Chapter 5
The Quest for Identity

Identity is a much debated term in postcolonial literature. The historical, cultural and ideological circumstances prevalent in the alien and native societies enmesh the protagonists. They become victims of despair and loneliness as they feel the people around them asking them, ‘Who are you? Where are you from? Why are you here?’ The perplexity of the protagonists caused by the binary opposition results in identity crisis. Coulmas establishes, “Identity is a multi-layered dynamic process rather than an inborn trait that cannot be helped. Identities are partly given and partly made” (178). The cultural clash bewilders the protagonists Ramaswamy, Billy Biswas and Yogananda who leave for France, America and Hawaii respectively. The cultural clash produces a hybrid genre. As Robert J.C. Young asserts:

A hybrid genre says something about contemporary social problems, social contradictions: its politics are in its articulations, even its articulations of inarticulate states of being – it has no quick solutions, and may well have no immediate solutions at all. Like postcolonialism itself, it offers challenge rather than solution in the first instance,
and allows its audiences themselves to interpret its new spaces with relevant meanings of their own. It does not arrive delivering its meaning already fully – formed – rather it enables new meanings to be created and projected in dialogic encounters. And like postcolonialism, because it articulates the raw, the rough, the vulgar, social and sexual tensions in a changing, torn social milieu that no longer adds up to a coherent civil society, it is criticised for its lack of respectability for the impurity of its politics. (74)

Articulations of inarticulate states and the lack of immediate solutions accentuate the postcolonial trauma. The structures of binary opposition play a vital role in postcolonial literature. In an interview conducted by Aminu Abdullahi, Ngugi comments:

I should have been more particular and said in Kenya, where we have got three communities: we have got Asians we have got Africans and we have got Europeans and you know the history of Kenya has been one of racial tensions, racial quarrels: one of African people feeling they have been rejected, or feeling they have been subjugated to a certain class or position. Now the problem with the African writers in Kenya is surely one of being able to stand a little
bit detached; and see the problem, the human problem, the human relationship in its proper perspective.

(Duerden 127-128).

The six selected novels project the problems of the postcolonial society, but none of them depicts a solution to these problems. The protagonists face fragmentation, alienation, identity crisis and they are on a search for their authentic selfhood. They do not realise what they are and what they should be. The question “Who am I?” raised by the protagonists reverberates in all the novels. Ramaswamy belongs to a very orthodox religious minority. In spite of living in such an environment, he marries the French lady Madeleine and faces a lot of cultural and religious conflicts. He suffers a lot of psychological problems, chief among them being his orphanhood. He accepts the loss of his mother as an irretrievable loss which has left its mark on his mind. On a government scholarship Rama goes to France to carry on research in the University of Sorbonne.

I was a provincial Brahmin from Mysore, where everybody learns marriage songs of Rama and Krishna, or Sanscrit verses for banquet competitions. I had come with that background to France, where I fell among the group of Madeleine and her friends, almost all Catholics, or serious
communists. But this world of, “The sky is blue and I love you,” was completely irrelevant to me. (SR 123)

He faces the first stage of acculturation i.e elation. But after making an acquaintance with Madeleine, he feels at home. Ramaswamy’s dilemma is similar to what Uma Parameswaran states:

When one arrives in a new land, one has a sense of wonder and adventure at the sight and feel of a landscape so different from what one has been accustomed to; there is also a sense of isolation and fear; and intense nostalgia is a buffer to which many retreat. (SR 31-32)

The greatness of Madeleine lies in patching up that sense of “isolation and fear.” The first child of this hybrid relation between Brahmin Ramaswamy and Christian Madeleine dies. It shocks Madeleine to the core. Madeleine implores him to practice the ascetic Brahmacharya of his ancestors. He admits his failure in that. Ramaswamy feels himself a pagan as he lacks real religious feeling in the beginning. When Rama goes to India for Saroja’s marriage, he falls sick and is not able to return to France at the time of Madeleine’s second delivery. Madeleine undergoes a Caesarean operation, but her second child too dies. Her life completely changes due to this tragic incident. She gradually takes up fasting and later she shifts to another house and becomes a perfect
Sanyasin. Rama does not have a proper company in France. The letters which he gets from India suggest that he has lost his contacts there too. His only company is Georges and Catherine; he is very much attracted to their little daughter Vera. Once Rama speaks about the nature of universe which clearly portrays the clash of real and unreal:

The world is either unreal or real – the serpent or the rope.
There is no in-between-the-two – and all that’s in-between is poetry, is sainthood. You might go on saying all the time, “No, no, it’s the rope”, and stand in the serpent. And looking at the rope from the serpent is to see paradises, saints, avatars, Gods, heroes, universes. For wheresoever you go, you see only with the serpent’s eyes. Whether you call it duality or modified duality, you invent a belvedere to heaven, you look at the rope from the posture of the serpent, and you feel you are the serpent – you are – the rope is. But in true fact, with whatever eyes you see there is no serpent, there never was a serpent. (SR 335)

Rama’s dilemma is seen in the words which he says to himself, “I must leave this world, I must leave, leave this world. But Lord, where shall I go, where? How can one go anywhere? How can one go from oneself?” (SR 399). This reflects the postcolonial crisis as man feels
homeless and alien to oneself. He feels “there is nobody to go now: no home, no temple, no city, no climate, no age” (SR 402). He analyses whether it is God that he is searching for; but he realises it is his guru whose help he needs. He says, “Lord, Lord, my guru, come to me, tell me; give me thy touch, vouchsafe” (SR 403). For the sake of higher studies, he leaves his own country and being attracted to a French lady, he marries her. His relation with Savithri strengthens the Indian values hidden in him and finally due to the detachment from Madeleine he leaves to Travancore in India in search of the Guru. The Brahmin in him starts conflicting. Like Rama, other protagonists too are in a quest for identity.

John Macleod observes:

The concept of hybridity has proved very important for diaspora peoples, and indeed many others too, as a way of thinking beyond exclusionary, fixed binary notions of identity based on ideas of rootedness and cultural, racial and national purity. Hybrid identities are never total and complete in themselves, like orderly pathways built from crazy-paving. Instead, they remain perpetually in motion; pursuing errant and unpredictable routes, open to change and reinscription. (Beginning Postcolonialism 219)
Colonisation has paved the way for this movement. The modern man is in this motion and his routes are unpredictable and changing very often.

In *A Dream in Hawaii*, Yogananda and Neeloy Mukherji are two different beings in the same human body. Neeloy Mukherji declares in the class, “There is a yogi deep within Neeloy. One day the yogi will assert himself powerfully and then perhaps Neeloy will be gone forever” (DH 89). The clash between Yogananda and Neeloy starts with this and after a long stay of Yogananda, Neeloy reasserts his position in the old Professor’s mind. Neeloy admires silently his student Devjani, whereas Yogananda pretends he has buried the memories of Devjani. Hawaii, which is considered the meeting place of the East and the West, plays a vital role in the realisation of the real being hidden in Yogananda. Later the focus of Yogananda’s search is realised, “The Swami’s relentless quest was directed to the core of reality behind the appearances which were maya, the stuff of illusion” (SR 8). The yogi, Yogananda has come to Hawaii “to present the universal religion in its Vedantic concept.”

Vincent Swift proposes “to set up an institute offering practical help to reduce inner tensions” (DH144). The Swami motif constitutes the binary opposition between spirituality and materialism. Swift doubts “Would the spiritual accept the needs of materiality?” He contemplates: “By this time Yogananda must have shed a little of the Ancient India in him and
absorbed a little of modern America” (DH144). He speaks about the universality of compromise between cultures. In order to harmonise diverse cultures one value system should replace another. Interchange is essential for a world culture. This cultural reversal and displacement results in what Spivak calls the binary opposition. The Western intellectual longs for all that is not West, and the non West desires for the West. While staying in India he gets attracted to France and later to the French lady; while staying in France he yearns for India and Indians.

Ramaswamy is also in search of the real, “The unreal is possible because the real is. But if you want to go from the unreal to real, it would be like a man trying to walk into the road that he sees in a hall of mirrors” (SR 22). Here the reference is to Dushasana, a character in Mahabharata, who is humiliated because he walks into a mirror thinking it is a path in the park.

In The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, the letters which Billy has written to Tuula is later sent by Tuula to Romi. One of the letters highlights man’s run after money which he considers the real problem maker:

I sometimes wonder whether civilisation is anything more than the making and spending of money. What else does the civilised man do? And if there are those who are not
busy earning and spending-so-called thinkers and philosophers and men like that – they are merely hired to find solution, throw light, as they say, on complications caused by this making and spending of money. What need would there be of psychiatrists, research foundations, learned societies, ministerial advisers, ambassadors, generals, had the world not initially been hung on this peg of money. (92)

Billy establishes that money is the root cause of all evils and it necessitates the service of research foundation and psychiatrists. Like other protagonists Billy too is least interested in money. This is one reason for his attraction towards Tuula and Bilasia. Both of them consider money as mere paper which should be disregarded. Tuula also states that after the basic needs, one has to contribute money as much as possible to society. When Romi tells him that Meena makes a lot of money, he retorts, “I can’t imagine Meena doing something that did not make money” (SCBB 106). This is the major reason for the rift between Billy and Meena. Billy criticises the materialistic society which he loathes. The quest for identity also plays a vital role in the creation of this strangeness as it is reflected in Billy’s words:
“It was more or less the same with me except that I could not figure out what excited or troubled me unless it was a sudden interest in my own identity. Who was I? Where had I come from? Where was I going? I can say this much, though: There was something about Bhubaneswar that had brought it on. (SCBB 120)

On an official assignment Collector, Romi, meets Billy amongst the tribals in the Maikala region, ten years after his disappearance to the Saal forest. Romi is astonished to see him in loin cloth as the civilised society had come to the conclusion that Billy was eaten by a man-eater. Romi observes the change that has come over Billy. “His skin had darkened because of constant exposure to sun. It was stretched tightly, emphasizing the muscles of his body. His hair was lighter and longer” (SCBB 100). But Billy’s words reflect great happiness. “What kept us happy, I suppose, were the same things that have kept all primitives happy through the ages: the earth, the forest, the rainbows, the liquor from the mahua, an occasional feast, a lot of dancing and love-making, and, more than anything else. No ambition, none at all” (SCBB 146). The educated Professor of Anthropology mocks the world which is truly ambitious. Even Romi envies the freedom Billy is enjoying as there is “no question of hurry in the life of Billy Biswas” (SCBB 149). Billy
foresees the danger if he is spotted by the civilised society. “I am sure
the civilised folks in Delhi will immediately try to reclaim me once they
knew I was alive. And that could be dangerous” (SCBB 148). Billy
comments on the shallowness of Delhi which is a major reason for his
retreat:

I don’t think all city societies are as shallow as ours. I am, of
course, talking mainly of the so-called upper classes. I
didn’t really get to know the others. I don’t think I have
ever met a more pompous, a more mixed-up lot of people.
Artistically, they were dry as dust. Intellectually, they could
no better than mechanically mouth ideas that the West
abandoned a generation ago. Their idea of romance was to
go and see an American movie or go to one of those
wretched restaurants and dance with their wives to a
thirty-year-old tune. Nobody remembered the old songs,
or the meaning of the festivals. All the sensuality was gone.
So was the poetry. All that was left was loud-mouthed
women and men in three-piece suits dreaming their little
adulteries. (SCBB 177)
Romi interferes that the mixing up is due to the foreign rule and justifies
it as the period of transition. Billy says that if they do not think about it
seriously, the period of transition will last forever. It is a remarkable warning as the postcolonial society is not free from the impact of colonisation and is still in the period of transition.

The quest of these protagonists is similar to that of Hanif Kureishi, British-Pakistani writer. He observes in “The Rainbow Sign” that he is born of a Pakistani father and British mother. He speaks of his experience of visiting his uncle in Pakistan. He really faces an identity crisis because he is told by a Pakistani acquaintance, “We are Pakistanis, but you, you will always be a Paki.” The emphasis here is to the slang derogatory name the English used for Pakistanis, and therefore Kureishi could not rightfully lay claim to either place. Kureishi who resembles an Indian, wonders when a photograph of Indian scene is shown to him, whether his cousins in Pakistan are playing with mud just as Moughli, half naked and have the habit of eating with fingers. Playing in mud and eating with fingers are really unacceptable to Europeans and even to European Diasporas.

Just as Kureishi pictures a total contrast between Pakistan and Europe, Bhabhani Bhattacharya contrasts the Indian and American way of life in A Dream in Hawaii. The transcendental meditation, permissiveness, hippie culture, Krishna consciousness and Hare Ram, Hare Krishna cults are depicted in the novel. On the one side sex and
Kamasutra dominated society is pictured; on the other side yogas and meditation dominate. Bhattacharya deals with two main poles of life – Kama or physical desire and Moksha or salvation. It also covers Tamas or darkness on one side and Jnana or enlightenment on the other. Yogananda is really caught up between these two worlds and returns corrupted to his homeland. The American soil makes him unfit to be a yogi. The real problem he faces is the clash in his inner mind between him and Neeloy Mukherji. The Neeloy Mukherji in him is not able to suppress the affection towards Devjani. Once while lecturing in the University of Varanasi, Neeloy came to the theme of his own accord. He said, “I've been asking myself, who am I?” (DH 92). Devjani feels it is the ‘Crisis in identity!’ (DH 92); the crisis which she herself faces. Devjani realises Neeloy is in the grip of his identity conflict. She senses his perplexity, his uncertainty and inner crisis:

The charisma was there deep within Neeloy and he only had to become self-aware. Even a mere student of his could hasten that process by holding before him a mirror in which his inner image would be reflected. He would one day be sure to feel that his outer and his inner image had to be one, that he could not remain forever self-divided.

(DH 91)
It is true that Yogananda is not able to get rid of the inner crisis and keeps on asking why he has denied himself the life of an ordinary man and with that question he returns to India.

Identity crisis is also formed due to the great respect towards one’s own culture and neglect towards all others. Ezeulu of Arrow of God and Waiyaki of The River Between face the similar situation. Eustace Palmer opines in “An Introduction to the African Novel”:

At the heart of The River Between are rigidly uncompromising attitudes which, for want of a better term, can be best described as ‘egoisms’: an aggressive concern for oneself and one’s views and a complete contempt for those of others. On the one hand, there are the traditionalists whose strong hold is Kameno, traditionally the seat of Gikuyu and Mumbi, the legendary ancestors of the tribe. (13)

In The River Between and Arrow of God the division is not between two countries or continents, but the division takes place within the country. The division and hostility between the Makuyu and Kameno ridges is beautifully portrayed through the harsh feelings Waiyaki and Joshua exhibit towards each other. More over the geographic division is also pictured:
The two ridges lay side by side. One was Kameno, the other was Makuyu. Between them was a valley. It was called the valley of life. A river flowed through the valley of life.

(RB 1)
The river is called Honia, which means cure, or bring-back-to life. The important characteristic of this river is that it never dries, even in droughts and weather changes. It is considered the soul of Kameno and Makuya as it is the only link between the two ridges. The circumcision which is considered the greatest rite amongst the tribal people is done on the shores of this river and is considered a sacrifice to the river. But the river fails to cure the illness from the minds of people belonging to Makuyu and Kameno.

In both Arrow of God and The River Between, as a result of the encroachment of white man, the moral value of the indigenous tribe is disintegrated. Both Ezeulu of Arrow of God and Chege of The River Between send their sons to the white man’s school. The purpose of these two is to enable their sons to fight with white man with their own weapons. Ezeulu accepts the world is changing, “I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like Mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do
not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend white man today will be saying *had we known tomorrow*” (AG 46).

Ezeulu chooses his son Oduche for this purpose, though Oduche’s mother, Ugoye disagrees. Chege is doubtful, whether his son Waiyaki who is supposed to discharge a great duty to his people will be attracted towards the white people. But it is Ezeulu’s son, Oduche who cheats his father and his people. He fails to report to his father the plans of Goodcountry. He also brings ill fame to his father by locking the python in a box. Oduche “felt a great relief within. The python would die for lack of air, and he would be responsible for its death without being guilty of killing it, which seemed to him a very happy compromise” (AG 50). Here the conflict between Christianity and the native religion is evident. His inner mind warns him what he is doing is wrong, but he looks for a compromise.

In *The River Between*, Waiyaki’s identity crisis begins with an incident which happens in his young age. The young Waiyaki and the other boys usually play Demi na Mathathi. One day a boy from Koina tells Waiyaki that he cannot be Demi as he is not ready for circumcision. The boy said, “You are not born again” (RB 12). Waiyaki feels small and humiliated. He realises the need of circumcision to attain his manhood and to prove his manly spirit. He decides to be circumcised and the first
phase of circumcision which is the symbolic cutting of the umbilical cord is done:

The ceremony did not take long. It was not even complicated. His mother sat near the fireplace in her hut as if in labour. Waiyaki sat between her thighs. A thin cord taken from the slaughtered goat and tied to his mother represented the umbilical cord. A woman, old enough to be a midwife, came and cut the cord. The child began to cry. And the women who had come to wait for the birth of a child, shouted with joy:


Old Waiyaki is born

Born again to carry on the ancient fire’. (RB 14)

Chege entrusts a responsibility on Waiyaki to save his people and tribe from the clutches of the white man. Chege feels he has a mission to complete before his death. He is determined to impart great knowledge “to none but the right one” (9). This “right one” is Waiyaki. Chege takes Waiyaki along with him to the hills and reveals the great secret he is holding in his mind for many years. Pointing to a Mugumo tree, he says, “This was a sacred tree. It was the tree of Murungu.” (RB 19). It is clear from Chege’s words that Murungu brought the man and woman and
showed them the whole vastness of the land. “He gave the country to them and their children and the children of the children, ten na tene, world without end” (RB 21). He continues, “The children spread all over the country. Some came to the ridges to keep and guard the ancient rites” (RB 21).

Lamming’s Weep Not, Child also deals with the Gikuyu legend. Ngotho longs for the return of his ancestral lands taken away by the Westerner with the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other. The land thus snatched away by the foreigner is really a gift of God to Gikuyu and Mumbi, the Adam and Eve of Kikuya land of Kenya. According to Gikuya legend the God has handed over the land to man and woman to rule. They may sacrifice it only to God under the sacred tree. The implied meaning is that no white man has right to rule them.

Chege informs Waiyaki that Mugo wa Kibiro, the seer, foresaw things of future. He further enlightens Waiyaki:

“Mugo was born and grew up in Kameno before he went to tell people what he saw. For he saw many butterflies, of many colours, flying about over the land, disrupting the peace and the ordered life of the country.” Then he cried aloud and said: “There shall come a people with clothes like butterflies........” People did not believe him. Some even
poured scorn on him, laughing at him, for they said, “He is not well: And they would not listen to his voice, which warned them: “Beware!” the seer was rejected by the people of the ridges. They gave him no clothes and food. He became bitter and hid himself, refusing to tell them more. He went beyond the hills, to the world yonder, the whole extent of Gikuyu land. He was not yet exhausted and there spoke the message even louder. Still they laughed and poured scorn on him. Here they thought him dead. But disguised he came back here and settled’. (RB 22)

When the young Waiyaki is told, “We are his offspring. His blood flows in your veins”, he stands dumb. The knowledge that he has in him the blood of this famous seer makes him wonderstruck. The most relevant words in The River Between are uttered by Chege:

Mugo often said you could not cut the butterflies with a panga. You could not spear them until you learnt and knew their ways and movement. Then you could trap, you could fight back. Before he died, he whispered to his son the prophecy, the ancient prophecy: “Salvation shall come from the hills. From the blood that flows in me, I say from the same tree, a son shall rise. And his duty shall be to lead
and save the people!” He said no more. Few knew the prophecy. Perhaps Kabonyi, who has betrayed the tribe, knows about it. I am old, my time is gone. Remember that you are the last in this line. (RB 24)

From the words uttered by Chege “Arise. Heed the prophecy. Go to the Mission Place. Learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the white man. But do not follow his vices. Be true to your people and the ancient rites” (RB 24), it is certain that Waiyaki is the person entrusted to save the tribe from the white men, who have already reached there “with clothes like butterflies.” The whole experience seems a dream to Waiyaki. He ponders, “What had he, a mere boy, to do with a saviour?” (RB 25). But with strong determination he progresses and impresses the white missionaries, who think he would be a brave Christian leader of the church. Chege’s idea of white man is similar to Moses of Arrow of God who tells, “White man is like hot soup and we must take it slowly from the edges of the bowl” (AG 85).

In fact the desire shown by Waiyaki towards his tradition is something forced by his father. Later Muthoni also functions as an instrument to implant this traditional feeling in Waiyaki’s mind. Identity of a person depends highly on the society’s moral value and the perspective through which the person is being viewed. What one
considers right may be wrong in other’s eyes as in the case of the use of veil by women. Veil is viewed through different angles by Westerners and Islamic societies as pointed out by Robert J.C. Young:

For many Westerners, the veil is a symbol of patriarchal Islamic societies in which women are assumed to be oppressed, subordinated, and made invisible. On the other hand, in Islamic societies, and among any Muslim women in non – Islamic societies, the veil (hijab) has come to symbolise a cultural and religious identity, and women have increasingly chosen to cover themselves as a matter of choice. As a result, the veil is more widely worn today than ever before. (80)

The use of veil is similar to the idea of circumcision. The tribal people consider circumcision as mandatory but according to the Christian belief it is pagan. In The River Between, Chege dissects the tribal and Christian belief.

Were these Christians not now preaching against all that which was good and beautiful in the tribe? Circumcision was the central rite in the Gikuyu way of life. Who had ever heard of a girl that was not circumcised? Who would ever pay cows and goats for such a girl? Certainly it would never
be this son. Waiyaki would never betray the tribe. Would he ever fail the tribe? Would he ever fail the prophecy? It was as if his life, his heart, was being carried by Waiyaki and he feared the boy might stumble. (RB 44)

Chege watches Waiyaki’s progress and behaviour. “He lived in the son” (RB 45) and was sure that his son would fulfil the prophecy. As the first step the circumcision is done. “All his life Waiyaki had waited for this day, for this very opportunity to reveal his courage like a man. This had been the secret ambition of his youth” (RB 52). After circumcision, “a religious bond linked Waiyaki to the earth, as if his blood was an offering” (RB 52).

The tribal belief is hidden in Waiyaki’s blood and further instilled by his father and Muthoni. The Christian ways are being taught to him by white man like Livingstone at Siriana. These two ideas clash frequently in Waiyaki’s mind. After circumcision, he ponders over his childhood days and later of Livingstone. “What would he now think if he found Waiyaki sitting there facing the river, holding his penis with blood dripping on to his fingers, falling to the ground, while a white calico sheet covered him?” (RB 53). Seeing Muthoni’s spirit and zeal for circumcision, the wavering mind of Waiyaki feels that he will not have done circumcision if he is a Christian like Muthoni. This identity crisis
occurs in Billy too. During the expedition, Billy as an Anthropology Professor gives a briefing to the students on the area they were going to investigate. While describing their geography, their livelihood, their origin and their customs Billy gets a strange feeling. He feels “as though I was a tribal myself, that I was one of the primitives to be investigated and not one of the investigators” (SCBB 127).

Ngugi makes Waiyaki consider education as an instrument to unite the people of Kameno and Makuyu. With the knowledge he attained from Siriana, Waiyaki sets up a school named Marioshoni where he educates a great number of students and is reverently called ‘teacher’. They also consider him as “the champion of tribe’s ways and life” (RB 81). He feels more loyalty towards the tribe after the death of his father. Later Waiyaki falls in love with Nyambura, the eldest daughter of the staunch Joshua. Their alliance creates grave problems among the elders of the tribe as Nyambura is an uncircumcised Christian. He faces the real clash as he can neither abandon the lady whom he loves nor the tribe whose saviour he is. Recollecting his father’s warning, Waiyaki wonders, “Was the education he was trying to spread in the ridges not a contamination?”(RB 83).

When the novel ends he is waiting for the judgement. “Waiyaki and Nyambura would be placed in hands of the Kiama, who would judge
them and decide what to do” (RB 174). The same situation takes place when the novel Water with Berries ends. Teeton, the protagonist is waiting for the trial along with his two friends. Teeton is caught between the loyalty he has towards his home country and the obligation he has towards the landlady. The Old Dowager is ready to protect Teeton and for that reason travels with him to the cold isolated island. When the Old Dowager gives account of her experience as a young wife Teeton is overwhelmed; her curious identification with the dead body of Nicole on the divan surprises him. “It must have been ten hours that she had kept vigil in his room; watching over Nicole’s corpse as her husband had once kept watch over her” (WB 183). But in the clash, his urge to return triumphs and he does not hesitate even to burn the Old Dowager. How Teeton is influenced by the foreign soil, is stated in the opening lines of Water with Berries. After seven years he has learnt to live with the lunacy of the seasons.

He had been growing without much notice from anyone; a plant which had defied some foreign soil, coming to fruition without a name. He liked it here. London had been a city of welcome, the safest harbor for his kind of waiting. But he was about to bring this pilgrimage to an end. After seven years it was now over. (WB 11).
He feels himself out of country and burns the lady as she is responsible for the procrastination of his return. Salman Rushdie declares in his essay “Imaginary Homelands”:

The writer who is out-of-country and out-of-language may experience this loss in an intensified form. It is made concrete for him by the physical fact of continuity, of his present being in a different place from his past, of his being “elsewhere.” (12)

Achebe pictures Ibo society in his novels. He depicts their life, culture and history. At first they had great difficulty because they did not have any well established, centralised institutions and leaders to lead the tribe. There is no rigid hierarchy of power in the Ibo society. S.A Khayoom opines:

It is a pluralistic system where power is decentralised and is vested in small groups – priests, diviners and medicine men represent religious power and lords of the village, men of title and elders constitute the temporal authority of the village.(12)

Ezeulu is a very ambitious man who aspires even to become a king. It is ironical to note that there are no kings in Ibo community, only priest diviners, men of title and elders of the village. They grant titles to
people who prove their mettle in wars. People assemble in market places to take vital decisions on important matters. This practice is evident in some of the traditional societies in India, Kenya and Nigeria. In *The River Beween* people gather around the market place to take important decisions.

In *The River Beween*, people at Kameno become restless and believe that it is Joshua who is responsible for the white men's presence in the hills. There are rumours that a Government post will be soon built at Makuya and that the hills will be ruled from there. It is also announced that people in those regions will have to pay taxes to the government in Nairobi. They do not even know what a tax is. In *Arrow of God* when Akukalia reaches Okperi, he is informed that everybody in Iboland knows that Okperi people do not have other business on their Eke day.

The conflict between the two villages is strong. Okperi welcomes missionaries and governments, while Umuaro remains backward. When Akukalia insists on revealing his message, he is informed, “If you want to shout like a castrated bull you must wait until you return to Umuaro. I have told you this place is called Okperi” (*AG* 23). The people of Okperi and Umuaro are great enemies and this hostility results in a savage war which breaks between them over a piece of land.
Ezeulu is greatly influenced and attracted towards the dramatic behaviour of the white man Winterbottom. Winterbottom, not satisfied that he has stopped the war, asks the soldiers to break all the guns except three or four which he carries with him. For that reason he is called Otiji-Egbe which means the Breaker of Guns. The native people state that all the children born in that year belong to a new age-grade of the Breaking of the Guns. Though the distance between Umuaro and Okperi is only about six miles, the people of one village treat those of the other as foreigners or opponents.

In judgment over Umuaro and Okperi, Winterbottom gives the disputed land to Okperi. There are five Europeans living on government hill of Okperi: Captain Winterbottom, Mr. Clarke, Roberts, Wade and Wright. Captain Winterbottom is the District Officer. At first Winterbottom finds the climate and the food in Nigeria unbearable and doubts if he could continue his service there. But then he becomes a hardened coaster, and although the climate makes him irritable and limp, he does not exchange the African life for the comfort of Europe. His strong belief in the value of British mission in Africa is strengthened during the Cameroon campaign of 1916 when he fought against the Germans. Thus he gets the title of captain.
Though there are only five Englishmen to administer, they are strong enough to change the people, transform their culture and annihilate their values. Achebe establishes that colonisation is a very slow process. Achebe says that the first missionaries came to Niger River town of Onitsha in 1857. They reached Achebe's town in Ogidi only in 1892 even though the distance between the two is only seven miles. “Seven miles in thirty-five years: that is, one mile every five years. That is no whirlwind” (EBPC 7).

Even then Winterbottom is dissatisfied and comments:

We British are a curious bunch, doing everything half-heartedly. Look at French. They are not ashamed to teach their culture to backward races under their charge. Their attitude to the native ruler is clear. They say to him: ‘this land has belonged to you because you have been strong enough to hold it. By the same token it now belongs to us. If you are not satisfied come out and fight us.’ What do we British do? We flounder from one expedient to its opposite. We do not only promise to secure old savage tyrants on their thrones- or more likely filthy animal skins - we not only do that, but we now go out of our way to invent chiefs
where there were not before. They make me sick.

(AG 35- 36).

Colonisation, whether it is by the French imperial powers or by the British, reflects the helplessness of the colonised natives. Winterbottom has a deep knowledge about the natives and beautifully pictures the character of Ezeulu:

One thing you must remember in dealing with natives is that like children they are great liars. They don’t lie simply to get out of trouble. Sometimes they would spoil a good case by a pointless lie. Only one man –a kind of priest-king in Umuaro- witnessed against his own people. I have not found out what it was, but I think he must have had some pretty fierce tabu working on him. But he was a most impressive figure of a man. He was very light in complexion, almost red. One finds people like that now and again among the Ibos. I have a theory that the Ibos in the distant past assimilated a small non-negroid tribe of the same complexion as the Red Indians.” (AG 37)

As Fanon declares the native is a ‘thing’ in the hands of the coloniser, a puppet which should act according to the whims and fancies of the coloniser. Within the natives, there are many conflicts and hostilities.
The enmity between Ezeulu and Nwaka of Umunneora grows to such an extent that people comment, “kill and take the head” (AG 39). It is stated, “For when we see a little bird dancing in the middle of a pathway we must know that its drummer is in the near-by bush” (AG 39). Nwaka’s drummer and praise-singer is the priest of Idemili, the personal God of Umunneora. Nwaka is a great man and great orator and is called ‘Owner of Words’ by his friends. His friendship with Ezidemili gradually turns him into Ezeulu’s immortal enemy.

Ezidemili uses very powerful words to picture the real power of Idemili, “Every boy in Umuaro knows that Ulu was made by our fathers long ago. But Idemili was there at the beginning of things” (AG 42). He further comments, “Idemili means pillar of water. As the pillar of this house holds the roof so does Idemili hold up the raincloud in the sky so that it does not fall down. Idemili belongs to the sky and that is why I, his priest, cannot sit on bare earth.” (AG 42)

Even the priest king Ezeulu learns the implication of churchbell. The coloniser’s objective of spreading their language and religion is executed by the natives. When the church bell rings Nwafo comes back to the obi and asks his father whether he knows what the bell was saying. Ezeulu says, “It’s saying: leave your yam, leave your cocoyam and come to church. That is what Oduche said” (AG 43). All the members
of Ezeulu’s family are shocked to observe Oduche’s box moving. The box, which is the only one of its kind in Ezeulu’s compound, has a lock. Only people of the church have such boxes made for them by the mission carpenter and they are highly valued in Umuaro. Oduche’s box seems to have something inside it struggling to be free. With a great struggle, when finally the box is open the situation becomes entirely alarming. Oduche has trapped the royal python inside the box. “What they saw was enough to blind a man. Ezeulu stood speechless” (AG 45). Referring to Oduche he says, “Today I shall kill the boy with my own hands” (AG 45). Ezeulu understands he has put himself and his son in danger by sending him to a Christian school. The natives address the python as father, but for the Christians it is the traitor who tempted the first mother Eve to eat the forbidden fruit.

Oduche’s brutal act is the result of the inspiring words of Mr.Goodcountry, “If we are Christians, we must be ready to die for the faith. You must be ready to kill the python as the people of the rivers killed the iguana. You address the python as father. It is nothing but a snake, the snake that deceived our first mother, Eve. If you are afraid to kill it do not count yourself a Christian” (AG 47). Oduche is well versed in the Bible than the native religion. This python instance can be
considered as a first signal to Ezeulu that he has done a blunder by admitting his son in a Christian school.

Oduche proves his valour when Moses Unachukwu tries to forbid the killing of the snake. Citing the native myth of python, Unachukwu tries to establish the decree of six villages that “anyone who killed python would be regarded as having killed his kinsman” (AG 48). Many people clap for Oduche, when he utters the most striking words, “It’s not true that the Bible does not ask us to kill the serpent. Did not God tell Adam to crush its head after it had deceived his wife?” (AG 49). The fact that the coloniser not only tried to exploit the natives politically, but also tried to convert them to Christianity is evident in these words of Mr. Goodcountry, the catechist.

“You say you are the first Christian in Umuaro, you partake of the holy meal; and yet whenever you open your mouth nothing but heathen filth pours out. Today a child who sucks his mother’s breast has taught you the scriptures. Is it not as our lord himself said that the first shall become last and the last become first. The world will pass away but not one single word of our lord will be set aside.” He turned to Oduche. “When the time comes for your baptism you
will be called Peter; on this rock will I build my church."

(AG 49)

The coloniser knows how to choose and encourage the best people to spread their message constantly. The very pillar of Ezeulu’s existence as a priest shakes, when the elders question him about Oduche’s abomination. When the messenger of Ezidemili comes and asks how Ezeulu intends to purify his house of the abomination that his son has committed, Ezeulu becomes outraged and retorts “Go back and tell Ezidemili to eat shit. Do you hear me? Tell Ezidemili that Ezeulu says he should go and fill his mouth with shit” (AG 53).

Ezeulu accepts it as an offence on the part of Oduche, but it is not serious enough for the priest of Idemili to send him an insulting message. In the festival of the New Pumpkin Leaves Ezeulu “would then cleanse the six villages of this and countless other sins, before the planting season” (AG 59). Ezeulu is the extinguisher of sins.

Postcolonial theory encourages thought about the colonised’s creative resistance to the coloniser and how that resistance complicates and gives texture to European imperial colonial projects, which utilises a range of strategies, including anti-conquest narratives, to legitimise their dominance. The English man Mr. Wright supervises the road construction connecting Okperi and Umuaro. He uses unpaid labour as
he considers the natives as loyal pet dogs. Unachukwu’s reputation increases because he uses the white man’s tongue. The brutal language of the coloniser is reflected in the words of Mr. Wright, “Shut up, you black monkeys, and get down to work!” (AG 83). Western depictions of the native construct an inferior world, a place of backwardness, irrationality, and wildness. The West identify themselves as the opposite of these characteristics as a superior world that was progressive, rational, and civil. Ngugi speaks about the imperialist tradition and resistance tradition of Africa. These two opposed forces are evident in all those countries which were once colonised.

The imperialist tradition in Africa today maintained by the international bourgeoisie using the multinational and of course the flag-waving native ruling classes. The economic and political dependence of this African neo-colonial bourgeoisie is reflected in its culture of apemanship and parrotry enforced on a restive population through police boots, barbed wire, a gowned clergy and judiciary; their ideas are spread by corpus of state intellectuals, the academic and journalistic laureates of the neo-colonial establishment. The resistance tradition is being carried out by the working people aided by patriotic students,
intellectuals, soldiers and other progressive elements of the petty middle class. (DM 2)

In an interview with Goddard, Lamming declares:

History as a force has been very, very strong in the Caribbean imagination. This is true of the prose writers as well as of the poets. I think that it has something to do with the nearness of events; that we are still very near some of the most critical events. We are still living, in many ways, the legacy of some of the most critical moments in Caribbean history, and I think that has something to do with it.

In A Dream in Hawaii Swami Yogananda confesses to Devjani before returning to India that Swami Yogananda has ceased to exist and the man who stands before her is Neeloy Mukherji. He strongly admits, “the yellow garb he still has to wear must be discarded” (DH 232). He asserts that he had no wish for a life that was not the life of the common man. He admits the woman to whom he frequently makes love is Devjani. He delays giving diksha to Devjani because of his inner weakness. He tells her “at sadhana, where I was so far away from your presence, you were in my dreams at night. Year after year. The truth is that I never got away from Neeloy” (DH 234). He proves that “a firefly
cannot become a star – ever” (DH 234). In the airport when he was about to leave, Stella touches his feet and requests him to come again to them. Devjani and Jennifer follow the same ritual. As Devjani bends low, Yogananda moves a step back and says, “Neeloy does not deserve that” (DH 242.). She answers, “There is no Neeloy, there is only Yogananda” (DH 242). The success of Yogananda is that even his enemy, Walt feels the personal need of Yogananda. Walt ponders:

    Things had happened to topple his belief that he, revolutionist in social behaviour represented the America of today. How shaken he was by the new idiom his students used! Purpose. Faith. Direction. Alien words in his modern parlance. The modern was giving way to ultramodern!

    There was a new dream of youth, and Yogananda seemed somehow closer to that dream than he who claimed to be today’s America (DH 243).

    Even the business minded sponsor Vincent Swift turns out to be helpless to prevent Yogananda’s return. Frieda speaks of the guru who came to Los Angeles. She says about him, “When I went to his hotel he took me to his room. First, he showed me how to sit in lotus-posture. Then he gave me a strong drink. He talked he had spotted me in the lecture hall, he said, and he knew instantly by his inner sight that I was
ready for ambrosia. So...so he pulled me to bed” (DH 113). These phony gurus also represent the great India. The treacherous yogis and flirting ladies excavate the hidden Neeloy from Yogananda.

When Romi expresses his grief in the tribal life of Billy, Dhunia comments, “What are we but little mud dolls [mati ke putle] in the hands of fate. Who has ever succeeded in ironing the creases off his brow” (SCBB 161). These words echo the famous lines of Shakespeare.

“As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods;/ They kill us for their sport.” (King Lear Act IV, Scene I, Lines 39-40). The existential crisis is reflected in these words.

Lamming observes in Pleasures of Exile the dilemma of the West Indian writer abroad. He hungers for nourishment from a soil which he could not at present endure. Lamming states, “The pleasure and paradox of my own exile is that I belong wherever I am.”

The loss which the writers face is similar to that of the protagonists. The protagonists are out of their country, language, customs, traditions, religion as there is a great disparity between their past and present. The protagonists, who are victims of inferiority or dependency complexes, bring to limelight some strange fantasies of human mind. The most perplexing question that remains unanswered in the postcolonial situation is ‘Who am I? The problem aggravates with
binaries: East/West, native religion/Christianity, ancient/modern, spirituality/materialism and primitive/civilised. A world culture or universal culture anticipated by Vincent Swift “to harmonize diverse cultures” results in clashes. Owing to this, postcolonial writings depict the specific culture and the hybridisation of cultures. The quest for identity of these natives becomes a “spiritual odyssey of the modern man, who has lost his social and spiritual moorings and who is anxious to seek his roots” (Pathak 52 ). Ramaswamy faces homelessness. The “rootless and ageless”, Yogananda faces normlessness; Ezeulu faces powerlessness and meaninglessness. Billy is isolated. Teeton is subjected to self estrangement. Ezeulu and Waiyaki face social alienation. Social alienation is “the sense of estrangement brought out by the sudden discovery that the social system is either oppressive or incomplete with the individual’s desires and ideals” (Taviss 47). Powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-enstrangement are considered as different manifestations of alienation. (Melvin Seeman). When the harmony and belongingness is lost man loses confidence and faces insecurity. In an insecure situation he thinks of return.