is transgressing the boundaries of old-fashioned Englishness through her depiction of the Sikh family and is emphasising the Sikh morality as an interesting counterpoint. Rowling's adoption of the Sikh perspective and the transgression of British cultural boundaries ensures the unfavourable representation of British and its values and customs. Rowling attempts to subvert the old-fashioned English values to replace them with the egalitarian values of Sikhism. She shows that even though the old-fashioned and dominant characters of Pagford tried to locate the Sikh family within their own established boundaries, the Sikhs have agency and showed resistance to be able to carve out their own space in the diaspora. Rowling represents the diasporic Sikh identities to be complex, flexible, changing, producing, dynamic and fluid, which shows the transforming aspect of Sikh identity. Rowling also shows that the diaspora Sikhs displaced from their ancestral place of origin in the Punjab establish new routes to maintain their connection with homeland. The diasporic Sikhs remain in the liminal existence which allows them to explore new opportunities and help create new identities. The diaspora Sikhs resist marginalisation in host countries but also contribute towards the well-being of British society.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

This thesis concentrates on Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992), Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Bose's *Amu* (2004), and Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy* (2012), that span the fourfold typology of contemporary Sikh fictional readership in English as analysed and discussed in chapter 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The thesis draws from various aspects of Sikh culture, heritage and identity that collectively inform the theoretical and critical approach and allows for the articulation of meanings within the selected texts. The application of the postcolonial theory, diaspora concepts and the interweaving of Sikh theorisation of identity has provided a theoretical and analytical framework for studying Sikh identity. The critical approach taken to analyse the contemporary texts reveals a complex and dynamic identity of the Sikhs as found in both male and female subjects in the chosen texts. The exploration of the space occupied by Sikhs within each historical context of the texts has articulated a relationship of space with the construction of Sikh identities. This has allowed me to investigate and project various Sikh notions present in the texts, which reveal meanings that are specific to the Sikh culture and heritage, which surface when texts are articulated through a Sikh perspective. My central argument of the Sikh identity as complex, and dynamic has been emphasised throughout the thesis. I have demonstrated that Sikh identity is located beyond the fixities of the socio-political constructs of the contemporary world, whose attempts to reduce identity is resisted by the Sikhs. I have shown that Sikh identity is continuously changing and evolving with time, which makes it dynamic and complex. Each historical context brought its own challenges that the Sikhs overcame through reconfiguring their identities accordingly. Sikh subjects as minorities continue to remain as complex figures of difference and identity whether they are in India or overseas in the diaspora. I have shown that Sikhs transform themselves whilst facing the everyday challenges of the contemporary world which results in the formation of new identities in India and the Sikh diaspora.

Sikhs have a complex relationship with their sense of home and belonging, due to their occupation of a liminal 'in-between' space as depicted in various historical contexts. I have shown that Sikhs have agency, and the Sikh identity is located beyond the rigidity of stereotypical, colonial and racist discourse imposed on Sikhs by the dominant society that attempts to fix identities and marginalise Sikhs, and Other them. The analysis of Ondaatje's *The English Patient* in Chapter 1 found that the Sikh identity cannot be reduced to the exoticised, romanticised, feminised and demonised strangers of the Second World War. I

showed that wartime Sikh identity shifted away from being loyal colonial subjects of British Raj to an actively resistant identity that challenged colonial oppressions, which aimed to free the Sikh homeland from the British colonial authorities. In Chapter 2, the analysis of Singh's *Train to Pakistan* shows that Sikh identity is situated beyond the perceived fixed binaries which either portrayed Sikhs as stereotypical hyper-masculinised colonial traitors or radicalised subjects of India, a fixity that was perceived and propagated by the dominant society and government of the post-independent India to suit their own needs during the Partition. I showed that after independence, the moving national consciousness of Sikhs continued to be ambivalent towards the national culture of India, which created anxieties such that Sikhs desired further socio-political and socio-economical change that would locate them in an inclusive national culture. I demonstrated that the identity of Sikh refugees displaced from Pakistan into India was made rigid. They were made strangers and outsiders by the dominant Indian culture, which also fixed them as radicalised Others. I reflected on the fixity of the diasporic Sikh identity that existed in the text whereby the individuals are being perceived as foreigners or western Sikh subjects, which made them feel displaced as outsiders in their own birth nation; in that way feeling 'of and not of' India was constructed. Furthermore, the analysis of Bose's *Amu* in Chapter 3 confirms that the Sikh identity cannot be found in the imposed social constructs of the dominant culture of India as propagated by the government of India during 1984 Sikh genocide, for it demonised Sikhs by depicting them as terrorists. The return identity-journey carried out by the diasporic Sikh subject to her home in India after twenty years of 1984 Sikh genocide challenges the pre-given notion of belonging to a birth nation, as she was Othered in India upon return, and regarded as an outsider or foreigner. For the returning Sikh, this further constructed a displaced sense of belonging, constructing the feeling 'of and not of' India. Chapter 4, analyses Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy*, and investigates how the Sikh diasporic identity is fixed into a stereotypical and racist discourse. This process which affected the sense of home and belonging, is carried out by the dominant faction of the British society. It constructs the feeling 'of and not of' British fictional town of Pagford in Sikhs where they feel excluded from the society. Throughout these four chapters, I have shown that complexities exist within various displacements, spaces and cultural contexts occupied by Sikhs. Where attempts are made by the dominating society to fix and reduce Sikh identities, the process leads to the marginalisation and Othering of Sikhs within various cultural and historical settings of the novels.

I have revealed that Sikh identity is not a fixed thing but it changes and adapts and changes to various historical contexts and experiences as demonstrated in the examined fictions. I have argued throughout this thesis that Sikh identity is dynamic, and this dynamic aspect is reflective of the influence of Sikh culture and heritage on the Sikh identity as represented within varied historical contexts of the texts. The Sikh identity that reflects the developing Sikh consciousness works towards socio-moral responsibilities in *Miri-Piri*, which aims at achieving a balance between temporal and spiritual existence and one of the signs of a dynamic and evolving Sikh consciousness. The temporal development of the Sikh identity is through the Sikh notion of *seva* (one of the core principles in Sikhism that exhibits selfless service towards other human beings) whilst the spiritual development of Sikh identity is through remembering *Gurbani* – both aspects contribute towards the development of *Miri-Piri* as present in the texts. I have demonstrated that this evolving Sikh consciousness is found in both male and female Sikh characters and is present throughout the fourfold typology of the Sikh readership. For example, in Chapter 1, the male Sikh identity shown in Kirpal is represented as performing *seva* through defusing European bombs to save humanity, and upon returning to India, the Sikh protagonist continues his *seva* as a doctor and saves human lives. This reflects the character's contribution (and Sikhism) to the betterment of the society of the temporal world; to the Sikhs, this is an exhibition of *Miri*. The recollection of *Gurbani* played at the Golden Temple resulted in the re-enactment of a spiritual experience in the Sikh protagonist, which shows development of *Piri* or spiritual Sikh consciousness. Once again, since both *seva* and *Gurbani* are carried out simultaneously, this action reflects *Miri-Piri*. In Chapter 2, while the male Sikh protagonist, Jugga, sacrifices himself to save Muslims, which signifies *seva*, the fact that he goes to gurdwara to listen to *Gurbani* showing his spiritual development, once again the action is an exhibition of *Miri-Piri*. Similarly, Bhai Meet Singh replicates *Miri-Piri* through his priestly dedication towards gurdwara and running congregational services whilst supporting displaced Sikh refugees and Iqbal reflects development of *Miri-Piri* through his *seva* in social service and residing at *gurdwara* where he learns spirituality from Bhai Meet Singh. In Chapter 3, the return identity-journey to India by the female diasporic subject results in her identification with Sikhism and its concepts of *seva*. This is evident when Kaju embraces Sikhism by wearing Sikh article of faith *Kara*, that signifies all humanity as one. The fact that she attentively listens to *Gurbani* reflects her spiritual development; therefore, she exhibits a progressive *Miri-Piri*. Finally in Chapter 4, *Miri-Piri* is exhibited by both mother and daughter, who follow various aspects of Sikhism for spiritual wisdom and apply it in their daily lives in Britain through *seva*. The Sikh family plans

to the visit Golden Temple, which shows an evolving Sikh consciousness. The development of *Miri-Piri* through *seva* and *Gurbani* supports in bringing progressive change in Sikh consciousness and identity. I have demonstrated that Sikhs are driven by the notion of *seva* which brings changes to the Sikh consciousness and identity that cares for the humanity. That *Gurbani* is central to all the texts shows how the love that Sikhs have for their heritage and culture towards aids the transformation of the Sikh consciousness and identity. I have shown that *gurdwara* acts as a spiritual place that reminds Sikhs of their collective memories, which influences Sikh consciousness and identity in the present. The Sikh articles of faith worn by Sikhs alongside joining in with the listening of *kirtan*, *Gurbani* and *ardas* at congregations acts as a memory kernel that reminds Sikhs of their origins and allows them to performatively experience their collective past in today's modern world, which develops Sikh consciousness.

As propounded in the Sikh theory of evolution, the Sikh identity is an evolving identity that has been changing throughout history to cope with the transformations of the globalised world. The Sikh theory of 'identity consumes identity' is significant throughout the thesis which shows evolutionary development of Sikh consciousness towards a positive consciousness and outlook of life. All the Sikh protagonists are always on the move, finding ways to progressively shift away from their painful and anxious liminal existences whilst remaining aligned to their Sikh culture and heritage, in order to cope with the challenges of the world. The progressive shift in identity portrays dynamic aspect of the Sikh identity, which reflects working towards *Miri-Piri*. I have demonstrated that the negative consciousness gets consumed by the positive consciousness, experiences, and existence, which exhibits a transformed sense of Sikh identity. In Chapter 1 Sikh identity is always on the move, finding new routes to cope with the borderline existence of the contemporary world. The Sikh protagonist Kirpal shifts away from being colonised towards anti-colonial resistance and remains on the move until the end of the novel where he appears to be carving new trans-continental routes towards Canadian Sikh diaspora. In Chapter 2, just as Jugga's identity of self-sacrifice reflects going beyond the borders of India and Iqbal's actions shifts him away from the corrupt Indian politics towards establishing new transnational routes into diaspora. In Chapter 3, Kaju changes her desire to rediscover her roots and establishes trans-continental routes towards India where her identity always remains on the move until the end. Finally in Chapter 4, the British Sikh family is shown to have shifted away from their repression towards saving others and establishing new routes of a spiritual journey to the Golden Temple in the end. The Sikh identity throughout the texts has remained on the move, transforming itself to

meet the challenges of the contemporary society, which reflects that the Sikh identity is complex and dynamic, constantly shifting and moving towards a positive Sikh consciousness, and therefore constantly opening new transformational routes in the globalised world diasporas.

The critical analysis of the texts in this study provides a Sikh perspective that attempts to delineate the Sikh identity. It is a step away from the prejudice and fixity of the Sikh identity as colonised subjects, traitors of India, and demonised 'Other', etc, since these attempt to reduce Sikh identity into a politically constructed structure that portrays rigidity. I have demonstrated diverse and innovative ways to think about the Sikh identity and provided a framework that works towards an understanding of the construction of a Sikh identity as complex and dynamic subject. Throughout the thesis, I have attempted to provide an in-depth analysis on various aspects of the Sikh identity politics but an aspect that I was unable to explore in great depth or cover fully was the Sikh identity politics surrounding the Sikh turban in the post 9/11 terrorist attacks, where Sikhs in the west were innocently targeted at due to the hate crime associated with Islamophobia, with Sikh turban being mistaken for Muslims. I highlighted the ambivalence of the Sikh turban during the colonial period in Chapter 1 and also briefly demonstrated the western politics surrounding the turban being mistaken as Muslims in Chapter 3. The turban continues to remain a concern for Sikhs in the contemporary diaspora – this is certainly an area that provides possibility for future research.

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## Appendix

### The Sikh theory of 'identity consumes identity':

1. ਹਉਮੈ ਰੋਗੁ ਗਇਆ ਦੁਖੁ ਲਾਥਾ ਆਪੁ ਆਪੈ ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਖਾਧਾ ॥  
ਹਰਮੈ ਰੋਗੁ ਗਏਆ ਦੁਖੁ ਲਾਥਾ ਆਪੁ ਆਪੈ ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਖਾਧਾ ॥  
Ha<sup>u</sup>mai rog ga<sup>i</sup>ā dukh<sup>h</sup> lāthā āp āpai gurmat<sup>t</sup> khādhā.  
The sickness of my ego has been dispelled, and my pain is over and done. Through the Guru's Teachings, my identity has consumed my identical identity. (SGGS, p.78)
2. ਆਪੈ ਨੋ ਆਪੁ ਖਾਇ ਮਨੁ ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੀ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥  
ਆਪੈ ਨੋ ਆਪੁ ਖਾਏ ਮਨੁ ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੀ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥  
Āpai no āp khā<sup>e</sup> man nirmal hovai gur sabdī vīchār.  
Their identity consumes their identical identity, and their minds become pure by contemplating the Word of the Guru's Shabad. (Ibid., p.86)
3. ਨਾਨਕ ਆਪੇ ਆਪਿ ਆਪਿ ਖੁਆਈਐ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਆਪੇ ਆਪਿ ਆਪਿ ਖੁਆਏ ॥  
Nānak āpe āp āp khū<sup>a</sup>ī<sup>a</sup>i.  
O Nanak, his identity consumes his identical identity. (Ibid., p.369)
4. ਆਪ ਸੇਤੀ ਆਪੁ ਖਾਇਆ ਤਾ ਮਨੁ ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਹੋਆ ਜੋਤੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਮਈ ॥੨॥  
ਆਪ ਸੇਤੀ ਆਪੁ ਖਾਏਆ ਤਾ ਮਨੁ ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਹੋਆ ਜੋਤੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਮਏ ॥੨॥  
Āp setī āp khā<sup>i</sup>ā tā man nirmal ho<sup>a</sup> jōtī jōt sam<sup>ī</sup>. ||2||  
When my identity consumed my identical identity, then my mind became immaculately pure, and my light was blended with the Divine Light. ||2|| (Ibid., p.490)