INTRODUCTION

The present study is an attempt to examine Peter Abrahams’ novels through the perspective of quest for identity. The study scrutinizes Peter Abrahams’ novels as an example of quest for identity. The prime aim of this research is to analyze the fictional work and unnoticed episodes of an African writer Peter Abrahams.

In the case of South Africa, many countries were under the governance of European countries. They were known as colonies of European countries. The Whites were not ready to accept the fact that the Black Africans are human beings. Rather, the White would think that the Blacks are just talking animals; and they have no culture, no identity. When the inner of African people began to getup they started fighting for their self existence. Most of the African writers put forward this issue and made the battle of quest for identity stronger and more serious. The authors like Joyce Cary, Chinua Achebe, Toni Morrison and Wole Soyinka observed that the aboriginal people began to fight for their identities. These writers attempted to expose like: ‘if one loses his wealth he loses something, but if he loses his identity he loses everything’. In post-colonial writing when the colonizer had denied the identity of colonized people there was outbreak of emotions through writings. Second World War had loosened the strong hold of the colonizers. At the same time battle for quest for identity in Africa had become stronger. The well-known writers of Africa had made awareness of self identity among the oppressed people through their writing.
Peter Abrahams was one of those writers whose literary work had paved the way to the oppressors to search their identities. His most of the novels are the depiction of the quest for identity. Unfortunately these novels didn’t get name and fame like Achebe’s or Soyinka’s literary work. Even Peter Abrahams tried to fill-up the gaps of the quest for identity portrayed by the well-known writers. His readers are not only from South Africa but from America, Europe and Asian countries also. At academic level his novels have been studied at thematic level and the academicians only look at the traditional elements of his novels through their analytical and illustrative spectacle. A very few critics looked at his literary work with fresh and genuine perspective. Only two critical books are available on the works of Peter Abrahams all over the world, which again focus on the thematic concerns. They do not expose what Peter Abrahams actually wants to deliver to his readers and critics. This is main reason of the researcher to select this ignored writer and ignored perspective as well; and to study his novels through the thematic angle of quest for identity which is ever not studied by any researcher or critic.

Before going to focus on the novels of Peter Abrahams through the angle of supposed study, it would be better to summarize African literature and the genre novel particularly through the aspect of quest for identity which would help a lot to understand what Peter Abrahams exactly wants to convey and which things had been missed in the popular literary works. Even it would be an attempt of the researcher, while summarizing the African English Literature to expose the gaps between the writing of Peter Abrahams and other African writers.
AFRICAN LITERATURE:

African literature has a long tradition. When there were no scripts available of any languages, such a literature would be transmitted orally. Africa had several tribes and every tribe had its own culture, religion and code of conduct. The songs of various rituals had been sung at the time of their ceremonies. Every tribe used to celebrate these ceremonies in a grand way. As these people were leading primitive life and away from advanced life they didn’t have any solutions on natural calamities or dangerous diseases. The leaders of the tribes used to organize various rituals to escape from the natural calamities like flood, storm, and draught; at the same time the man made calamities like battle, burning of forest and diseases like Cholera, Plague and Smallpox. These tribes had created various Gods and Goddesses so that they would be rescued from these calamities. They composed the songs of praising to God and constructed mythical stories regarding the greatness of God. They were thinking that everything happens due to the magical power. Rather, there was no logic in their magic. This magic had filled with music. Some musical instruments like drum and piano used to add a beauty to these songs. They would only use all these musical instruments while singing the religious songs of the greatness of parents, grandparents and great grandparents. Africans are the first on the earth who established the marriage system and family importance, according to anthropologists and sociologists. When the Roman and Greek cultures had been on the doorstep of ideology and culture of human life, Africans had already been established their suitable ways of life. Africans kept busy themselves all the time in search of bread and butter which restricted them to progress the way of life.
Gradually the script of African language had been developed and the poems in the form of lyrics came into existence. The folk tales had been, though concerned with black magic and even evil worship, written on the paper. African tales focused more on evil as compared to Roman and Greek myths, but it deals with originality. These tales were concerned to the happenings to the nature as well as the wild animal worlds. They had stone-gods, and in the form of sun and moon as well. Unfortunately, they were spending their time in performing the superstitious activities for the winning the hearts of their gods. Women would prick their many body parts, even tongue too. There had been various terrible and tyrannical conventions in each tribe. They would follow all this conventions blindly.

The birth of African literature is not a matter of a co-incidence, but, on the other hand, it came into existence with great painstaking efforts. The inventions of the script gave the birth not only to the small lyrics and short folk tales but also various forms of poetry like epic, ballad and elegy; and the forms of prose like drama, one act play and fiction. There was native taste in their writings before the arrival of European travelers and American missionaries. The intrusion of White culture into the dark countries caused to the death of the culture of Black. European and Americans began to look at them as their objects and their working hands. The very first blow was on their religion and culture. As there was no any philosophy and suitable way of life of Africans the white devils easily succeeded to impose their culture and religion on black people. Instead of introducing their ideals and philosophy to the black people they easily turned them to their slaves. The African countries experienced extreme pains, sufferings, chaos and slavery on the arrival of Europeans and the
American missionaries. They tried to stamp their culture, language and religion on the aboriginal people. They began to educate the people for their personal needs as they were into badly need of clerks. The Europeans and the Americans have purposefully divided the tribes to lessen their strength. While doing so they studied the traditions, culture, religion and idea of life of Africans. They came to this conclusion that the aboriginal people could be divided into three classes: those who can think what is good and bad could be converted into Christian; those who were physically strong and their muscles were capable to carry the White man’s burden to be turned into slaves; and those who were neither physically strong nor able to have any philosophy of life would be given so less education that would be enough to be clerks. The colour of their skin played a vital role to be physically, mentally, culturally and intellectually their slaves.

The American and European began to change their ideology of goodness. They had been thinking that white people are born to humanize the black people. The black people those who had not the awareness of their identity and philosophy, lost this nonsense game and gradually became the slaves of white culture. Thus, it led Blacks to lose their confidence on their culture, religion, gods and conventions. Further, they themselves became the destroyer of their own culture, nature and literature. Since then nobody dared to praise their local ideology of life either orally or through the written forms. A dawn had been brought by the writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Derek Walcott when they started writing to challenge the White University.
A NATURE OF AFRICAN NOVEL:

After the Second World War, the new literature was born which included quest for identity and awareness of selfhood. After the freedom none of the African countries were socially and politically settled. There were social and cultural disorders in 1950s and early 1960s. The African writers rightly pointed out the situation and began to write according to the social, political, cultural and intellectual need of African people. African countries faced the intense national activities which challenged the whole idea and the practice of colonialism in Africa. According to Emmanuel Ngara, “All people in Africa were equal mentally, physically and realistically. The education of English caused for materialism and for the birth of new bourgeoisie or elite class. This new bourgeoisie or elite class was the product of European ideology whose base was European but roots were local” (Ngara 35). One can find this kind of society in Amos Tutuola’s novel The Palm Wine Drinkard (1952). The writer used the Yoruba mythology and African folk tale tradition to expose the birth of the Black elite class which would pretend the life style of people. The Dark Child (1953) by Camara Laye is an episode novel. It is totally based on African oral tradition. He has glorified the African tradition past and the civilization. Chinua Achebe’s Africa and Joseph Conrad’s Africa are different. The first Africa is through the angle of native and latter is through the angle of the colonizer. Things Fall Apart (1958) by Chinua Achebe gives a naked idea of social, cultural, political and religious atmosphere of Igbo society and how tribes put themselves into destruction due to White ideology of life. Weep Not, Child (1964) is most noteworthy novel by Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong’o. This was published when
the African countries had just got the independence. There was an urgent call to the African to grab education in these novels. Instead of attacking against western ideology the post colonial writers tried to follow the best; and rejected the waste; and Achebe and Thiong’o were on the forefront. The Palestine critic Edward opposed the idea of universalism in his critical Treatise, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Most of the African writers looked at colonizer’s governance as the opportunity to learn new and helpful for comfortable life. They preferred the educational system in colonial context which may in future make awareness about the lost self identity and to herald African values inside and outside Africa. The new writers got impressed by their past and started writing history of their nations. They preferred the myths of their countries. The plots of these novels are pregnant with the enquiry about their self, the immediate community or village, the nation-state or the new formed proletariat. But, unfortunately their writing remained un-noticed.

There was impact of European writers on African writers so far as thematic view or pattern is concern. But the difference lies in: ‘these new African writers attempted to expose what is grown in the soil of Africa and in the heart of Blacks. They always opposed the formal complexities and scary status which seem compulsory in European literature. These novels seem to be original product of the traditional legends of South Africa. The language of African writers is very simple, lucid and common English which is easily understood to the common people of Africa. After reading the masterpieces of European literature which claims to be universal, the African writers came to know that the expected universality of European writers is not a real universality in true sense. So they rejected the sense
of the new universality and began to just entertain and educate the African people. They tried to hold the leaders by the very beauty of narrative, giving pleasure and also teaching morals and beliefs of the community, race or nation. African novels are the essence products of African classical tradition. This classical tradition finds its renewal in the novels of twentieth century because this genre puts into context of today a number of subjects relevant to traditional and modern African values. The novelists not only portray how Europeans generated the new ideology of life through their way of life but also concentrated on the plight of pre-colonial Africa, colonialism, neo-colonial independence, apartheid, indigenous and imported religions. Thus, the writers changed according to the need of the society and thought; and attempted to handle the themes like art, urban life, religion, apartheid, ironies of life, tradition and culture and pre-colonial- colonial- post colonial realities. The writers wanted a change in the society brought by the natives and not by European emperors and American missionaries. This change must have been based on the roots of African culture, religion and the way of life. Most of the African writers attempted to bring this positive change to enrich human lives and African societies.

the novels of Africa and African society in true sense written by non African writers. But this picture was not accepted by aboriginal writers of South Africa. According to these writers, the writers who write about Africa and prefer Africa as setting of their novels cannot give the justice to the people portrayed in their novels because their sense to look at African people is not pure; they look at them as working hands, emotionless hearts and moving objects. Achebe is the first writer who denied the deceptive things exposed in *The Heart of Darkness* (1899) by Joseph Conrad.

The new African writers have brought the African fiction into new form and shape in the last two-three decades. These new writers have taken an education in European countries and began to bring into an offshoot of western literary culture infused in the western education. The writers like Achebe and Wole Soyinka already have shown that it is possible to have African fiction in African form that is without any dependency on the western form of writing. Actually, Achebe opposes all other writers who do not belong to Africa but write about Africa. He is strongly of the opinion that the fictions about Africa written by non African tends to rewrite the history and culture of African people in very bad manner and intensions. The historian Herodotus of Halicarnassus states that- “Africa is a continent of Barbarians and animal like humans with four legs without any form of culture or religion” (Emily 212). Such notorious picture of Africa tempts to describe Africa in fictions as a continent of wild animals. The western judgment of Africa and Africans is made up not by the ground experience but by the imaginative pictures decorated by such historians. So it is wrong expectation from non Africans for better fiction.
The writings of African slaves in America, India and Europe are also noticeable. There are innumerable slave narratives available on today’s date. Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789) is such a factious work which exposes the physical and psychological state of the slaves. A well known novel by Alex Haley, *Roots* (1977) shows the proper account of the slave trade experiences of the African in fictional mode. In colonial period, Europeans milked the African with their language and culture for most of the African writers preferred to write in English. The novel *Ethiopia Unbound* is considered the first English novel in 1911 by African writer Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford. This novel is neither purely fiction nor political document yet it was praised by many foreign newspapers and magazines. It is considered that most of the novels written by African living in America are the African-American novels. Many writers left their motherland for their family and society because of economic and political reasons and settled in foreign countries. These African writers began to write the admixture of setting.

There are many writers those who had been living in Africa from the beginning of their career as a writer. The writers like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Ben Okri, Niyi Osundare, Chimamanda Adichie, Helen Oyeyemi and Diana Evans had been once living in Africa. Their native place gave them name and fame. Ethnic groups of African writers used the local languages of the literature. These novels were not accessible to those who were away from the sense of African local languages. There were more than thousands languages in Africa. Further, many African writers preferred to write in the western
languages like English, French and Portuguese as the languages of fiction in order to reach out to maximum people with diverse language form. Many African critics deny the English for it is the language as it is the satanic and slow poisoned language which enslaves all of those either writers or readers. Some critic and even philosophers think that English language is an imperial language which represents colonialism in all its facets. African writers should write in any African languages instead of European languages is advocated by the international critics. African lingua franca was suggested by the critics Derek Walcott to evolve in the literary works. Swahili, Hausa, Yoraupa and Acoli were some important African languages which had been forced to use as a languages of literature. The African thinkers believed that African novels are for the consumption of African people only. That is the reason probably why at the beginning of the career, the writers like Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Chinua Achebe, Okot p’Bitek and Wole Soyinka practiced writing in their native dialects. But when these writers saw their writing was limited to their farms, streets and hills they made the idea of Universalism. So these writers believed that African fiction will truly be identified as African though written in either in African languages or in any European dominant language without their opinion that they are so much capable to express African ideas and philosophies any language either local or foreign language. According to Abiola Irele, African literature cannot reach to its excellence if it ignores its social function.

African literature and African diasporic literature are two different things; both the writers should go hand in hand to expose the excellence and to destroy everything which is against the well-being of society.
According to Raymond Williams, “...in each transition, as a historical development of social language itself, finding new means and new forms and new definitions of changing practical consciousness become inevitable” (Raymond 234). This is not only applicable to the African literature but to the whole world as a whole. African writers have a peculiar challenge. When these writers write other than African languages, the African people do not read it and if it is written in any African language the native speaker and the readers read it but the writers fail to lead African world at international level.

Initially, the African writers had been the slaves of European philosophy but soon their conscious made them to destroy this wrong impression and create their own of African ideology. One cannot deny the fact that African novels got sharpened and developed its prime ideology due to the infection of European literary works. African writers’ works got influenced due to European writers by two ways: the awareness of their own identity was created; and they thought that their identity should be proved on the canvas of the world through the novels written in not in native languages but in European languages. When they came to know that African characters in European fictions are portrayed with many weaknesses and villainous activities the native black novelists began to ask the question whether they are really like the picture decorated by the European in their literary works. Their inner voice answered them that they are neither villainous nor weak at any level. So, they opposed to their dull picture in European fictions. Frantz Fanon, the post colonial thinker thinks that the original identity of the black people has been deliberately erased and the false identity has been stuck to them. In Black Skin, White
Masks (1952) he, further says that Europeans are looking at black people as though they are just objects and born to help the white people.

Wole Soyinka was impressed by the novel of Daniel O. Fagunwa whose novel Drawer Willy on folktales traditions and idioms includes many supernatural elements. Soyinka thought his novels born from the true African soil, so he translated his most of the novels in English so that Europeans would get an idea of self identity of black African people. The heroes portrayed in the novels by Daniel O. Fagunwa are usually Yoruba hunters, who interact with sages and even gods in their quests. These novels are thematically different because they explore the divine between the Christian beliefs of Africa’s colonizers and the continent’s traditional religions. Amos Tutuola was a famous Nigerian writer whose novels are based on Yoruba folk-tales. The Palm-Wine Drinker, a 1952 novel by him explored Yoruba traditions and folklore. This novel is considered as a conscious attempt at serious fiction in English from African. This novel deals with visionary realisms like a folk-tale while the language was full of repetitions and full of emphasis. This novel focuses on African belief systems about their culture, the spiritual essence and affinity with divine powers and the general worldview of their culture.

The African writers put forward one of the important issues of urbanization through their novels in post colonial writings. When they choose city as setting to their novels they attempted to expose the ugliness of the city. The themes generally discussed in these novels are armed robbery, stealing, prostitution, suicide, manslaughters and other negative vices. Yet it doesn’t mean that writers missed to concentrate on the quest
for identity. Most of the writers had the purpose to show self identity by various incidents and dominant local setting.

There is always comparison, one can find, in Elechi Amadi’s *The Concubine* (1966) and *Things Fall Apart* (1958) due to their fight for the same motto: to re-establish the lost identity. The novel’s settings are a rural background before the entrance of the colonial masters. The story revolves around Ihuoma, a young woman and the men who indicated interests of managing her. The chains of the deaths of the lovers of Ihuoma take place in Omokachi Village.

In short, the novels of African writers always attempted to expose the issue of self identity. Along with all other themes, the quest for identity finds almost in all the novels which had been written during and after the colonial period. In this research work, the researcher’s focus is on the quest for identity especially in the novels of Peter Abrahams.

**PETER ABRAHAMS: LIFE AND CAREER**

Peter Henry Abrahams, popularly known as Peter Abrahams, was born on 19th March 1919 in Vrededorp, which is Johannesburg’s largest Coloured and Asian slum. The name of his father was James Henry Abrahams Deras who was from Ethiopia. His grandmother had narrated the true story of his father’s adventure. His mother Angelina du Plessis was a Cape Coloured. Before Abrahams’ birth his mother was a widow. She had already two children from her dead husband Cape Malay. Unfortunately his father passed away when Abrahams was very young. So he had been sent to a rural village, Elsburg. There he had been living
with his relatives Aunt Liza and Uncle Sam. At the age of seven he was brought back from his Aunt’s house and began to live with his mother along with his step brother and sister. As his mother was going out of the house in search of livelihood, he also began helping by selling firewood and working at the smithy. In his life, he first of all read a story of Othello written by Charles Lamb. The white lady, the owner of the smithy asked him to read this story book and after reading Othello, he decided to be a writer. Abrahams came into contact with a variety of books but he didn’t get enough time to read. So he decided to leave the job and attend the school so that he would learn new things and able to read more and more books. After joining the school, he planned to complete three years schooling in one year. He concentrated so much on study and at the age of eleven he had read more than twenty books. He loved Shakespeare a lot than any other writers because the stories of Lamb based on Shakespeare’s plays taught him how to be an ideal writer.

Abrahams was forced to leave the school at the age of fifteen due to his aunt’s arrest for selling skokiaan. Then he left his aunt’s house and began to live with his sister Maggie and her husband Charles. For the livelihood he did many nonsense jobs like carrying bags for white shoppers at the market and selling in Johannesburg at night. He searched a new job in the hotel. It was very hard job so his sister forced him to resign this job and hold the previous job of carrying bags at the market. One day he saw a man reading the newspaper Bantu World while trying to find work at the market. This paper shocked and surprised him because he hadn’t seen ever any black man on the front page of the newspaper. Abrahams turned close to the man of reading paper and began to read.
The black man surprised to see Abrahams’ reading ability. When the man asked him what he wanted to become, he showed his wish of becoming an author. So the man offered to help him to find a job at the Bantu Men’s Social Centre as an office boy. When he joined there, he got an opportunity to read African-American writers. The description of his motherland portrayed in the novels by African writers made him more enthusiastic to be a writer. The African novels began to influence him a lot. He became conscious about his slavery in his own country. He attempted to tally whether the description found in African novels is right or wrong and when he came to know that African literature is trying to show the reality of white culture, he decided to be a top writer to expose the real aspects of white people and the missionaries. Once he saw an advertisement in the Bantu World, he rolled his name in a correspondence. He took General Education course for ten Shillings a month. Unfortunately he couldn’t continue his job after three month because the centre was not affordable to keep an office boy. His employer, Peter Dabula suggested him to attend the Diocesan Training College in Grace Dieu near Pietersburg working there to afford his stay.

He admires his three teachers; Father Woodfield, Father Jones and Father Adams who were though white, influenced him for writing. He began his career composing the poems which were published while he was at Grace Dieu in the Bantu World, a white owned newspaper catering towards Black readers. He was converted into Christian by his teacher Father Woodfield. As he never wanted to be a teacher, he left the school at the age of seventeen. He was also having a hard time reconciling his lessons and Christianity with the violent racism. One more cause he
shared of leaving the school. Once he and his friend stopped at a store to buy a loaf of bread, Abrahams was asked to leave the store. While leaving the store, unfortunately he stumbled with a white man. The white man felt disgusting after unconsciously touching Abrahams. He threw Abrahams away. His voice was violent and overflow with disgust. He called Abrahams a ‘black baboon’. On the same night Abrahams thought to give justice to black people because he thought that white people might have intelligence but black people have emotions and they are sensitive. To give justice to black people and to re-establish their self he decided to fight against white ideology. On that night he decided to leave the school and go the Johannesburg. There was St. Peter’s school established only for black people. After leaving Grace Dieu, he was admitted to this school by the help of Father Woodfield. The purpose of this school was to matriculate the black people so that they would perform their each activity with powerful thoughts. Abrahams meets Ezekiel Mphahleele in the school. Afterwards Mphahleele went to become a writer, academician, artist and activist from Pretoria. In Abrahams writing every reader, critic and researcher finds one common thing that Abrahams’ fight was not only common thing that Abrahams’ fight was not only for giving the justice to black people but it was for proving how black people are equal to white people.

Abrahams joined South African Institute for Race Relations at the University of Johannesburg for work. There too, he was exposed to young men and women who seemed untouched by the racial disease of the land. When he was at St. Peter’s, he became exposed to left wing politics through his interaction with a white couple leaving near the school and the
white people always looked down at the black people like Abrahams. He was first time in his life called by white couple to their house. This white couple gave him a treatment like human being. He came into contact with Marxism only due to this couple. Due to the Marxism, he came to know that only Marxism is capable to destroy the racial fight and give political, cultural and economical justice to the black people. While his circle to the white friends grew, it seemed to him that only the Marxist seemed wholly free of any taint of racialism in their dealings with Abrahams and other non-Europeans. It is great contribution of Abrahams due to the active participation in Marxist movement that he not only did this interaction to left wing politics but also highlight his continued ability to blur racial lines.

Actually, Abrahams wanted to go to England so he had to travel to Durban hoping to find a passage to England and therefore went to the docks on a regular basis to build up contacts. During the Second World War he managed to bribe himself on board of England. He was active in politics through his writing as well as helping with communist party activities. Actually, he wanted to go to England to be a writer. When Abrahams had been working with Bantu Men’s Social Club, he had decided to go to London but this opportunity knocked his door very late. Many of the African writers wanted to make their career going to America but love for Charles Lamb and John Keats kept dragging him passionately to England. When he reached England, it was a question of his stay, so he took the help of his African friend who was already living in England. His friend was involved in the British Communist Party. With the help of African friends in England, he found a job at the communist book
distribution centre as well as a room in a comrade’s flat. In 1941, he got married to a white woman named Dorothy Pennington. They had to go to Paris to finalize their marriage. They lived in Paris among the peasants in Nemours. She gave birth to a son in Nemours. Abrahams claims that when he was in Paris, he realized the absurdity of colour judgments of any kind.

During this period, he became acquainted with African students and intellectuals particularly Kwame Nkrumah who became a first Prime Minister of Ghana. Abrahams thought to publish his literary works during the war but he didn’t get enough success. Meanwhile, he came to the contact of Pan-Africa congress which was fighting for independence in Africa. He describes it as the most representative gathering of African delegates that the world has ever seen. Abrahams went to Paris in 1946 for the Paris Peace Conference. It was in Paris that he was introduced to the American writer Richard Wright. Wright was a leading American black novelist and former communist. George Padmore suggested Abrahams to get in touch with Wright. The first meet between Wright and Abrahams was fruitful because of many years Wright became a mentor of Abrahams.

PETER ABRAHAMS - A DIASPORIC WRITER

In the year 1939 of September when the Second World War broke out, Abrahams heard that there was a ship hiring crew, he managed himself to leave for England. His dream was to find a success as a writer. Authors such as Charles Lamb and John Keats compelled Abrahams to desire to journey to England. Over there, he found the flat of a friend from
South Africa who was involved in British Communist Party. Through this friend he found a job at a communist book distribution centre. Soon after his arrival in London, Abrahams became acquainted with George Padmore who wrote dispatches to be sent out to the colonies. Together these writers, including African, American writer like W.E.B. Du Bois and Richard Wright struggled against marginalization in the public sphere. These African intellectuals had Pan-Afrikanist sentiments and worked to bring about a world free from European rule. It was among this group of intellectuals that Abrahams moved away from Marxism and towards Pan-Africanism—his first political transition in his overarching quest for freedom. In Jamaica, Abrahams believed he had discovered a near non-racial society, a place where his mixed race family could feel at home. He settled into this land after departing from England in the year 1956.

Physical distance from home and its commonly associated feelings of being victimized or bitterness, sorrow, loneliness, dejection (not to say depression), nostalgia and the likes, may be painful and distressing. The Somali writer Nuruddin Farah, who has been in exile since the 1970s and even now has no country as such to return to, understands this very well; and insists that it could even be made profitable. William Conton’s *The African* (1961), Chinua Achebe’s *Man of the People* (1966), Wole Soyinka’s *Kongi’s Harvest* (1965) and Peter Abrahams *A Wreath for Udomo* (1956)... the list is endless.

The work of Peter Abrahams is touching and slightly different from those who have experience of descent in London. He is well polished and clear-cut ‘product of diaspora’. His works of fiction and non-fiction focus on Diasporic themes such as war, homelessness, belonging and identity.
As he has firsthand experience of colonialism everything is depicted in his fiction. Post colonialism is closely linked to diaspora and vice-versa. The themes and concepts as race, slave trade, identity, belonging, displacement and migration were stood on the verge of colonialism and diaspora. All these themes, migratory experiences and his fictional and non-fictional works have paved the way as diasporic writer who redefines the English Literature. The travelling experience transformed into the work of fictional and non-fictional work. His novels deals with migration, cross culture, racism, etc. which are considered as the qualities of diaspora. The African diasporic writers seem to be a feast for the readers and the critics.

**CHOICE OF THE TOPIC WITH REASONING:**

Humans are social animals. Man gets developed his personality, language, culture and ‘inner deep’ by living in the society, without which man cannot exist at all. Society fulfils all his needs and provides security. Every human take birth, grows, lives and dies in society itself. They come in contact with each other through the process of give and take. Man has a natural trend to live an associated life with others. Man needs society for his existence and survival. The relation between individual and society has been an interesting and a complex as well. So an individual’s life is, to an enormous extent, a groups’ life. Man thinks that he has a meaning to his life, thus his life is happy; and if he fails, his quest for identity begins. Most of the Psychologists and Social Scientists opined that man thinks about his identity all the time being into the surrounding. In the society there are thousands of people who have been neglected by the people around them or even the family members deny their spiritual, mental or physical existence. This deliberate negligence forces them to perform
such type of deliberate activities by which the people around them may attract to them.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Being one of the most important writers of Africa the researcher thought to study the novels of Peter Abrahams. When researcher concentrated the issues handled in his novels, it came to known that the theme of Quest for Identity which is not ever examined and focused by any critic or researcher. Further, the researcher found that the writer is skilful though he failed in his initial novels, his latter novels succeeded at both thematic and linguistic level. He seems most sincere and honest to his work as an author. It obviously seems that the writer, though came into the contact of nihilists and surrealists, he doesn’t indulge any artificial or false idea in his literary works. Critics believed that Abrahams loves to degradation but, in fact, the incidents portrayed in each novel helped to strengthen the main idea of the novel.

A REVIEW OF WORK DONE ON PETER ABRAHAMS’ FICTION:

The writing of Peter Abrahams is neglected by the critics and research scholars; so just two books and a few research articles are available on the novels of Peter Abrahams.

The first and foremost important book is *Peter Abrahams (Modern African Writers)* was written by Michael Wade (1972). Wade analysis the novels of Peter Abrahams which focuses on various themes
and issues related to Africa. This book also deals with Abrahams’ rendering of the people and history of South Africa.

Kolawole Oungbesan, in his significant book entitled as *The Writing of Peter Abrahams* (1979), examines the ways in which Peter Abrahams response both creatively and critically to the psychological effects of racism and economic exploitation in South Africa. This book concentrates on Abrahams attempt in increasingly various themes.

University of Witwatersvand has published a book entitled as *The Long Eye of History: Four Autobiographical Texts by Peter Abrahams* (1990). The book is compiled by Stephen Gray. The four novels of Peter Abrahams are discussed with the perspective of autobiographical elements. These novels are: *The Path of Thunder, The View from Coyaba, Wild Conquest* and *Return to Goli*.

Three articles are published on Peter Abrahams’ fiction. In an article, *The Political Novels of Peter Abrahams* published by Atlanta University in Phylon (1960-vol 34) written by Kolawole Oungbesan, there is study of Peter Abrahams’ novels through the political perspective. Another article *A Long Way from Vrededorp: the Reception of Peter Abrahams’ Ideas* has published by Indiana University Press in Research in African Literature (1980-vol 2). This article is written by Kolawole Oungbesan. This article exposes the issues related to African identity and related issues like racism, apartheid, bourgeoisie, and liberalization. The third article named as *History, Nation and Form in Peter Abrahams’ Wild Conquest* is written by Michael Green. This article is published in Research in African Literature (1982-vol 27) and published by Indiana
University Press. The author has given a brief outline of Great Trek and its impact on African literature and culture.

There have two research works been taken place for Post Graduation Studies. The dissertation named as Detribalization and Racial Conflict as Major Themes in Peter Abrahams African Writings written by Romola Vasantha Thumbadoo for MA Course. This research work is published by Nomasta University in 1975. A Thematic Study of Peter Abrahams’ Novels is another dissertation written by Tsabedze A. C. for MA degree in 1980. This dissertation is published by University of Nairobi. Both the thesis focuses on the analytical study of various themes like slavery, racism, displacement, migration, etc which is suffered by African Blacks.

In short, many critics have examined various issues that are somehow related to the research. However, it seems that the theme of quest for identity has escaped critical attention. So, the researcher, in this research work, tries to encompass this theme. Hence, the choice of the topic.

**HYPOTHESIS:**

The novels of Peter Abrahams deal with an important postcolonial issue of identity crisis which is reflected through his depiction of tragic society with a moderate and acritical position regarding the Black White relationship in exploring the quest for identity.
OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The research work focuses Peter Abrahams’ novels to explore how he has exhibited different features of quest for identity. Instead of criticizing Whites, Peter Abrahams, being Black, tries to affirm the place in the society. The objectives of the research work are as following:

1. To critically analyze the novels of Peter Abrahams.
2. To study Identity; and Quest for Identity in particular.
3. To apply the theory of ‘Quest for Identity’ to the novels of Peter Abrahams.
4. To contextualize Peter Abrahams’ novels in theoretical framework.
5. To study the historical conditions which have affected African Literature.
6. To study the racial and colour segregation of the Blacks and Whites in Africa.
7. To analyze, to understand and to evaluate the novels under the study from ‘quest for identity’ point of view.
8. To arrive at valid conclusions regarding Quest for Identity in the novels of Peter Abrahams.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS:

The scope of this study cannot be enlarged to accommodate the whole scenario of the quest for identity discussed in the novels of Peter Abrahams. Therefore, the objective of this study itself is limited one. It aims at finding thematic vision of the author in the term of the quest for identity reflected in the selected novels only. At the same time, the issues
like thematic techniques, style, setting and other concerns are also out of the scope of the present study. Though this research work occupies a broad perspective, it slightly touches to the cultural theories and deeply concentrates on hidden local issues; which are concerned with African social and cultural view of the society.

**METHODOLOGY:**

The analytical, evaluative, interpretative and comparative methods have been used for this research. In order to state the critical views, the modern critical theories have been studied. Qualitative Research has been used which aimed to finding out the quality of particular phenomenon. The background, improvement, current conditions and environmental interactions of one or more individuals, groups, communities, businesses or institutions have been perceived, recorded and analyzed for stages of patterns in relation to internal and external influences.

**CHAPTER SCHEME:**

The chapter scheme of the proposed study would proceed as per the following plan-

**CHAPTER I** A Theoretical Framework gives an overview and different definitions of Identity and types of Identities: and nature and scope of Quest for Identity.

**CHAPTER II** Journey Through Self Discovery comprises the analysis of Peter Abrahams’ first three novels: *Song of the City* (1945), *Mine Boy* (1946) and *The Path of Thunder* (1948).

CHAPTER IV entitled as Towards A Universal Civilization comprises three novels, *A Night of Their Own* (1965), *This Island Now* (1966) and *The View from Coyaba* (1985).

CHAPTER V Conclusions, which is final chapter of the study, summarizes the work, outlines the findings, state the conclusions and proposes new avenues for further research.