CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
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Nation and national identities have been institutionalised and deeply inscribed in our psyche through memories and conflict. As Gilroy observes they are materialized through “elaborate cultural, ideological and political processes which culminate in (the individuals) feeling of connectedness to other national subjects” (49) transcending the purportedly minor categories of class, religion, region, dialect or caste. In this globalized state, markers of nation, space, identity and consciousness are being endlessly reconfigured along the lines of power, internationalization, culture, religion and gender (C.Vijayashree, Ozkirimli). As an outcome of this nations and nationalisms are withering away. But regardless of these speculations on the demise of the nation state, the precarious theoretical paradigm remains as “the most universally legitimate value in political life of our time” (Anderson 3) and we still witness battles being fought and livelihood being hampered in the name of nation. Therefore, it becomes important to understand the underlying politics behind the process by which an abstract idea (the nation) sustains itself and unifies the individual and collective imagination in order to accomplish a common objective.

In this regard, the thesis tends to look at the conceptions of nation and identities which are subject to constant alteration and its dialogic function in the literary sphere. The research project’s objective is to decode the present-day difficulties and politics involved in theorizing the internally colonized nations and cultures trapped within the nation state in select third world / developing countries using literature. The argument further studies the process by which facets of nationalism and literature informs each other. As Brennan corroborates the overtones of national anxieties interspersed in literary
texts confer a “fictive quality of the political concept itself” (48). Identities which are deliquesced by resistances could undergo changes to be re-configured becomes a narrative in forms such as novel. This identical nature of narrative form and nation are contingent of each other (Bhabha). This introduction sets the premise on which postulations of present day nationalism is constructed. Following this, the relevance of postcolonial theory as methodology and its tryst with nation is deliberated. A synoptic overview of the core sections of the thesis has been furnished at the end.

Bearing in mind the politics of constituting a nation (single/unified) through literature (in the presence of binaries, multiplicities and the global discourse), this work studies select texts which illustrate the crisis and dilemma operating in the formation and restriction of identities. Debates and theories on imagined communities have defied the conception of nation as a rigid landlocked structure and conceived nation as always being in a state of flux (Ozkirimili 2000, Bhabha 1990). Despite such claims of volatility, nations (influenced by mediascapes, ideoscapes & ethnoscapes) do assert themselves mostly in an attempt to overthrow (neo-colonial or imperial) domination. Taking this aspect into consideration the thesis expounds how nations which at the outset rise to encounter colonial authorities perform more than it intends. This work by construing literatures situated in the heart of “ambivalence” and “ruptures” (Bhabha) explicates the hypotheses of present nation and the future of the nation as a political category.

Another major focus of the study is to unmask the process of decolonisation (be it from an imperial / a neo-colonial force) in the (postcolonial) texts. To accomplish this, select literature from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Palestine, Iran and Bangladesh have been taken up for analysis. The select transcripts interrogate the penchant of dominant forces
to homogenize variances in order to achieve stability. They further confront the rhetoric produced by the majority/imperialistic powers that intentionally subjugate the ‘other’ as demons/uncivilized. In addition to the above stated objectives different types of ‘scapes’ involved in the realisation of nation and separate nationalisms too will be looked at carefully. In this connection it becomes mandatory to exemplify the context of the literary work. The researcher proposes to read literature produced from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Palestine, Iran and Bangladesh which have been persistently termed as sites of conflict. The incongruous distribution of power in these specific locales augments dissonance among masses and rulers. And the tensions reflected in written and visual texts foster an engaging dialogue. The literary discourses from select countries project the pervasive nature of dichotomies and the belligerence of nation states.

The literature evolving from select contexts cannot be read in isolation they have to be cogitated through contextual history. For instance Afghanistan as a country has been combating internal conflicts since its institution. Being subjugated by English, Russians and Taliban it is rather arduous to define a distinct Afghan culture. The presence of various regimes in Afghanistan, the idea of Afghan nationalism has been embroiled in conflicts of religion and culture. A similar predicament can be stated about Sri Lanka which was/is raging with internal conflicts. Within the island, the claim for separate ethnic nationalism has been insistent and prolonged and this has led to establishment of various discourses of dominance in Sri Lanka. Both the Sinhalese and the Tamil resist forces of dominance. The brutal guerilla warfare fails to constitute nations in the Sri Lankan milieu. Palestine, Iran and Bangladesh too have been caught incessantly in the flames of violence and war. Trapped in a state of anarchy, the nation is
conceived only by imagination fairly designed by literature and media. Conflict has always been brewing in the select war/revolution torn zones which affect the life of the individuals. As the texts used for research (caught in a scenario of conflict) are of varied genre with a postnationalist outlook, the researcher has chosen the framework of Arjun Appadurai’s scapes to read the texts. The corpus of texts selected is interdisciplinary in nature and varied. This has been a deliberate choice as the research wished to highlight and foreground that texts of varied kinds depict the idea of nation and nationalism in different ways. This one hopes / leads one to understand the heterogeneity existing in the formation of a nation.

The literature selected for this thesis cannot be read in isolation and needs to be comprehended through the lens of colonialism, decolonisation, neo-colonialism and imperialism. Therefore, aspects of colonialism as well as nationalism have been utilised as the backdrop for the study.

In trying to map the significance of nations and nationalism in present day’s context, one recognizes that “thinking about the nation is not just a possibility or desirability” but arises out of necessity (Deshpande 44). The global space marked by electronic arbitration and mass migrations has created according to Appadurai an atmosphere facilitating, “collective imagination” (“Modernity” 161) which gradually tends to rescind the boundaries of nation. As Bhabha mentions society has reached a stage where nation ceases to be a power structure and its legitimacy is being suspected (1990). In such context, where the nation has ceased to perform as a unit of political governance (Bhabha 1990) it is important to understand how nations articulate social, cultural, political and personal identities in the new space.
In this light, a few theoretical propositions on which present-day nation rest have to be contemplated. The rise of capitalism in the globalised scenario has simultaneously strengthened and weakened the nation-state. This economic boom influenced and determined by global power politics has facilitated the flow of global networks and erased the rigid margins of nation states. Thus in the twentieth century, practices of ‘nation making’ is being preoccupied with issues of ‘borderline’ (McAlister 422). With the increasing processes of ‘reterritorialisation’ (Deluze and Guattari) and decentralisation, the power, autonomy and solidarity vested within the nation are weaning away. Though redefining precincts has engendered new challenges in our comprehension of what constitutes the nation state, it also makes us realise how the existing situations (i.e. globalised condition) impart momentum among the individuals to imagine strategies to align national identities (Croucher 20). As Deshpande critiques the present nation is caught between the “agnostic mood” of globalisation and the radical political ideologies of the past (44).

In this globalised space the world is largely steered by forces of transnationality, transculturality and the upsurge of economy and media and as a result the nation cannot be condensed into “single cultural unit” (Troillout 4). At this juncture, modernist and postmodernist leanings enable the rise of “imagined communities” that dismantle sacred communities, ethnicities and monarchies (Anderson). The new imagined spaces attempt to come to terms with the politics of space, identity and location in the world populated with “refugees, exiles, and other displaced persons” (Appadurai, “Modernity” 22). They expressly dismiss the contentions of cultural homogeneity on which nation is constructed. As voices of heterogeneity disintegrate the sovereign state (in transnational and diasporic
spheres) nation is only envisaged as, “the ideological alibi of the territorial state” (159) and we have arrived at a point to think ‘beyond the nation’ (i.e.) the postnational identity (158). As historians, social scientists and anthropologists staunchly proclaim the supremacy of territorial nationalism has come to an end (166).

This ‘postnational’ scenario tolerates infinite subversions and multiple representations. It is characterised when the “effects of the nation continue to be felt even though it no longer defines the current horizons of possibilities” (Deshpande 45). With the idea of nation sabotaged different manifestations of nation evolve (Zaidi 39). As Castell posits,

[a] new form of state is emerging, and supranational institutions, national states, regional & local governments and even NGOs are linked together in a network of interaction and shared decision making that becomes the prevalent political form of the information age: the network states

(Castells “Rise Network Society” 33)

Network societies have started supplanting nations. In today’s context they generate solidarity and garner collectivity, which were the main agenda of nation building. The sway of information societies are determined by media.

Another focal point of the thesis is to understand the nature of nation/network societies wedged between the “colonised past and the globalised present” (Deshpande). It becomes requisite for new forms of nation-state to be aware of the international & intra-national interventions, which carry a condescending attitude. Acts of re-reading nationalist discourse can be accomplished with the aid of postcolonial theory. By implicating itself with a “shifting and inordinately unstable intellectual environment
while encountering a high degree of scepticism” (McLeod, “Routledge” 7), postcolonial theory becomes inexorable in a thesis dealing with literatures from the select developing countries. Since the texts used in this thesis emerge from the third world countries (that endured colonial jurisdiction) the claims of legitimising or delegitimising the nation can be deciphered using this practice. This conjecture will be used to negotiate the intrinsic ‘artificialities’ in constituting nation and national consciousness (Cilas Kemedjio and Alexis Pernsteiner). Along with this, the intricacies involved in the formation and violation of national identities will be discussed under this spectrum. This argument exposes the ploy behind the efforts of the west in constructing itself as a superior power structure thereby indubitably typecasting the colonised as its opposing image.

Postcolonial theory arose to counteract the influences of imperial power centers in colonial societies. (Ashcroft 2003 McLeod 2011)

As McLeod (2011) states in order to comprehend the nature of postcolonial studies it is important to understand the process of colonialism and its impact on the literary circle that paved the rise of postcolonial literatures. Colonialism (influenced by the presence of imperialist powers) was a dominant force had been a driving force in the idea of nation construction. After attaining political autonomy, the natives from the commonwealth (select countries that had been under the colonial administration) documented their experience through literary forms. In 1950s there was a massive proliferation of this commonwealth literature. These texts which were faithfully written along the Western canonical tradition aimed to please the “Western English speaking” readers. The literature produced by the natives about their “nationalist sentiments” transmitted the assumptions of the imperialists. The major problem with commonwealth
literature was its universalizing tendency. In this conjecture critics and academicians insisted that the writing practices of the commonwealth literature had to be located contextually within their local, regional, historical and cultural practices (McLeod, “Beginning” 10-14). This had been one of the ideas regarding the use of the term postcolonialism.

Besides this, the works of Fanon and Said made the argument of postcolonialism even more compelling. While Fanon in his *Black Skin White Masks* explicated the psychological effects that the colonised had to endure as the after effect of colonialism Said redefined the notion of the Orient. Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) delineated the methods in which colonialism conditioned the “ways of seeing” the world (McLeod “Beginning” 21). The wide reception of Said’s dissertation impelled the academicians to probe further. Consequently 1980s resulted in a “postcolonial boom” (Brydon 2) where the canonical texts were re-read, and the earlier representations of the colonised were reexamined.

Influenced by Said’s and Fanon’s practices of “writing back to the centre” (Ashcroft) emerged and the term commonwealth was replaced with postcolonialism. In order to dismantle the claims of universalism of European languages, culture and literature this project of writing back to the dominant was instituted. In *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Young professes that the origins of the postcolonial theory lie in “the historical resistance to colonial occupation and imperial control, the success of which then enabled a radical challenge to the political and conceptual structure of the system on which such domination had been” (60). The production of knowledge system and notions of civilizing the native were subject to academic research. Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin who postulated the tenets of postcolonial studies emphasized on the different
“ways of representation” and “modes of perception” (McLeod, “Beginning” 17) possible through ‘abrogation’. Ashcroft et al. in Empire Writes Back argue that the postcolonial text “is always a complex and hybridized formation” (110). McLeod in Beginning Postcolonialism avers that the postcolonial framework interpreted from various loci of culture, academia and politics tries to unveil the relationship between reality and representation through reading practices. It strives to “revise those nationalist or “nativist” pedagogies that set up the relation of Third World and First World in binary structure of opposition” (Bhabha, “Postcolonial Criticism” 107). This approach enables the discursive practices of nation to contest the centre with oppositional dialogues. The cognitive theoretical paradigm probes into arguments of objectification, reification and surveillance effected through a “unifying discourse” of colonialism (Bhabha, “Location” 172). It simultaneously “consolidates and subverts possibilities of resistance” (Dirlik 231).

The resulting postcolonial studies negated the colonial discourses which construed “the colonised as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction” (Bhabha, “Location” 70). By erasing binaries and appropriating the perception of the native/subaltern it engages in recuperating their lost voices (Garaway). As Gandhi critiques the postcolonial project ventures a “historical and psychological recovery” (8). It further inspects the production of hybridities and erasure of binaries. The resulting disruption of normative stability will be taken by the researcher in analyzing the texts.

This ‘polysemic’ theory essentially signifies change and continuity (McLeod, “Beginning” 33). Being an ongoing process, it doesn’t imply a rigid temporal or spatial
apportionment. Even after deposing the hegemonic forces, new masters keep occupying the fore in guise of neocolonialism. The neocolonial power buttressed by media barons and capitalists has subtly replaced colonialism. In such a state, postcolonial theory is apposite and essential to make sense of the present scenario. Impregnated with ambiguity and complexity it has been cynical of reigning modes of epistemology and willfully disrupts the accepted ideas of gender and race expedited by dominant histories (McLeod 2011). As Young affirms a postcolonial study, “sets out to serve as a transnational forum for studies grounded in the historical context of colonialism, as well as in the political context of contemporary problems of globalisation” (qtd. in Brydon 1-2). Not only do they preoccupy with the theoretical and political concerns of the past but flout the complacent nature of present configurations of power (Young 2001).

Conditions of migration and its impediments have increasingly elicited the dialectics of displacement and have been largely dealt by the postcolonial pedagogues. The conceptual tensions of space evoked by them result in “imagined geographies” (Sharpe). Postcolonial literatures integrate the country’s culturally rich past with the anxieties of the present to eventually sustain the nation by forging national consciousness and study the production such “national and regional consciousness” (Ashcroft, “Introduction” 50).

The present postcolonial condition hovers on the conceptualisation of identity. Along with the nationalist concern, feminist theory too has been influenced by postcolonial perspectives. It critiques the imperialistic aims and aspects set in rescuing women especially the brown women. The postcolonial theorists deplore the attitude of West for exploiting the image of the third world woman which has become, “instrumental
in shifting colonial system of meaning from self-interest and moral superiority to self-sacrifice and racial superiority” (Sharpe 7).

Precepts of split and ruptured identities become an imperative module of this methodology. Scholars like Ray, Spivak and Bhabha state that ambivalence mitigates identity formation in the present condition. Ambivalent identities are perpetually reorganized in a postcolonial approach which annihilates any “holistic forms of social explanation” (Bhabha, “Location” 173). As Bhabha in “Postcolonial Criticism” informs only by a “process of alterity” the construction of nationalism can be accentuated (107-109). He alludes that nationalisms constructed are subject to the current practices of imperialism. The postcolonial nationalisms yield ambiguous postcolonial conditions. Dirlik cogently comments on such condition as having a proclivity to merge as well as debilitate the “possibilities of resistance” (231).

In the increasing transnational, postnational and diasporic spaces a postcolonial study, “destabilizes the categories of nation, ‘race’, ethnicity, and gender, demonstrating that these categories carry histories of contestation over their construction and mobilization” (Brydon 11). So the politics behind reclaiming one’s land/place/nation and also voicing out to intrude the neocolonial forces becomes a crucial undertaking of the postcolonial condition. As Bhabha comments in the article “Postcolonial Criticism” the postcolonial perspectives arbitrate the “ideological discourses differential, often of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic ‘normality’ to the uneven development and the disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples” (105).

Anne McClintock, the postcolonial theorist points out that the disparities existing in imperial powers make it complicated for one to theorize. Though decolonisation itself
is seen as a means to empower the educated bourgeoisie class, it is also important to understand that the processes of decolonisation do not completely liberate the subaltern groups (McLeod 2011). In fact Dirlik in one of his oft cited articles “The Postcolonial Aura” criticises that ‘postcolonial’ itself is an after effect of the arrival of the third world intellectuals in the first world academic circles. In his words “postcoloniality generates a criticism of its own ideology and formulates practices of resistance against the system of which it is a product” (231). Postcolonial studies while debating over various issues ranging from textual representation and resistance to feminism, hybridity, postmodernism eschews tendencies of homogenization.

So far the need to undertake research in the arena of literature and nation has been explicated. Since academic constraints will not enable one to deliberate over all debates surrounding nation, the researcher has confined to specific issues. The argument will be based on the possibilities of resurrecting the lost/disappearing nation in the postnational & global space, the circumstances and drives that kindle an insatiable desire for separate nationalisms and the presence of varied types of nationalisms in the global context and how their nationhood is different from the western construct.

The thesis has been divided into six chapters including the Introduction and Conclusion. A brief introduction to each of the chapter is given below

Chapter I: Introduction

The Introduction discusses the significance of nationalism in the present context. It justifies the area of research and its scope, selection of texts and the research
methodology. It gives an overview of the texts and theory that will be applied to the thesis and provides an outline of the work.

**Chapter II: Nation and Nationalism: A Theoretical Framework**

Following this introductory chapter the second chapter provides an introduction to theories on nationalism. This chapter will include an overview of the theories on nation – its possible definitions and a chronological outline followed by the state of nation in the global context. It includes an overview of the theories on nation – its possible definitions and a chronological outline followed by the state of nation in the global context. In the process of approbating religious nationalism & fundamentalism as forms of resistance (in nation construction), the relation between women and nation which has been highly exploited and problematized in/by the nationalist movements is studied. Following this the difficulties involved in realising the nation as a western construct is juxtaposed against third world nationalisms. Using theories of Breuilly, Gellner, Smith, Bhabha, Hobsbawm and Appadurai this division would evaluate the contemporary claims of postnationalism and analyse the pitfalls in defining a nation and national consciousness.

**Chapter III: Conflicted Ethnoscapic Nationalism: Memory, Trauma and Exile**

The third chapter analyses the conceptions of an equivocal nation that haunts the transnational refugees. This chapter aims to read the appropriation of national & national identities in light of colonial/ postcolonial tensions, followed by the processes of en(gendering) nations (using Autobiographics and gender theories) and the rise of ethnoscapes in the postnation scenario. The texts chosen deal with trauma of being displaced and having to perform desired identity/ies in different domains. Abeer Y.

The novels *The Kite Runner* (2003) and *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013) recapitulate the lives of displaced Afghans in the light of global changes. Moving to non-fiction, Hoque’s memoir *Olive Witch* (2016) records the journey of a Bangladeshi girl growing up in two different continents. Her father a scientist and devout Muslim, was a Professor at the University of Nsukka (Nigeria) and her mother an economics teacher. Having spent her life in Nigeria and Pittsburg she remains in a hyphenated position. The pressure to perform well and identify with the successful American results in nervous breakdown. The realisation of ‘not belonging’ drives her to undertake a quest in search of her ‘nation’ – which she can call ‘home’. *The Cypress Tree: A Love Letter to Iran* (2011) is a testimony of Iranian’s allegiances caught between Britain and Iran. Mohammadi, a representative of the affluent Iranian society fled Iran during the 1979 revolution at the age of nine. Along with her personal experiences of growing up in a foreign space (Britain) she weaves a narrative of her clan and nation (Iran). Karmi’s *Return: A Palestinian Memoir* (2015) is a similar story of the woman in search of her roots. It describes the journey of the exiled doctor Karmi to her ‘homeland’. She recounts her experiences of working with the Palestinian Authority Ministry. Karmi’s expedition to comprehend the modern ‘state’ of Palestine is shattered. Mohammadi’s writing like Hoque and Karmi exemplifies the immigrant trauma.
Since the texts (interposed with diasporic anxieties and identity crisis) unfold the operation of ethnoscapes in the current setting, this chapter mainly focuses on the ethnoscapes and its relevance.

**Chapter IV: Mediascopic Configuration of the Nation: Performing Identities**

The fourth chapter explains the role of media and mediascapes in creating and sustaining discursive discourses and identities. Media texts inclusive of the films *Terrorist* (1998), *Forsaken Land* (2005) and *Dheepan* (2015) along with documentaries *Killing Fields of Sri Lanka* (2011) and *Lies Agreed upon* (2011) figure out the evolution of separate ethnic nationalisms using Appadurai’s mediascapes. In addition to this the chapter further reads select images from *Sean Smith’s Frontline: Conflict in the 21st century* in envisaging the nation. It tries to figure the perpetual imagining that goes into the making of a nation in the global scenario. By using select visual texts, the researcher intends to read the mechanisms through which internal colonisation and resistance operate in a multi-ethnic scenario.

**Chapter V: Ideoscopic Re-Presentations**

The fifth chapter utilises select news articles to analyse the formulation and configuration of nation. Ideoscapes are exploited in disseminating a nation and the ensuing conflicts. To read the evolution/dissolution of nation, this section uses Said’s and Bhabha’s discourses on media and ‘othering’ to cull out the subtexts of colonial discourse that operate within the texts.

**Chapter VI: Conclusion**

The chapter elucidates the problems in theorising allegiances, patriotism and postnational/transnational identities that haunt nation-states in the global scenario. By
examining the role of literature and media in the process of nation building, this chapter would also state the scope for further research in this arena.