Chapter 1

Introduction: A Critical Overview of Race and Ethnicity
No two leaves of any one tree in nature are to be found perfectly alike, and still less do two human faces, or human frames, resemble each other. Of what endless variety is our artful structure susceptible!

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Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind

I

As human beings we need to define and categorize events, worldly objects and mankind in order to make our real world convenient and easily accessible. Without any categorization and distinction, it would be very difficult for us to give a definite meaning to an object and to control our everyday world. Categorization, therefore, “is [a] part of the psychological makeup of all human beings and plays a fundamental role in the definition of diversity and, by definition, also of racial diversity” (Bolaffi et al. 239). There is nothing wrong in defining and categorizing mankind, but when we start putting prominence in phenotypical traits as markers of one’s personality and character in order to divide mankind in different hierarchical offshoots, it becomes an issue of racial debate and discrimination. So, such social categorization does place people in a ladder of social “hierarchy that defines groups in terms of whether they are to be favoured or not, empowered or not, economically advantaged or not, and so forth” (Kivisto and Croll 2).

II

The word ‘race’, an ambiguous, highly problematic, argumentative and controversial term, does not have any fixed meaning and value because of its categorization in different unstable groups. According to Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary (2005), ‘race’ is “one of the main groups that humans can be divided into according to their physical differences, for example the colour of their skin” (1240). Although ‘race’ has a position in different areas of academic disciplines such as in biology, anthropology, psychology, social science, history and literature etc., but it altogether causes different reactions in most of the art forms. On the basis of these studies we can certainly assert that the definition and value of the immensely speculative concept of “race” dramatically vary from time to time and place to place in our society.
The debut discussion on race comes from environmental theorists who say that the colour of someone has nothing to do with biology; rather the variation in skin colour depends on the geographical or environmental factors. Different environmental theorists ascribe different factors like climate and geography, instead of colour, as root determinants of one's varied hair texture, skin colour, stature etc. Israeli writer Benjamin Henri Issac’s book *The Invention of Racism in the Western World* (2004) focuses on ideological factors and early form of racism, better to proto-racism, and ancient imperialism which were intensely prevailing in the Graeco-Roman world. The concepts like racialization, racism, nationalism and ethnic pride and prejudice, prominent themes of Graeco-Roman world, had developed from ancient times as attitudes of their mind. Ethnic surnames and racism are still prevailing and dominating in different names and altered surnames in different cultures over the periods of time which are undeniable.

On the basis of environmental factors or geographical factors as chief determinants of human characters and behaviour, ancient Greek and Roman writers were hostile towards outsiders, strangers and immigrant minorities. They prized mankind racially on the basis of such factors not only to define and define the character and personality of others but also to conclude themselves as superior beings in comparison to the subordinate ones. They thought that such environmentally acquired characteristics subsequently transfer to the succeeding generations and remain unwavering in mankind over a period of time. They also expressed that they belonged to ‘pure race’ as having ‘pure lineage’ because their ancestors never mixed themselves up with the people of other colour and culture who thought to be inferior, feeble, and passive. According to them “people living in hot climates are forceful, self-confident and courageous” (Isaac 57), while those living in cold climates are defined as less self-confident, emotional and meek. So, as it seems to opinion that “Asiatics are servile, Europeans, free men and acrors” (Isaac 57). Assuming on the basis of ‘environmental’ and ‘pure lineage’ theories, the ancient authors easily created a ladder of social hierarchy - superior and subordinate - a stereotypical division of mankind is still prevailing in our so called civilized society.

Simultaneously, another idea was prevailing there – the identity and quality of a man may change if they leave their habitats and start living in a new environment.
But such “change would only be for worse” (Isaac 56) because then these people would only regress to their primitive Caucasian race due to the inadaptible new environmental factors.

One can find how the great Greek philosophers and environmental theorists like Herodotus (484 BC-425 BC), Hippocrates (460 BC-370 BC), Plato (428/427 or 424/423 – 348/347 BCE) and Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC) stank of racism and talked a lot about such issues in their master pieces. Instead of supernatural factors, Hippocrates, a 5th century BC Greek physician, acknowledged the role of natural factors like climate, foods and occupations on the proper development of mankind in general and on the building ideologies of the Asiatic and Scythian races in particular in his book On Airs, Waters, Places (translated by Francis Adams). He defined the Asiatic race as coward, lethargic, feeble, emotional, passionate “unwarlike and of gentler disposition than the Europeans” (Hippocrates 13). The Asians are, according to him, neither “their own masters nor independent” (Hippocrates 13-14), rather slaves of others, can die for their masters. The key reason behind such nature is the effect of always evolving climate and constantly changing seasons. In such context, we can correlate Greek philosopher Aristotle’s climatic view of racism to that of the Hoppocrates’ as the complementary one. Aristotle mainly attempted to excavate the nature and tendency of Europeans, Asians and Greeks in his book Politics (translated by Benjamin Jowett) in order to stamp the superiority of the Hellenic race. According to him,

Those who live in a cold climate and in Europe are full of spirit, but wanting in intelligence and skill; and therefore they retain freedom, but no political organization, and are incapable of ruling over others. Though the natives of Asia are intelligent and inventive, they are wanting in spirit, and therefore they are always in a state of subjection and slavery. But the Hellenic race [Greek and Roman], which is situated between them, is likewise intermediate in character, being high-spirited and also intelligent. (Aristotle 161-162)

Aristotle acknowledged the Greek people as superior, spirited and intelligent, and was of the opinion that they should rule the non-Greek slaves who were defined as barbarians and more submissive than the Greeks. Therefore, he concluded that the uncivilized should indefensibly tolerate despotic Hellenic rule without any complaint.
Such predisposition and racism on the subject of human nature do not stop here. Plato also extended another theory of hierarchy famously known as ‘Great Chain of Being’ which was lengthened by Aristotle in his book On the Parts of Animals (translated by William Ogle). The concept suggests that all living things in the universe including God and angels should be posited hierarchically by categorizing them on the basis of their power.

The existing species exhibit a hierarchy of status, and so compose a great chain, or ladder, of being, extending from the lowest condition of the merest existence up to God Himself. In this chain human beings occupy the middle position between the animal kinds and the angels, who are purely spiritual beings. (Abrams 154)

Like Aristotle, Roman author Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (80-70 BC-15 AD) also aid that all nations differ according to the variation of the climate. On the basis of the environmental factors, he divided mankind in different sects in his master piece The Architecture of Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, In Ten Books (translated by Joseph Gwilt). The metropolis of the Roman people is placed in an excellent and temperate climate, whereby they have become the masters of the world. Since, then, it is climate which causes the variety in different countries, and the dispositions of the inhabitants, their nature and qualities are naturally dissimilar” (Pollio 169). Like Aristotle’s Hellenic race, Vitruvius sited Roman people as the ideal race in the hierarchy of mankind as well as defined them as “suitable nucleus for universal rule ... capable of ruling the world” (Isaac 85).

Like Hippocrates, Plato and Aristotle, some sixteenth century writers – Jean Bodin (1530-1596), a French philosopher, Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), an Italian mathematician and philosopher, and Francois Bernier (1620-1688), a French physician, divided human beings into different races in terms of skin colour and other physical attributes which are also influenced by and varied due to environmental factors. After his travel in Asian countries like Persia and Egypt, Francois Bernier in his book A New Division of the Earth drew a conclusion that in shaping healthy body, hair texture, beauty etc., the geographical factors like water and food play important role. “[Beauty] arises not only from the water, the diet, the soil, and the air, but also
from the seed which must be peculiar to certain races and species” (Quoted in Bermasconi 4).

III

In the later part of the eighteenth century, the word ‘race’ started playing important role in the hands of some prominent philosophers like Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) who also accepted the racial hierarchy of mankind on the basis of environmental or geographical factors. In his essay “On the Different Human Races” he divided humankind into four different categories in order to draw the distinctions or differences among them;

STEM GENUS, white brunette.
First race, very blond (northern Europe), of damp cold.
Second race, Copper-Red (America), of dry cold.
Third race, Black (Senegambia), of dry heat.
Fourth race, Olive-Yellow (Indians), of dry heat. (Quoted in Feagin 73)

For Kant, white European in comparison to other races is superior, strong, educable race, as well as advance both qualitatively (rationally and morally) and quantitatively (climatically and physically) in the world because they possess all motivating forces and talents in themselves. Kant’s view was rejected and proved to be faulty by Johann G. Herder (1744-1803) in his text Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind (1784-1791). Herder believed in the theory of human diversity in the natural world, but he disagreed to divide humankind into ‘races’, rather he emphasized on the division of humankind through the scale of ‘people’, considered to be more appropriate term.

In the division of mankind, new debate arises in the ‘Age of Enlightenment’ (mid-17th century to last decade of 18th century). Two main viewpoints namely ‘monogenism’ (human race having same or single ancestor) and ‘polygenism’ (human races having different origins) covered the European belief systems during that period. Unlike French philosopher F. M. A. de Voltaire (1694-1778), Anglo-Irish physician Robert Boyle (1627-1691), French naturalist Comte de Buffon (1707-1778) and German scientist John Blumenbach (1752-1840) took the side of monogenism
which argued that all races have descended from Adam and Eve, parents of human race, who are thought to be white. Irrefutably, it is said that the white people or the Caucasian race gives birth to the other races like the coloured and the degenerated form of race but other races become degenerated types due to the effect of poor environmental factors like adverse climate, poor food and unworthy water. "Caucasian [are] presumed to be the most beautiful of all the races, with others the result of degeneration from environmental factors" (Ansell 139). On the basis of environmental factors, Buffon focuses on six varieties of human race as follows: Lapp or polar, Tartar (Mongolian), South Asian, European, Ethiopian, and American.

Voltaire refuted such biblical explanation of the origin of mankind in his essay "Of the Different Races of Man" that figures his philosophical treaty The Philosophy of History: Or A Philosophical and Historical Dissertation, on the Origin, Manners, Customs, and Religion of the Different Nations, and People, of Antiquity; with a Clear and Concise Exposition, of the Usages, and Opinions Common Amongst Them: And, in Particular, of Their Religious Rites, Ceremonies, and Superstitions: Interspersed with a Great Variety of Other Useful and Highly Interesting Matter ... (1765), where he analyzed the theory of polygenesis which conceptualizes that each race has its separate origin contrasting with monogenism. This does not mean that he was against the idea and existence of God rather He appeared to him like a 'being' of reason and questionable. As a deist he thought, "It is perfectly evident to [his] mind that there exists a necessary, eternal, supreme, and intelligent being. This is no matter of faith, but of reason" (Voltaire 155). Despite a polygenist, he believed in the theory of universal brotherhood irrespective of altered religious, castes and customs.

During the advent of Victorian Age (1937-1901), Charles Darwin (1809-1882), a naturalist and physical anthropologist, gave new direction to the human origin, the scientific theory of mankind, which resulted in new debates and discussions between scientific and religious theorists. He put an end to debated theory of monogenism and polygenism by giving the scientific view of the theory of monogenism. He advocated the idea of monogenism that "all the races of man are descended from a single primitive stock" (Darwin 229) 'Apes', and he discarded the view that human race had originated from 'Adam' and 'Eve' in his seminal text On the Origin of Species (1859), a book on evolution. According to him, all the species of life, particularly human beings, have descended from the same species or common
ancestors over a period of time through the process of evolution, while differences among them have been resulted from the process of biological inheritance and natural selection. According to him, the more fit human beings like Caucasian race will compete and struggle and finally eliminate the weaker one like black, popularly known as the theory of the ‘survival of the fittest’ (the phrase originally coined by Herbert Spencer). So, “The immunity of the Negro is in any degree correlated with the colour of his skin is a mere conjecture: it may be correlated with some difference in his blood, nervous system, or other tissues” (Darwin 244). Social Darwinism “relates to the study of race and ethnicity in that, historically, white supremacy was understood as reflecting the presumed evolutionary superiority of white people over racialized others” (Ansell 145). Darwin’s evolutionary theory justifies the human classification and segregation which get wide momentum mainly in his essay “On the Races of Man” published in his next book on evolutionary theory The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex (1871). After theory of monogenism, he divided human beings into different human races on the basis of skin and hair colour. According to his evolutionary theory, the European white races become more advanced and progressive through the process of evolution that establishes racial hierarchy just like the biological superiority of male documented in his theory of sexual selection in our society. “The American aborigines, Negroes and Europeans differ as much from each other in mind as any three races that can be named” (Darwin 232). Such racial view ran in prominent pace throughout the latter half of the 19th century. After comparison and measurement, Darwin boldly affirmed that one race differs from another due to “the texture of the hair, the relative proportions of all parts of the body, the capacity of the lungs, the form and capacity of the skull, and even in the convolutions of the brain” (Darwin 216) including mental disposition, and intellectual faculties that are influenced by wide varieties of climates. Thus, due to the adverse climate and environment, “it has been asserted that the native women of Australia and Tasmania rarely produce children to European” (Darwin 220). It is said that Mulatto can produce only few children through their intermarriage but such view is refuted by Dr. Bachman of Charlestown who “positively asserts that he has known mulatto families who have intermarried for several generations, and have continued on an average as fertile as pure whites or pure blacks” (Darwin 221). Darwin, thought to be racist, accepted the environmental factors, food etc. that directly affect the
bodily development and its resulted frame, “the effects being transmitted. Through the
combined influences of climate and changed habits of life, European settlers in the
United States undergo, as is generally admitted, a slight but extraordinarily rapid
change of appearance” (Darwin 246).

IV

Beside the role of environmental factors on the division of mankind, Kant’s
classification of race gives a new momentum to scientific view of race. Biologists
define and divide human beings or animals or planets into different groups on the
basis of distinct physical characteristics which come out from genetic ancestry. In the
later part of 18th century, the scientists including biologist, physical anthropologists,
botanists and zoologists pressed forward the genetic or biological factors in order to
rank the white race at the top of the ladder and the black Negroes (black) at the
bottom line. For them, “Sin is Negro as virtue is white” (Fanon 69). According to
biologists, meaning of race is ‘skin deep’ and their racial variation varies due to blood
group and metabolic process. Psychological view given by biologists tries to prove
that sometimes IQ level of a people or a group of people varies due to genetic
differences. That is why mankind is concluded as volatile and ambiguous creation
which loves to distinguish one from other people or other creatures. In a well-known
text The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life (1994), an
American columnist C. A. Murray and an American psychologist R. J. Herrnstein
agree to define that the both IQ level and intelligence are extensively influenced by
‘genes’ and ‘environment’ of American society in particular and mankind in general.
Some of the researchers are still trying to prove that it is not obsolete to draw a
relationship between race and personality.

Earlier, in his 10th edition of System Natura (1758), the Swedish botanist
Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778) made a great contribution by dividing ‘Homo-Sapiens’
into four geographical subspecies, namely ‘Homo European’ (Europaeus), ‘Homo
Asiatic’ (Asiaticus), ‘Homo Africans’ (Afer) and ‘Americanus’
(Americanusrubescens). In Linnaeus taxonomy, the ‘Homo European’ is branded as
light (white skin), well-disciplined, highbrow, and follower of law while ‘Homo
Africans’ or black Africans are considered as reddish, obstinate, regulated by customs
and shameless like ‘Homo Asiatic’. ‘Homo Asiatic’ stands for dark eyes, black hair,
naughty, and governed by 'opinions' in Linnaeus' taxonomy. These biological hierarchies summon social hostilities and skirmishes.

Later anthropologist Blumenbach followed Buffon's view of monogenism and accepted the role of environmental factors as major determinants of the degenerated races. The classification of race by Francis Bernier influenced J. F. Blumenbach's biological classification of mankind. Finally, in his book *On the Natural Variety of Mankind* (1795), Blumenbach modified the scientific racial view of Carolus Linnaeus by classifying human race into five racial categories as Caucasian (white), American (red), Malayan (brown), Mongolian (yellow) and Ethiopian (black). Though Blumenbach neutrally (without any objective ranking) drew such scientific division of humankind, but somewhere he covertly tried to justify and stimulate racial apartheid, demotion and supremacy as was revealed through his ranking of human races. So, he put the 'Caucasian race' (white European race) who are governed by law, at the top of the list, while the black at the bottom. Unlike savage black race, the physical characteristics of white Europeans like their white skin colour, narrow noses, thin lips, and white hair (in some cases) gave birth to all positives connotations to be most advanced, civilized, intelligent, powerful, and originators of all social ethics. The 'Mongolian race' (Asian people such as Chinese, Japanese, and Indian etc.), on the other hand, is attributed with all the negative connotations like Linnaeus’ 'Homo Asiatic' having dark eyes. The Ethiopian or black African governed by impulses is thus put to the bottom.

Later, biological classifications of Linnaeus and Blumenbach are explained by modern physical anthropologists who modify their keen views and observations about race and focus on physical characteristics, mainly on the basis of 'skin colour'. Anthropology gives much concentration on physical characteristics (skin colour, hair texture, height, bone and skull structure, eye brows and eye colour). Samuel George Morton (1799-1851), a craniometrist and polygenist, tried scientifically to judge and justify the racial intellectual capacity of humankind by measuring the interior structure of skull in his book *Crania Americana; Or a Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America; to Which is Prefixed an Essay on the Varieties of the Human Species* (1839). After such anthropological inspection and experiment, he justified the Caucasian race as highly intellectual due to its large skull, while Negroes having small skull indicate lower intellect. In the
footnote of his essay “Of National Characters” (1748), David Hume extended his racist views: “I am apt to suspect the Negroes and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation” (quoted in Valls 133).

In 21st century, researchers have refuted these aforesaid biased views and division of mankind after their long term experiments. They think that there is no ‘common gene’ factor to all whites and to all blacks. The modern geneticists break the previous views and postulate that the race variation is much within a group than between the groups. “The species within the same large genus by no means resemble each other to the same degree: on the contrary, in most cases some of them can be arranged in little groups round other species, like satellites round planets” (Darwin 228).

After the WWII, the racism gets an inordinate blow in the hand of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) that deprecates any kind of racism, especially the scientific racism in a statement “The Race Question’ (1950). According to UNESCO, there is no biological link between intelligence and skin color or in phenotypical traits, rather it’s a social myth created by human beings in society to formulate the great chain of being. The biologists say that, first white are developed biologically and then the blacks, but such syllogistic justification given by whites has been rendered unacceptable by modern theorists and sociologists.

V

The scientific theory becomes an outdated theory of race which is refuted by most of the contemporary social constructivists. The hierarchical division of materials and human life is unacknowledged and debunked by an American professor J. L. Graves (1955- ) in his book The Emperor’s New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium. Specifically, his main “goal is to show the reader that there is no biological basis for separation of human beings into races and that the idea of race is a relatively recent social and political construction” (Graves 1).

Race is “an autonomous field of social conflict, political organization, and cultural/ideological meaning” (Orni and Winant 48). “Race is a social construct that changes constantly, depending upon circumstances and the self-defining agency of
group members” (Bolaffi et al. 101). Few biologists are still trying to fix biological factors behind the character and personality of human beings. Social constructivist theory rejects the scientific view of race by defying it as a genetically fixed and immutable phenomenon and thus, proves it to be a socially constructed one by the dominant group. The constructivists believe that the dominant group divides mankind in different cults to reach their goal and social benefits easily accomplished as well as to continue their supremacy over weaker ones by dislocating them from their social rights and positions. Racial groups “are understood not as discrete biological units but as social ones that are relatively plastic constructions that alter along with new contextual realities and community or self-understanding” (Ansell 38). According to constructivist theory, it would be untenable to correlate one’s skin colour with intelligence like anthropologists and biologists.

From the beginning of the 20th century, though the word ‘race’ remained the same but the definition, scope and notion of the word ‘race’ started changing in the hands of some other American socialists like Franz Boas and Robert E. Park. American anthropologists Franz Boas and Robert E. Park gave a new paradigm to the much-debated racial theory by disavowing the scientific theory of race, and simultaneously promulgating race as a socially constructed trait, that begins the active era of constructivist theory of race. In his book The Mind of Primitive Man (1911), Franz Boas meticulously emanates the role of primitive race and culture in the life of mankind and draws the distinction between primitive and civilized man. Consequently, he has also postulated the racial prejudice of white Europeans against non-Europeans (blacks) by challenging the myth of scientific view of race and racism.

The basis of our reasoning is obvious: the higher a civilization; and as aptitude presumably depends upon the perfection of mechanism of body and mind, we infer that the white is made that achievement depends solely, or at least primarily, upon innate racial ability. Since the intellectual development of white is highest, it is assumed that its intellectuality is supreme and that its mind has the most subtle organization. (Boas 4-5)

The white Europeans, so called civilized people, consider themselves more intelligent, supreme, and perfect while they look down upon the black ‘Other’ as
uncivilized. They self-interestedly think that they are holding the highest position in the world and have captured the forces of nature. They have highest physical and mental type and "every deviation from the white type necessarily represents a lower feature" (Boas 5). So, Franz Boas paradoxically says "We should expect to find in the white race the highest type of man" (Boas 5). Later, Boas again comprehensively dismantles the biological view of race as well as assesses the social view of it in his Race, Language, and Culture (1940). His personality and writings have influenced his contemporary social theorists, especially Robert. E. Park and W.E.B. Du Bois who are exploring the same views of Boas on race and racism. They, refuting the genetic or scientific view of racism, deplore the white prejudice against the non-white in American society. In his two basic books Race relations and the Race Problem; a Definition and an Analysis (1939 written with E. T. Thomson) and Race and Culture (1950), Robert Park talks the black-white race relationship and its deep-rooted hierarchy in American society.

In his book The Soul of White Folks, a combination of several essays, Afro-American writer W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) explores the discriminations of black people in education, economy and other social rights as well as mistreatment of his own experiences as an Afro-American in the hands of white American in the North America, especially in the United States of America. Such racial prejudice invites several interracial violence in the United States of America, mainly in southern part. As an activist, he wants to solve the problems of racial division and discrimination of black on the basis of colour line. In the book, he postulates the famous theory of 'double consciousness':

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Du Bois 8)

In his essay "The Nature of Racism" British writer Michael Dymnmett says, "race is sometimes a pure social construct, and at most a matter of physical
characteristics that can have no bearing on anyone’s abilities or moral characters” (Dyrmatt 31). This notion is supported by Joshua Glasgow, a Senior Lecturer at Victoria University of Wellington, who says that if race means characters and temperament of human beings then “race is illusion” (Joshua 18) because “There is no adequate biological basis for our racial categories” (Joshua 114). Advocating the views of Van den Berghe, British sociologist John Rex in his work Race Relations in Sociological Theory (1983) defines race as a social construction instead of biological one. Earlier William J. Wilson brings forth such distinction of race and ethnicity in his book Power, Racism, and Privilege (1973). Wilson draws the distinction that “racial groups are distinguished by socially selected physical traits” (Wilson 6). Later such view is contrasted with Robert Miles’ view that the human race is cultural construction and divided on the basis of geographical location rather than physical structure or genetic variation. Robert Takaki in A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America (1993) defines the actual motive of dominant white Americans who have created such social hierarchy in their society in order to put their power on black minority, especially Africans in terms of biological factors. Another writer of 1990’s is Ruth Frankenberg who, in White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness (1993) concludes race as marker of social status that in turn creates unjustified social hierarchy in American society.

Earlier, Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), an anti-colonialist African writer, postulates some of these black issues in his books Black Skin, White Mask (1952), a socio-psychological study of race and The Wretched of the Earth (1963) which is also about dehumanizing effects of colonization upon nations and individuals. He highlights how “The white man is sealed in his whiteness. The black man in his blackness…. [And how] white men consider themselves superior to black men” (Fanon 3). “If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: // --primarily, economic; //--subsequently, the internalization -- or, better, the epidermalization -- of this inferiority” (Fanon 4). As a result, they experience “a feeling of nonexistence” (Fanon 69). Fanon draws the attention towards the fact that both the exploitation and colonial racism are intentional and intensive practices of the white—both are the hegemonic process of victimization.

While, Fanon reveals his socio-psychological view of race and racism in his texts, Edward Said talks about the stereotypical opinions of white Europeans about
Oriental and its culture in his masterpiece *Orientalism* (1978). In order to craft a balanced society, Edward Said voices to break racial discriminations, socio-political and cultural hierarchy. The main concern is to break and challenge the concept of binary-dispute: the West and the East, or Occidental and Oriental, or civilized and uncivilized, or superior and inferior.

The idea of the East as some shadowy, threatening ‘Other’ with which the West is in sharp conflict, and the essentialising of East and West into two simple and contrastive categories, has a long history and can be traced back to the time of Herodotus and to the epic conflict between Hellenes and Persians, giving rise to the mythical contrast between the heroic, liberty-loving and dynamic West and the despotic, stagnant and passive East. (Clarke 4)

We have already talked about these issues earlier. Orientals, devoid of energy and initiative, maneuvering, inveterate liars cunning, lethargic and suspicious, and unkind, like ferocious animals who cannot walk on either a road or a pavement and they lack the “clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race” (Said 38-39). In his later work *Culture and imperialism* (1993), a collection of essays, he tries to trace the connection between imperialism and culture.

The stereotypical images which are created intentionally or unintentionally by Western people against Eastern people have been supported by Rudyard Kipling. Edward Said recalls Rudyard Kipling’s poem “White Man’s Burden” (about the American rule on Philippine) which defines that it is white people’s obligation and duty to rule over and help the poor, until and unless they can socially and economically become strong. According to Kipling, Orientals are incapable to develop and rule themselves, so they need the hand of the white-civilized to civilize them. “During colonial expansion and consolidation, the contradiction between universalism and racist thought was intensified as Europeans seemed bent on the supposedly impossible task of washing black people white” (Loomba 98-99).

After the discussion and dealing with biology, anthropology and social science, it is proved that “sometimes the words change but the category remains the same: thus, as the [American] Civil War [1861-63] began, a person was black, while immediately after World War II that a person was a Negro. Four decades later, and
the person was again black. As this example indicates, these categories reflect, at least in part, changes in public opinion” (Kivisto and Croll 15).

But another problem occurs in America that is if one new born mixed (black and white) child is racially one percent black and ninety nine percent white, then which membership will be given to him/her? Conclusively, he should come under ‘one drop rule’ and will be given the membership of the ‘less privileged group’ (black group) instead of ‘white’ in America. So, the division of human race in different categories is nothing but a creation of human beings. On the other hand, some countries believe in the theory of mixed race or multiculturalism instead of racism unlike white America;

Some nations, such as Brazil and a number of Caribbean countries, do not operate with a view of race that is constructed in binary terms, such that a person is either white or black. Instead, these nations recognize the reality of racial mixing and thus have constructed categories to account for this reality. Thus, the term “mulatto”, which refers to a person of mixed white/European and black/African parentage, is a commonly used term (in Brazil “parado” is used as a synonym for mulatto). Less commonly used, but used nonetheless, are the terms “quadroon” and “octofoon”, referring respectively to individuals who are one-fourth black and one-eighth black. Meanwhile, the term “mestizo” describes an individual who is the product of white/European and indigenous/Indian ancestry. (Kivisto and Croll 16)

On the other side, the division made by African people is based on their day to day experiences of colonized periods’ (mainly apartheid period) such as white, black, coloured (mulatto) and Indian.

After the attack and counter-attack on race and racism, the empirical observation and numerous viewpoints over the concepts of biological and social view of race, we can succinctly conclude that race is nothing but a socially constructed image of particular people about people of other colour or creed at particular time for particular purpose in a particular society. So, race is propounded with a purpose. It changes sides but usually the power is derived from the majoritarian theory.
VI


...as a signifier with a vague, highly variable, unspecifiable or non-existent signified. Such signifiers mean different things to different people: they may stand for many or even any signifieds; they may mean whatever their interpreters want them to mean. In such a state of radical disconnection between signifier and signified, a sign only means that it means. Such a disconnection is perhaps clearest in literary and aesthetic texts which foreground the act and form of expression and undermine any sense of a natural or transparent connection between a signifier and a referent. (Chandler 78)

The term ‘floating signifier’ or ‘empty signifier’ becomes an unstable concept in the hands of postmodern theorists like Stuart Hall and Derrida who attempt to define the concept of race and gender in a new way. The biological view of race is highly rejected and criticized by theorist Stuart Hall in his lecture “Race, the Floating Signifier”; a fight and a logical explanation against the stereotypical image of racism. Stuart Hall has talked about ‘signifier’, only ‘floating signifier’ referring how the meaning of ‘race’ is discursive and floating in its nature because the biological concept of race is sunk without any trace. Hall believes that the meaning and the
values of race change with histories, events and contexts as meaning of race remains in floating state, never reaches to a destination or conclusion.

Hall categorizes things like human beings, earthly objects, emotions, feelings, and our notions in order to create their meaning in our everyday world, unintended to racialize them. We learn such categorization unconsciously like learning of language, while such categorization helps us to distinguish one thing from the other. But with the act of categorization, meaning also starts changing from place to place and culture to culture which is not fixed, an ever going process. For example, in West the white people wear black dress on the occasion of someone's death, while in Eastern countries white dress is worn instead of black on such occasion. On the other hand, whenever we hear the word black or white, the values and their symbolic meaning which are related to these terms automatically come to our mind. So, we automatically connect the signifier ‘race’ with the meanings and values of the word unconsciously.

We can further apply such floating nature of ‘race’ and ‘racism’. According to Hall, Race is not attached to biology, instead it is a construction and outcome of the sociological, cultural and political meanings, which we learn through society, culture, and history. For Hall, it's nothing but a social creation and developed by the mind. Racists believe that the outlook of a person is directly associated with a person’s characters and personality, but Hall directly refutes to judge IQ level, personality, character and intelligence etc. of mankind on the basis of skin colour as a determinant factor. Hall thinks that such definition and classifications of mankind on the basis of colour line is done to maintain the order of inferiority and superiority like the Western white people. Hall rejects such definition and limitation because there is no such distinction, definition and limitation of race or distinct skin colour, which varies repeatedly from culture to culture, place to place, and man to man called ‘non-existent signified’. So, with the change of skin colour, the meaning of race also changes as the signifier ‘race’ becomes a ‘floating signifier’. Most of the time it is said that race is a construction of the Western white culture, but people from other cultures also have a great role in the creation of such hierarchy.

Like Hall, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), an Algerian-born French philosopher and literary (deconstructionist) theorist, does not support any binary creation as well as construction of fixed meaning given by Western civilization. Derrida in “Structure,
Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (1966) challenges and questions the metaphysical assumptions that entire history of “Western culture has been found upon a classic, fundamental error” (Bressler 365). His deconstruction theory is a reaction to Ferdinand de Saussure’s concept of structuralism. Saussure says signifier guarantees signified or a ‘centre’ of meaning but, like Hall, Derrida also says that it is not conceivable to orient permanent meaning of a signified given by a signifier because the relationship between the signifier and signified is arbitrary and conventional. Unlike Saussure, Derrida also refutes the theory of binary oppositions; male/female, white/black, and good/evil etc. Here, the first term “functions as privilege and superior and second term as derivative and inferior” (Abrams 58). As in Derrida’s theory, these are considered as very much “essential elements in logocentric language” (Abrams, 58). But Derrida’s aim like Hall’s ‘floating signifier’ is to diminish this hierarchy, not to stop reversal, but “to destabilize both hierarchies, leaving them in a condition of undecideability” (Abrams 58). So, like Hall, Derrida deliberates the ‘free plays of signifier’ where meaning, an ever going process would not provide any ultimate truth. Derrida’s theory helps to rectify the stereotypical definition of human ‘race’ given by so called Western civilized people who think themselves as intelligent, pure, strong, superior beings, and the black or Eastern people as black, savage, inferior and uncivilized.

In their book Racial Formation in United States: From 1960s to the 1990s, Michael Omi and Howard Winant opine that “The effort must be made to understand race as an unstable and “decentered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle” (Omi and Winant 55). Like Hall and Derrida, Omi and Winant also discard earlier dominant view of race “as an essence, as something fixed, concrete, and objective” (Omi and Winant 54) based on the phenotypical and genetic traits, by defining it as socially and historically constructed, dynamic one.

VII

‘Ethnicity’, an umbrella term, is not as debated as ‘race’ but yet it is a complex concept. The term ‘ethnicity’ has been derived from the Greek word ‘ethos’ that signifies pagan people or heathen nation who neither had faith in Christianity nor converted to the dominant Christian religion. Unlike the definition of race, ethnicity in our contemporary usage deals with common heritage, shared cultural origins and blood line, values, and experiences with other members of its group. Later, such view
is supported and followed by our contemporary sociologists who, by the same token, "use the term to refer to a group of people who presumably share a common experience and origin" (Li 4). So, according to social constructivist theory, ethnicity is defined as something naturally achieved by birth.

In his book *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Society* (1978), Max Weber (1864-1920), a German sociologist, accepts all the aforesaid ethnic features like "a common language or religion, or common customs, or political memories" (Weber 398) including sense of peoplehood or identity that are based on descent. For Weber, the varieties of ethnicity like "race, culture, tribe, nationality, and religion (Leo Driedger 4) become the 'central foci' to define ethnic identity, where race stands for first identity marker for an ethnic group. In *The Canadian Ethnic Mosaic: A Quest for Identity* (1978), Leo Driedger lengthens the discussions on ethnic indicators, including six main credentials of an ethnic community, "ecological territory, ethnic culture, ethnic institutions, historical symbols, ideology, and charismatic leadership" (Li 5). Later in his book *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* (1993), Michael Brown also postulates six essential markers of an ethnic group with few new elements including ‘name’ for itself, common ancestry, historical memories, shared cultures, specific territory and having a sense of common ethnicity. He states, out of these six indicators, the most important ethnic marker is ‘shared culture’— a “group must have a shared culture, generally based on a combination of language, religion, laws, customs, institutions, dress, music, crafts, architecture, even food” (Brown 5). Wsevolod Isajiw, a sociologist and former president of Canadian Ethnic Studies Association, also writes on the debated issues of ethnicity and ethnic problems in his books *Ethnic Problem Retention* (1981) and *Ethnic Identity and Equality* (1990). After reviewing few sociological journals in the United States of America and Canada, he finds ‘seventy’ defining elements of ethnicity some of which are common like ancestry, culture, religion, race and language. In *Majority-Minority Relations* (1995), sociologist John E. Farley defines ethnic group as “a group of people who are generally recognized by themselves and/or the others as a distinct group, with such recognition based on social or cultural characteristics” (Farley 6).

In his book *Ethnic Conflict: A Global Perspective* (2006), German political scientist Stefen Wolff gives wide theoretical explanation of the concept of ethnicity. At present, because of its politicized nature, the contemporary meaning and
definitions of the word ‘ethnicity’ “vary greatly and are hotly disputed among academicians as well as among politicians” (Wolff 33). To clarify and give fixity further to the tangible nature of the word ‘ethnicity’, we need to analyze number of different conceptual approaches like ‘primordialism’ and ‘instrumentalism’ given by Wolff and accepted by other ethnic schools of thought.

The so-called primordial school holds that ethnicity is so deeply ingrained in human history and experience that it cannot be denied that it exists, objectively and subjectively, and that it should therefore be considered a fact of life in the relations between individuals and groups who all have an ethnic identity. In contrast to this view, the instrumentalist school argues that ethnicity is by no means an indisputable historical fact, rather, instrumentalists suggest that ethnicity is first and foremost a resource in the hands of leaders to mobilize and organize followers in the pursuit of other interests, such as physical security, economic gain, or political power. (Wolff 33)

In ethnic theory, primordial, in a nutshell, is something immutable, ancient and natural, while instrumentalism is something used socially to fulfil some material goals. Both the schools find some kind of commonalities in their thoughts—thinking that an ethnic group has a number of important tangible components, such as a shared customs, traditions, language, or religion which are markers of an individual’s ethnic identity. On the basis of such socially selected cultural traits, one ethnic group is distinguished from or by another group. Consequently, on these bases we can possibly and more easily draw boundaries among individuals of a group as well as can establish differences between groups. So, sociologists love to study ethnicity as a matter of identity, as an ethnic group attempts to create a sense of boundary to protect its features of identity markers like culture, religion and institutions etc. from the attack of other territorial groups or outside groups. The dominant group rises to the top position because the minor ethnic group cannot compete with them due to their staying at the bottom. The stratification of ethnic group leads to inequality and chaos in society. The minority group starts fighting for equality as well as social rights against unacceptable, unequal and unjust law, which results in mass destructions like genocide and holocaust.
VIII

As we come to know that race as a biological concept stands for physical aspects of human beings that help to differentiate one from the other, whereas ethnicity refers to shared cultural, language and religion etc., but the word ‘race’ in different context has much more negative connotation and denotation than ethnicity. According to Wolf, the concept of race and its expansion go back to the time period of European mercantile expansion, and ethnic groups to the capitalist expansion. ‘Race’, a discursive term, has no fixed position and ‘definite’ meaning persists in the world of ‘slipperiness’ accepted by Hall, Derrida, Omi and Winant as discussed earlier. According to Michael Omi and Howard Winant, race and ethnicity are two distinct entities, but our lengthy discussion leads us to see them as ‘interconnected body’, which is supported by British sociologist Paul Glory and Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson. Patterson denies the distinction between ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’, which Patterson postulates as meaningless and potentially dangerous in The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America’s “Racial” Crisis (1997). African-born social theorist P. L. Van den Berghe in “Ethnicity and Socio-biology debate Relations” notes that there is no such distinction of biological concept of race and cultural concept of ethnicity. Like Berghe, Raman Grosfoguel from Department of Ethnic Studies (Berkeley) uses both the terms ‘race/ethnicity’ as a one-concept instead of a separate term.

The view of race and ethnicity as synonymous can be accepted partially because race and ethnicity are not synonymous, rather race is a subset of ethnicity and sometimes overlaps with each other. So, it will not be much fair to use the concepts “race” and “ethnicity” interchangeably rather we should use them as interconnected body. They are socially constructed; “one of the most important aspects of this idea is that both race and ethnicity are dependent upon the particular social and historical contexts in which they occur” (Kivisto and Croll 13). The concepts and meanings of both the terms have changed over time in our society. The word race is sometimes used as an interconnected body of ethnicity in United States but not in United Kingdom: ‘ethnicity’ has sometimes racial connotation as ‘white’ in United States but in U.K. it is used to refer to the ‘minority’ and ‘outsider’. For example, when Nazis held the power after 1930s in Germany, Jews were minority and were treated and diminished as minority group, but the concept changed in 20th century as Jews are
now viewed in both racial and ethnic terms in America (North). They are now considered as major white people in the same racial groups and also they are being categorized as 'distinctive ethnic group' within that racial group.

IX

Today, people of different racial and ethnic groups are migrating from one territory to another for different purposes. When, they reach in foreign lands they have only two options to follow- either they assimilate with the foreign cultures intentionally or they are sometimes obligated to adopt it as minority group, and slowly start losing their own identity and culture under the foreign effect through this process known as the theory of assimilation. Unlike ethnic mosaic, “Assimilation theory suggests that immigrant groups will be synthesized into a new group. This evolutionary process results in a melting pot different from any of the groups involved and different from the original melting pot” (Driedger 24). Robert Park, a chief proponent of assimilation theory,

...suggested that immigrants came into contact with the new society and either took the route of least resistance (contact, accommodation, and fusion) or a more circuitous route (contact, conflict, competition, accommodation, and fusion)...the end result would be ... the loss of a distinctive ethnic identity. The new culture and values would emerge. (Driedger 24)

For example, in the countries of Western Europe like Germany and Italy, Jews started following the non-Jews cultures and traditions like their dressing sense, food habit, and religious practices, but consequently were mislaying their own well-familiar Yiddish high culture.

On the other hand, according to the theory of pluralism or multiculturalism one does not lose his/her cultural identity rather tries to live in an alien land as an individual group by maintaining his/her racial, political, and religious identity with other groups under same nation-state and its policies. In praise of multiculturalism, William McNeill (1986), Chicago historian at the University of Toronto, addressed that “Poly ethnicity is normal in civilized societies, whereas the ideal of one ethically unitary state was exceptional in theory and rarely approached in practice. Marginality and pluralism were and are the norm of civilized existence.” (Quoted in Driedger 4-6)
In such contexts, we need to discuss the nations like Canada, the United States of America, African countries like Egypt and Libya, European countries like England, Asian countries like India and Sri Lanka. Michael Ondaatje has talked in details on the issues of race, racism and, minority problems and ethnic conflicts in these countries in his novels *Coming Through Slaughter, Running in the Family, In the Skin of a Lion, The English Patient* and *Anil's Ghost*.

Canada, one of the most well-known multicultural nations, is situated in the North America continent bordering with the United States of America. Canada is officially a bilingual nation having diverse ethnic groups due to the large-scale immigrations of world populations from different parts of the world. The main language for communication in Canada is English, then comes the French—both are official languages of Canada. Here, each and every ethnic and racial group can perform or celebrate its culture, language and religion in equal sense like its major two main ethnic groups, British-Canadian (majority) and French-Canadian (second majority), popularly known as “charter groups”, according to 2001 census of Canada. The Canadian federal government plays important role in the exploration of the policy of multiculturalism in later part of 20th century as reflected in the Canadian Multicultural Act (1988) and Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), especially section 27 is made for the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians that inclusively emphasizes equality for all people.

“Initially, from Eastern Europe, then from southern Europe, and now increasingly from places other than Europe, immigration can be said to have given rise to multiculturalism (Edwards 87). Besides French-Canadian and British-Canadian, the following ethnic groups “German, Italian, Jewish, Ukrainian, Portuguese, British/Irish” (Driedger 133) are prevailing in Canada. The post-WWII period made it easy for the other nations like African, Asian and Caribbean in large numbers to move there. Michael Ondaatje’s third novel *In the Skin of a Lion* is based on a hidden story of Toronto city, Canada. Charles Boberg in his book *The English Language in Canada* (2010) highlights an official data on Canada’s immigrant people and its cultures.

Earlier, French laid their gazebo as a foreign nation replaced by British army due to their lesser amount of powerful force in 1759. Both groups drew a borderline
above the colour line on the basis of power structure which is full of arrogance and discriminatory. Hence, it is clear that the stratification of any ethnic or racial group most of the time is primed on the basis of power status and sometimes on the basis of biological or cultural or physical characteristics. In order to gain the access of the resources and Canada’s geographical boundary, British colonizers played a significant role as a largest ethnic group who forced other ethnic minorities to follow the rules of their Anglo-conformity. The Britishers started controlling Canadian provinces single handedly without any obstruction after the successful elimination of the French. Though, “later again the British and French sought to gain monoethnic dominance in western Canada, [but] the British gained strong footholds after the Riel rebellions of 1870 and 1885” (Driedger 25). The British-Canadian reside throughout the country while French community has large number of its population in Quebec province.

Before the European invasion, Canada was dominated by its aboriginal people and indigenous people, comprising of three main groups- ‘First Nations’, ‘Metis’ and ‘Inuit’ who had their own markers of ethnic identity like culture, language and religion. Later on their cultures started fading under the rules of European invaders who forced them to adopt their culture, language and religion which reached in its pinnacle in the nineteenth century. They were also infected by the new diseases brought by the European colonizers. Due to such reasons the number of indigenous people started decreasing day by day, and now they are less in numbers.

Like Canada in North America, Sri Lanka, a South-Asian country and former British colony, also stands as one of the most well-known multi-ethnic mosaic off the coast of Indian sub-continent. Sri Lanka composes of four major ethnic groups: Sinhalese Buddhist, Hindu Tamil, Muslims and Burghers. The North-Eastern province and the central part of the island are dominated by the Hindu Tamil majority who are brought from the South India by the British forces in the 19th century for working in tea plantation and rubber industry. The mores (Muslims) reside in the Eastern province mainly as majority and Burgher ethnic group of European descents reside in the coastal areas and other parts of the land in small numbers. The major ethnic group Sinhalese Buddhists are residing and predominating all parts of the country except Northern Province where they are minor in numbers. Michael Ondaatje’s two novels Running in the Family and Anil’s Ghost mainly deal with the
issues of Ondaatje’s quest for personal and polyethnic identity as well as ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

Before the independence of Sri Lanka, it was expected that it was going to be a notable democratic country in the world having equal opportunities for all people above the racial and ethnic barriers. Unitedly, they resisted the British colonialism and its conversion to Christianity. But, the Britishers had already spread the seeds of communalism through nepotism by privileging the Tamil before the independence of Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, ethnic conflict got its new direction and spread widely after the Sinhala Only Act (1956) that replaced English as an official language by the proposal of Sinhala-dominated parliamentary government. This Act was the root cause of the Sinhalese-Tamil ethnic conflict as it served more opportunities in education, employment and land sectors to Sinhalese. “They [Sinhalese] sought to define Sri Lankan national identity as an identity that was solely derived from Sinhalese Buddhist culture” (Kivisto and Croll 115). After 1956 the ethnocentric ‘language act’ paved the way for the Tamil and other ethnic groups to think about the safety of their language and culture conspicuously developed community consciousness. In order to get free from the corrosive ethnocentric clutches of Sinhalese as well as to perform their own culture and religion freely, the Tamil ethnic group, namely Tamil Tigers voiced against the Sinhala-dominated government in an attempt to establish a separate state, but the arm forces of Sinhala-dominated government, thought to be extremists, started pampering the Tamil forces including the Muslims and Christian that commenced the Sri Lankan Civil war in mid-1980s.

X

Ethnic conflict is termed in different ways: minority conflict, community conflict and class conflict. In an essay, “Ethnic Conflicts and their Causes”, Gursel G. Ismayilov says that the term “ethnic conflict”, an internal conflict, cannot be used to describe other internal conflicts like

Ideological conflicts, governance conflicts, racial conflicts and environmental conflicts. For example, conflicts in Afghanistan, Somali, or Cambodia are not ethnic conflicts, because these conflicts are not between rival ethnic groups, but between rival political groups, all of which belong to the same ethnic group.” (Ismayilov 50)
Michael Edward Brown in his book *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* says “an ethnic conflict is a dispute about important political, economic, social, cultural, or territorial issues between two or more ethnic communities” (Brown 5). The term “ethnic conflict is therefore the result of cultural incompatibility of groups, coupled with a sudden rise in awareness of one’s identity vis-a-vis another ethnic group” (Roessingh 17). An ethnic group becomes violent when they are treated as unequal to other ethnic groups and also when feels insecurity for their own culture, language and religion due to the interference of a dominant ethnic group. Subsequently, they start disagreeing with the rules and role of dominant groups who are contenting for the devolution of their power, and finally have to revolt against one dimensional discriminatory law of dominant group in order to keep alive their culture and sharing values. Sometimes, in a multicultural country, the conflict occurs due to oppressed minority’s secessionist attitude—demand of separate land or autonomy within a country—from majority-dominated government as happened and as still going on in Sri Lanka. It is not possible to solve the problems until or unless their demands are fulfilled or they are forced to be silent by the nation-state armed forces. Interethnic conflicts are increasing day by day in the names of territorial conflicts, minority conflicts, and religious proclamations.

The marker of ethnic identity is sometimes considered to be a creator of interethnic conflict. The main indicator of an ethnic group is its ‘name’, which is important not only for self-identification, but also as expressive emblems of the collective “personality”, and then comes language. The minority group struggles against biased and faulty language policies passed and put over them forcefully by the dominant group. Minority’s language is considered as unworthy to use in public places and official work. So, they are disdained for using their language freely in a majority dominant state as happened in Sri Lanka when it was ruled by the Sinhala-dominatated government in 1956. Another important element of an ethnic group is ‘religion’ which is a very strong weapon and indicator of an ethnic group. When a minority’s religion is not allowed to be performed freely or they are forced to accept the majority’s religion, the conflict and chaos automatically start surviving in a land and create a long proceeded interreligious conflict for a long time. So, such ethnic determinants or markers are unavoidable and recognizable factor of a group. The most
important factor for an ethnic group is its demanded geographical location or territory for living. They need territory in order to establish their own government and economic structures which are central entities in the life of an ethnic group. The conflict of Israel and Palestine in the Middle East and Tamil in Sri Lanka are happening due to the demand of nationhood and safety of their people. Another important ethnic marker is ‘culture’ that consists of customs, cares, habits, norms and nuances which an ethnic group wants to practice freely with its own people. When they are prohibited from practicing their cultures by dominant group or other ethnic group, then the main tension occurs. Sometimes it also happens when ethnic groups begin to demand more rights and recognition from the dominant ruling party in a state. These factors are now accepted as well as recognized as the major causes of interethnic and interracial conflict. These factors can sometimes lead to a mass destruction called ‘genocide’ which stands for an intentional and conscious killing of a very large number of people or group of people and ‘holocaust’ that stands for mass killing or mass laughing. Another term ‘ethnocide’ is used to refer to the “total destruction of an ethnic group or its civilization” (Bolaffi et al. 103). Such vast destruction happens to be creating a mono-ethnic state, believes in the expulsion of minority from its territory.

In his book Ethnic Groups in Conflict (1985), Donald E. Horowitz defines ethnic conflict as a worldwide and current phenomenon highlighting abundant past and current evidences including the intermittent hostilities in Northern Ireland and Lebanon; the secessionist warfare in Burma, Iraq, Philippines and Sudan; the Somalia Invasion; the army killings in Syria and Uganda; expulsion of Muslims from Burma and of Beninese from the Ivory Coast and Gabon including scores of other countries. The major riots and genocides are Armenians (Christians) genocide in the Ottoman Empire by Turkish military, also known as Armenian Holocaust that took approximately 6000, 000-1.5 million lives (1914-15) during the First World War (1914-1918) and extermination of European by Nazi Germany, also known as Nazi holocaust or European Holocaust which claimed estimate five million people under the (Nazi) Hitler regime. It ran for near about 15 years, started in 1930 and lasted till the beginning of the Second World War (1939-1945).

For the need of basic human rights, such kind of conflict is still trending throughout the geography leading to escalating interethnic rights or internal civil war
resulting in momentous loss of human lives. In 1994 Rwandan genocide in the Republic of Rwanda, a sovereign state and less developed country in East Africa, 800,000 Tutsi civilians were butchered by Hutu militias within the span of 100 days. It is claimed that it happened due to the untimely intervention of International authority like UNO (United Nations Organization). After independence (1962) Burundi, like its neighboring country Rwanda, also experienced two genocides (1972 and 1994) caused by the conflict of two ethnic groups like Hutus (majority in population) and Tutsi (minority in population). In Indonesia, Indonesian government with the help of local militias killed near about one million Communists of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), Chinese communists and other social activists including common civilians. Another exemplified genocide is Balkan genocide of 1990s. The Kenyan ethnic conflict among different ethnic groups like Kikuyu, Luo, and Luhya etc. and ethnic conflict in Madagascar are other remarkable citations of recent ethnic conflicts.

Unlike genocide, ethnic riot is a sudden, less planned and less killing-attack of an ethnic group against other ethnic group. It takes place several times in several places of India, the second largest populous country and most democratic populous country in the world. Here, ethnic conflicts, most of the time happens due to extremist religious sentiments created by erroneous religious ideologies: Hindu-Muslim ghastly violence during the partition of 1947 considered to be a notable Hindu-Muslim communal riot. The other notable riots are the Hindu-Muslim Assam riots, Hindu-Sikh conflict in Punjab (1980), Hindu-Muslim Mumbai riots (1992), and Hindu-Muslim Riots of Gujarat (2002). Caste is also a cause of animosity between people of India. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnian Serbs, most of them Christian, forced Bosnian Muslims to flee from their homes in the name of ethnic cleansing in order to build ethnically pure communes for the members of their own ethnic group. The other notable riot is Vancouver Anti-Chinese riots (1886) in Canada. If we investigate all continents, we can find out hundreds of ethnic conflicts of varying intensity from one region to another. In each country within the borders, there exist numerous ethnic groups having varied racial, linguistic or cultural identity.
XI

Racial conflicts in continents like America, Africa and Asia take place since or before the European invasion or its colonization. In America (United States of America), such conflict started when black African and the European people migrated there for different purposes. The white people tried to eliminate the black people physically from the land of America but when it was going to be very hard-hitting, they attacked their cultural norms and its practices. The white supremacists treated the black as displaced object, exotic and emotional due to their ethnic qualities. So such jingoistic approach is baseless and can only bring detriment for a country. American feminist writer G. J Watkins (1952- ), pen name ‘bell hooks’, talks about all-encompassing oppression of the black men as well as women in the hands of the white supremacists in American society in particular. In her essay “Eating the Other”, Watkins advises the reader to put a question to those places where ‘Other’ (black men and women) becomes commodity to be consumed by dominant white. The ‘Other’, especially black woman becomes nothing but commodity (mainly source of pleasure) in the hands of white ‘consumer cannibalism’. Through such intimate relation white race is affirming its power over the ‘Other’. Here, the body of the ‘Other’ becomes nothing but a medium through which white males can simultaneously seek to gain some sort of inner-transformation. American white hegemony “believe[s] their desire for contact represents a progressive change in white attitudes towards non-whites” (Hooks 24). It is an oppressor’s policy to commodify the ‘Other’ by entailing the indirect colonization over the black body. “Commodification of black culture by whites in no way challenges white supremacy when it takes the form of making blackness the “spice that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture”” (Hooks 14).

XII

If there had been no national name, no geographical boundary and no nation-state conflict, people could have successfully exchanged each-other’s culture, norms and practices. The factors like excessive nationalism, chauvinistic hostilities, and discriminatory attitude play vital role in the creation of the inter-racial conflict e. g. the conflict between the Afro-American and the White American. The imperative race riot is the Chicago race riot (1919), one of the worst race riots, that took place between the white Irish people and African American (migrated from the Mississippi
Delta). The race riots mainly took place in America due to government’s unequal employment and inequitable law, rights and housing for the African American sides. The violence was intensified by whites’ attacks on the blacks, while the authority was thought to be responsible for the riot. “Over the course of a five day period, thirty-eight persons were killed (fifteen were white and twenty-three were black) and 537 were injured” (Kivisto and Croll 111). Later, the authority of the United States of America sent the militia in order to restore the pre-peace stage of the state. In order to avoid the racial discrimination and disfranchisement in South by Jim Crow Law, the African American moved to the Northern cities of the United States of America which were considered to be a safe place and population started growing rapidly in the city. Later it became a multicultural hub due to immigration from neighbouring states and Europe. With the increasing numbers, they were involving in competitive mood for jobs as well as to maintain their own culture. The riots took place sometimes against police brutality and its silent mood in favour of the white. In riots the white people were attacking the blacks and nearly 1000, primarily black, were made homeless. The other most significant race riots are the Cicero riots (1951), Loss Angel riot (1992), 1968 riot due to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Harlem riots (1935, 1943, and 1964), Miami race riots (1980), and Florida race riots (1996) etc. It seems that the race riot in the history of the United States of America and other places are never ending processes.

Race and racism, the interrelated body of colonialism, have been used to justify colonialism by the colonizers who view a colonized as a dark, unsocial, sin, savage and immoral from colonial perspective. Such view is drawn in order to rule a land without any obstacles creating a social hierarchy. In ancient as well as medieval period, the ‘Dark Continent’ Africa was captured and ruled by the Asians, especially by the Arab world. Later, it was controlled by the European invaders like France, Germany and Britain. The Africans stood straight against the efforts for Catholic conversion. Tutsi ethnic group in Burundi succeeded to resist the conversion while Hutu started conversing to Christianity. For such conversion the colonial ruler gave the lands and benefits to Hutu community while Tutsi were discarded from the social, political and economic benefits that ignited ethnic conflict between the two groups as we discussed earlier.
This barbarism on the basis of race has nothing to do with peace and social integration rather may induce the unpleasant mass destruction of a part or whole of a community and a country. The theory of Darwin leads us much to the (struggle) theory of survival of the fittest where weaker one is naturally to be eliminated by the stronger one. “When one of two adjoining tribes becomes more numerous and powerful than the other, the contest is soon settled by war, slaughter, cannibalism, slavery, and absorption. Even when a weaker tribe is not thus abruptly swept away, if it once, if it once begins to decrease, it generally goes on decreasing until it is extinct” (Darwin 238).

XIII

The people from the underdeveloped continents like Africa, Asia and some countries of Latin America and black people of North America, most of the time, didn’t agree to align with the biased policies and racial discriminations of the colonizers like Britishers and French. The oppressed people of these continents tried hard to free themselves from the clutches of the Western power but they had no other option except accepting their footsteps. However, the oppressed or colonized countries revolted against white power not only physically but also through their literary weapons as their pens become their strongest weapons that enabled them to survive. They failed again and again but they didn’t lose their hope against hopelessness. The African-American writers like Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, Tony Morrison, H. B. Stowe, Sojourner Truth and I. M. Baraka etc. fought and still are fighting in order to become free from the clutch of white power and racial discriminations. The colonial biases and negative attributions of white dominance are pictured through the writings like Maya Angelou’s in I know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Harper Lee’s in To Kill a Mocking Bird and Alice Walker’s in The Color Purple revealing their loss, alienation and agonies.

Such issues of racism, ethnocentrism and xenophobia are also often presented in postcolonial English novels written by the South-Asian writers such as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, V. S. Naipaul, Nirad C. Chaudhuri Arundhati Roy, Hanif Kureishi, Monica Ali, Meera Syal, and Michael Ondaatje etc. Discriminations, racist and xenophobic attitudes on the basis of skin colour and ethnic background are exposed and presented in some postcolonial English novels written by these South-Asian writers such as in Brick Lane by Monica Ali, in The Buddha of Suburbia and
The Black Album by Hanif Kureishi, in The Satanic Verses and Midnight’s Children by Salman Rushdie, in Michael Ondaatje’s Coming through Slaughter, Running in the Family, In the Skin of a Lion and The English Patient. The texts expose how the Western people think about the Eastern people and people of other worlds as inferior due to their dark and brown skin colour. The racists are defining them as ‘Others’, therefore dangerous thought by the white race. In the 20th century, an era of immigration, these writers “brought the people of different racial and ethnic origins into close proximity, juxtaposed the colonizer and the colonized, thereby bringing the given and inherent differences between them into sharper focus and making the questions of identity, roots, the notions of selfhood and otherness crucial to contemporary equity” (Jodha 64). Michael Ondaatje has juxtaposed the colonizer and colonized not only to show the differences but also to assimilate above the racial and ethnic differences in order to break the myths of racism, nationalism and ethnocentrism.

XIV

Philip Michael Ondaatje (1943- ), better known as Michael Ondaatje, an uncanny man having robin’s egg eye “and the roguish mane of greying hair that frames his broad, cherubic face” (Ilyse Kusnetz 2001), was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) of Burgher ancestry of Dutch and Indian origin. Michael Ondaatje, a Sri Lankan-born Canadian writer, moved to England at age of eleven in 1954 and then after long eight years staying in England, in 1962 he moved to Canada, where his elder brother is staying. Like Ondaatje, his elder brother Christopher Ondaatje (1933- ) first moved to England and then left for Canada in 1956 and settled down there. Christopher Ondaatje failed to complete his graduation due to financial crisis of his family. Penniless Christopher Ondaatje struggled a lot in Toronto, Canada and after all the hardships, he secured and became a financially strong man, a multi-millionaire in the city. He is now remembered as a well-known philanthropist. In In the Skin of a Lion, Ondaatje’s depiction of immigrant workers’ struggle in the city is much comparable with Christopher Ondaatje’s own struggles as a foreigner.

When Ondaatje started writing he was reading W. B. Yeats and William Carlos Williams, while Gabriel Garcia Marquez was only “a little delight, more of recognition” (Kate 1992) to him. He has never felt to cut himself off from the past life he had lived as a child, but in an Interview with Webb Kate, he says, “In order to deal
with the present [he] had to forget [his] past” (1992). Michael Ondaatje as writer of South-Asian diaspora remains a figure of double perspective, a colonizer (partially Dutch) and at the same time a colonized (partially Indian). Due to such in-betweeness, Ondaatje always suffers from fixed identity or origin. He has himself accepted it: “I am very displaced person. I really envy roots” (quoted in Bolland). “The present generations of South Asia and the diaspora as well are born into the Eastern culture and are raised in Western ways, bringing with them a hybridity and a crisis in identity and survival. They fight for acceptance in their own homeland as diaspora/expatriates who live outside their native domain” (Das 1271). In Running in the Family and Anil’s Ghost, Ondaatje traces his family lineage to Dutch and Indian, and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka to his ancestors who arrived in 1600. In Sri Lanka, “You had very different kind of Tamils. There were those who lived in Jaffna, and those in Colombo who were part of a [broader] culture that I was a part of: I was part Singhalese, part Tamil, and this other mixture” (Kate 1992). “The hybridity of experience and expression of the diaspora writers make them outsiders to the reality of Sri Lankans residing inside the country” (Das 1578).

“Canadian poet-novelist has crafted a distinct style of literature with its own subtle set of conventions” (Weaver 183). When Ondaatje writes he really does not “have a huge plan beforehand; [he doesn’t] have the whole plot and architecture, so the story is sort of discovered as [he] writes it” (Kumar 2012). It is a kind of diversion from conventional way of writing. Ondaatje neither wants to write his own opinion nor wants to just represent himself, but he represents himself through someone else like Patrick, Bolden, Anil, and Kip. In his novels we can see the ‘mixed alliance of identities’ often recurring fictitious characters but ‘built from real people and real places’. It is obvious as he himself opines, “For me, the books grow out of documents. They need to have their feet on the earth in some way. They begin with a reality of a place or a time or a situation, and then gradually become fiction” (Sarah Williams 2011).

Critics, writers and interviewers have now viewed Ondaatje’s works through different theoretical perspectives. They have analyzed his works from modernism, post-modernism, archetypical criticisms, structuralism, postmodernism, gender criticism, culturalism and post-colonialism. Post-colonial novelist Michael Ondaatje, both overtly and covertly decentralizes the Eurocentric norms and forms of the
conventional plot construction in his poetry, fiction and non-fictions. Like some post-structural theorists—Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), Michael Foucault (1926-1984) and Richard Rorty (1931-2007), Ondaatje snubs the definite meaning or the sturdy unified subject of a text having no correct or ultimate truth through "fragments of narrative from multiple points of view" (Bolland 65). "Hutcheon praises his writing for best exemplifying the postmodern challenge to boundaries" (Wang 146). His reimbursement of poetic narration, continuous entwining of the past with the present by analepsis and by disjointed narratives, stand as a kind of resistance against the "the master-narrative of Western Imperialism" (Abrams 236) by keeping in tandem with the literary tradition, also promulgated by Afro-American Black writers like Tony Morrison and Alice Walker.

Michael Ondaatje has not confined himself as a poet though he has started his career as a poet with the publication of his first collection of poems The Dainty Monsters (1967). His other major earlier works are The Collected Works of Billy the Kid: Left Handed Poems (1970), a book having series of poems; The Man with Seven Toes (1969), a long narrative poem; The Broken Ark: A Book of Beasts, an anthology of poems; Rat Jelly (1973), a collection of poems; Secular Love (1984), puzzling poems; The Cinnamon Peeler: Selected Poems (1989). This last work is based on a real life incident of William H. Bonney who is represented as Billy the Kid. Ondaatje has interpreted Billy through his fictional version in non-lenient way. For this, he got Governor General's Award.

After poetry, Ondaatje moved to writing novels. "Most of the critics have also taken note of Ondaatje's move from poetry to novel writings, his acute awareness of generic borders and the consistent challenging of these borders in his narratives" (Jodha 15). Most of the works like his earliest postmodern work The Collected Works of Billy the Kid (1970), a verse novel as most of the critics termed it, is based on a historical personage going beyond the classification of any fixed genre. Such generic experiment is also seen in his Running in the Family. Some call it a memoir, others auto-biographical novel, memoir-novel, non-fictional fiction and travelogue etc. In Running in the Family, Ondaatje "interweaves [his] own life story with [his] parents' story" (Gudmundsdóttir 183). It is said that "Michael Ondaatje experiments with genres in order to represent a fragmented past" (Gudmundsdóttir 266) and "a fragmented text to describe fragmented life" (Gudmundsdóttir 143).
Ondaatje’s proper form of novel came under the title of *Coming Through Slaughter* (1976), the winner of Books in Canada First Novel Award. His other major works are *Running in the Family* (1982), non-fictional novel; *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), winner of the 1988 City of Toronto Book Award and was also shortlisted for 1987 Ritz Paris Hemingway Award for the best novel of the year in English. *The English Patient* (1992), based on love and betrayal, is his masterpiece and Booker Prize winning fiction, and later adopted in movie version in 1996 by Anthony Minghella, won nine Academic Awards, though it was nominated for twelve awards. *Anil’s Ghost* (2000) won Giller Prize in the same year of its publication. His other latest works are *Divisadero* (2007) and *The Cat’s Table* (2011). Records show that Ondaatje has been on a space of winning awards since he started novel writing.

The main themes of his poetry and novels are hidden history and story of minority people, memory, racism, belongingness, quest for identity and self-identity, even escapism. “The story of the self leads into the diverse paths of others’ stories and across the borders of history, memory and art and keeps coming back to the few climatic moments, the explosions and implosions that open unexpected pathways into future” (Jodha 11). All his poetry, prose and novels talk about the marginalized immigrants, war victims, and insane. In his writings Ondaatje persistently explores the postmodern themes such as broken narratives and trans-nationality. His texts capture the tensions of oppressive centre and marginalized periphery; the bitter encounter of white and black, colonizer and colonized, Occidental and Oriental etc.

In Chapter two of the current thesis, “Unveiling an Enigmatic Black Musician’s Socio-cultural Identity and Politics Surrounding in *Coming Through Slaughter***”, an attempt has been made to explore the submerged black history, exclusively lost history of a 20th century Afro-American jazz pioneer Buddy Bolden of the New Orleans, the United States of America. The discussion of the chapter leads us to analyze his artistic quality and mastery of improvisation as a cornetist as he could improvise heard music into new shape which gave a new era to dance music. The chapter is also a kind of quest for the reasons behind Buddy Bolden’s insanity and role of contemporary politics surrounding his down fall including his attachment to alcohol and women. Despite colour prejudice, “Ondaatje’s work makes Bolden ‘a character of legend, hearsay and tall tales who cannot be pinned down” (Quoted in Wang 147).
Chapter three “Quest for Personal and Polyethnic Identity in *Running in the Family*” analyses writer’s journey back in Sri Lanka in 1978 and 1980, and his quest for long lost personal and polyethnic identity. The chapter inspect his postmodern self-reflexivity which has a link to his family history as well as investigates how Ondaatje has assembled different fragmented information and stories as a narrative technique to challenge genre boundaries, the work manifests his interest “in the postmodern meta-fictional mimesis of the actual process of writing, rather than “only” in the mimesis of reality” (Wang 146-147).

Chapter four entitled “Untold Story of the Minority Immigrants in *In the Skin of a Lion*” is about the official shrouds upon facts which ondaatje has tried to unveil. It evaluates how Ondaatje has illuminated the untold story of marginalized European immigrants whose contributions through labouring to building Toronto city of Canada in the early 19th century never became a part of the city’s official history. It shows how Ondaatje as an ex-centric writer has voiced for “the marginality to come into the center” (Kumar 2012).

Chapter five “Debunking the Hegemonic Myth of Nationalism in *The English Patient*” reveals how Ondaatje interrogates the notions of nationalism, social “institutions, moral imperatives and social clichés” (Sanders 483) in order to create a utopian world (perfect world) by assimilating the diverse poles of different nations and ethnic groups in a neutral venue, namely Villa de Girolima, that represents the whole world in microcosm, de-establishing the racial hierarchy of the black and the white. It endeavors to establish “a new system of mobile relationships [which] must replace the hierarchies inherited from imperialism” (Said 274).

Chapter six “Ethnic Identity and Politics: Unearthing the Truth in *Anil’s Ghost*” mainly deals with the grim reality of early 1990s Sri Lanka, an island traumatized by ethnic clash among the Sinhala-dominated government, the anti-government JVG insurgents, the separatist guerrillas LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam) who are engaged themselves in a bloody battlefield of autocracies against each other resulting in the Sri Lankan Civil War. The chapter also explores how Ondaatje, without any virility and prejudice, profoundly brings back the forgotten long past history of the Sri Lankan Civil War in provocative manner. Throughout the whole discussion of postcolonial text, colossal mass killings and huge
proportion of injustices are condemned by Ondaatje as well as he warns everyone to be cognizant in order to bring justice to the countless acquitted victims.

Chapter seven concludes over the whole thesis. In this chapter, here all racial, cultural and ethnic problems which we find in Ondaatje’s novels have been juxtaposed with our contemporary racial and ethnic problems. The past racial problems, national and ethnic conflicts help us to know and analyze in-depth reasons of our contemporary problems as well as help us to find solutions to the problems.

Beside these selected works, the recent fictional works like Joy Kogawa’s Obasan (1981), Kazuo Ishiguro’s The Remains of the Day (1989), Shyam Selvadurai’s Funny Boy (1995) British author Zadie Smith’s White teeth (2000) have been analyzed to unearth the issues of national identity, cultural hybridity and racial prejudice. During discussion of Michael Ondaatje’s novels, these works will make their entries as supporting elements. Like Ondaatje, these writers also talk about their migrant experiences as well as their position as ex-centric writers. In search of Canadian identity, Margaret Atwood’s Surfacing (1992) explores this issue in details. The other earlier works like Rudyard Kipling’s Kim (1901), E. M Forster’s A Passage to India (1924), and Paul Scott’s Jewel in the Crown (1966) deal with similar themes and situations by questioning the division of human beings on the basis of community, class and caste, national identity, hybridity, trans-national identity, ethnicity and belongingness. Beside the above fictional studies, during the discourse of the chapter, the whole argument also engrosses its attention in the study of some contemporary theorists and critics like Karl Marx, Fredric Engels, Ferdinand de Saussure, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Stuart Hall, Antonio Gramsci, Homi K. Bhabha etc.
Works Cited


