

**Memory, Trauma and Fluidity: Cross-cultural Angst
in the Select Novels of Nayomi Munaweera
and Roma Tearne**

Thesis Submitted to the
University of Calicut
for the Award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English

By

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled “**Memory. Trauma and Fluidity: Cross-cultural Angst in the Select Novels of Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne**”, submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of the Doctor of Philosophy, is a bona fide research work carried out by **Divakaran M**, under my supervision and guidance. No part of this thesis had been submitted earlier for the award of any degree, diploma, title, or recognition.

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DECLARATION

I, Divakaran M, hereby declare that the thesis titled “**Memory, Trauma and Fluidity: Cross-cultural Angst in the Select Novels of Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne**” submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is a bona fide record of research carried out by me and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar titles.

Devagiri

10.08.2023

Divakaran M

*Dedicated to
the Memory of Dear Vignesh,
whose love endures despite his untimely departure.*

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Abbreviations

CNC	Ceylon National Congress
SLFP	Sri Lankan Freedom Party
ACTC	All Ceylon Tamil Congress
MEP	Mahajana Eksath Peramuna
BC Pact	Bandaranayake-Chelvanayakam Pact
JVP	Janata Vimukthi Peramuna
TUF	Tamil United Front
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
TULF	Tamil United Liberation Front
IPKF	Indian Peace Keeping Force
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
UNP	United National Party
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Trauma, memory, and identity occupied the centre stage of the literary discourses in the late twentieth century as the collective consciousness of Western countries was shaken by the horror of the Holocaust. Most of the Holocaust narratives written by the survivors of the genocide speak about their harrowing experiences in the concentration camps or their hiding places, retrieving the memories of the trauma that they had to face and their identity crisis in their search for a space of their own in the wake of their psychological fragmentation and sense of alienation. These concepts are also significant in the political and cultural discourses of newly independent countries like Sri Lanka, as these countries had to struggle with rising ethnic conflicts and civil unrest, an offshoot of the colonial legacy. The anglophone literature of Sri Lankan writers in the era of postcolonial mobility and transnational settlement resulting from forced displacement and migration to multiple destinations tends to capture the attention of readers across the world because of their poignant depiction of trauma, memory, and identity crisis in the aftermath of forced migration.

The Sri Lankan diasporic writers explore the concepts of identity, trauma, and memory through the prism of culture, history, nationhood, and the trans-border experience of the immigrants in the backdrop of a devastating civil war that has brought in a paradigm shift in the political narrative of the island nation. Much of

the literature produced by the Sri Lankan expatriates exhibits an intricate connection with their home country's historical, cultural, and political setting as they vividly portray the inevitable cultural clashes in their ethnically divided native land and the multicultural host countries where they have been settled. The horrendous experience of war and the trauma of forced displacement represented in this literature have caught the attention of readers across the globe.

This study, titled *Memory, Trauma and Fluidity: Cross-cultural Angst in the Select Novels of Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne*, explores the representation of trauma, memory, and identity of diasporic individuals presented in the select novels of two Sri Lankan diasporic women writers of the postcolonial era: Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne. For this study, specific novels of these two authors have been chosen as they offer a profound exploration of the distressing memories of diasporic individuals. These novels, namely *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* (2011) and *What Lies Between Us* (2016) by Munaweera, as well as *Mosquito* (2007), *Brixton Beach* (2009), and *The Swimmer* (2010) by Tearne, provide insightful perspectives on the experiences of living in host countries that are culturally unfamiliar to these individuals. Through their poignant narratives, these novels offer a deeper understanding of diasporic individuals' complexities and challenges in such circumstances. Given the immense relevance of this subject matter in the current discourse on trauma literary theory, these novels are of great significance.

It becomes pertinent to analyse the novels selected for the present study, foregrounding Sri Lanka's diasporic literature in the backdrop of the country's civil war. Sri Lankan diaspora authors have produced novels since the 1980s that focus on

the challenges of compelled migration caused by civil conflicts and ethnic divides. These literary works also shed light on refugees' difficulties in their new surroundings. By examining these novels considering literary trauma theory is possible to gain valuable insight into how they contribute to the reconstruction of Sri Lankan history by depicting the trauma and challenges of forced dislocation, border crossing, and cross-cultural negotiations experienced by immigrants. These narratives provide a comprehensive understanding of the traumatic experiences and identity fragmentation faced by the Sri Lankan diaspora, surpassing the creative expressions of native English speakers. Just as literature from America and Europe after 9/11 is studied using trauma literature theories, Sri Lankan diasporic literature should also receive equal attention and analysis.

This study is significant in the current literary conversations in Sri Lanka. It is crucial to heal the wounds caused by the war and bring together the Sinhala majority and Tamil minority divided by ethnic differences during the civil war. This aspiration of writers of Sri Lanka in the post-war period echoes in the words of Shyam Selvadurai in his introduction to the first edition of *Write to Reconcile: An Anthology*: "Write to Reconcile is a creative writing project born out of my belief that literature can contribute towards healing wounds and facilitating dialogue in post-war Sri Lanka" (5).

Healing is a continuous process and does not mean a total recovery from a single stroke. Healing has multiple aspects and depends on factors like willpower and perseverance of the victim. The process of healing from trauma is multifaceted and requires the individual to address their intense emotions and challenge any

negative thoughts hindering their progress. In addition to this, it is also essential to restore feelings of safety and trust, develop flexibility, and engage in both physical and relational healing. Another dimension to consider is spiritual healing, which involves exploring one's beliefs and identity to understand the self in a better way. By sharing and processing their experiences, individuals can achieve personal growth and empowerment, called post-traumatic growth, enabling them to cope with future challenges more effectively. The identities of diasporic individuals can be significantly impacted by their displacement, cross-border experiences, cultural differences, and traumatic memories. These experiences can even lead to their disintegration. However, it is essential to note that these experiences can ignite creativity and be expressed in diasporic imagination and literary works.

This study may also reveal the complex psychology of the trauma victims and illustrate how they react to post-traumatic stress disorder and psychic numbness that debilitate them and puts them into a state of psychic disturbance. No other postcolonial anglophone novels by Sri Lankan diasporic writers presented the collective trauma and cultural alienation experienced by the people of Sri Lanka caused by ethnic strife and civil war and the consequent migration and cross-cultural anguish of the immigrants so vividly and expressively as represented by Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne in their novels. Civil unrest and ethnic cleansing have become widespread in many countries, and transnational mobility and settlement in foreign lands are burning issues of international concern. The poignant depiction of cultural conflicts and trauma-generated personality disorder in the characters of Munaweera and Tearne, along with the marginalisation of the immigrants in

culturally different foreign countries, may throw new insights into the study of diaspora and its fluid existence.

An exhaustive academic study considering the diverse approaches to trauma literary theory on the select novels of these two Sri Lankan women diasporic writers focusing on the representation of transnational mobility, cross-cultural angst, and hyphenated identities of immigrants will help the researchers and social thinkers across the world address the unaccountable experiences of trauma and precarious nature of existence of people in exile. This study proposes to provide new perspectives to analyse how the construction of history and dominant political narratives decide the course of people's lives everywhere in the world, replacing the old saying "character is destiny" (Heraclitus 123) with history is destiny in the context of the global political scenario.

The novels of Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne selected for the present study are relevant in the context of the diverse views expressed by leading scholars in the field of trauma literary theory and its interdisciplinary significance as both the authors portray the way the diasporic individuals traverse their fluid identity in the context of their trauma of displacement, transborder experience, and the sense of uprooting confronted in the culturally diverse foreign country. These novels explore the political turbulence that led to the three-decade-long civil war in Sri Lanka and how the traumatic memory of the war and forced migration of some of the ethnic groups to America and England, where they must confront the problems of alienation and a sense of rootlessness. Both use memory mapping as a narrative technique to explore trauma's impact on immigrants' identities.

Munaweera's exceptional literary works explore the intricate complexities of diasporic identity, home, and cultural alienation, all through the lens of her female protagonists. Her ability to craft a narrative that evokes deep-seated emotions is truly remarkable, particularly in her poignant depictions of the impact of trauma on both victims and subsequent generations. Furthermore, her unique insights into human relationships and emotions are unparalleled among Sri Lankan diasporic writers, cementing her reputation as a true master of her craft. Roma Tearne is an excellent storyteller with a unique talent for capturing the essence of her characters' lives. She probes the complexities of creative power and trauma through her writing, using multiple narrators to create a tapestry of haunting and beautiful experiences. Tearne's writing is a perfect blend of human psychology, nature, and art, which she skillfully weaves together to create a powerful narrative that speaks to the heart of the human experience. Moreover, she believes that the healing power of nature and art can help to overcome the scars of trauma and that reconciliation is essential for a peaceful and harmonious existence.

Munaweera's writing style is nothing short of captivating. Her ability to use figurative language, such as metaphors and similes, creates vivid imagery that draws readers into the story. With her multicultural background, Munaweera effortlessly incorporates Sri Lankan and South Asian terms into her prose, lending an air of authenticity to her characters' experiences. Her strong voice delves deep into the inner lives of her characters, exploring their thoughts, dreams, and fears with precision. Munaweera also addresses themes such as gender, sexuality, and power dynamics with sensitivity, all while considering the cultural context. Her language is

a testament to her nuanced approach, challenging traditional narratives and offering refreshing perspectives.

Roma Tearne is a highly accomplished writer whose literary works are nothing short of a masterpiece. Her ability to intricately weave together emotions, experiences, and landscapes through her vivid descriptions is remarkable. Her narratives continuously captivate readers from the beginning to the end. Tearne's writing is a testament to her expert hand as she effortlessly merges various cultures and languages, creating an authentic and enriched reading experience. Her writing delves into the complexities of human relationships, exploring themes such as love, loss, and trauma. She also boldly tackles broader social and political issues, such as war and social injustice, making her works both thought-provoking and compelling. Overall, Tearne's writing is a profound exploration of culture, identity, and the human condition, leaving readers with a deep reflection and contemplation.

The way Tearne uses the English language in her writing is distinctive due to its beautiful and emotional style. She has a talent for capturing the intricate details of emotions and locations. Tearne's writing is full of imagery and sensory details that create vivid pictures for readers. Her writing style is often poetic and includes descriptive passages that appeal to the senses and set the scene. Tearne incorporates her multicultural background into her writing, infusing Sri Lankan, British, and other cultural elements into her work. This approach makes her writing feel more genuine and relatable to many readers.

Additionally, she delves deep into the minds of her characters, analysing their thoughts and emotions. Tearne pays close attention to human relationships and

the complexities of human nature. Her writing often touches on themes of love, loss, and trauma, capturing the nuances of human experience. Tearne's language also addresses important social and political issues, such as war, conflict, and social injustice. She approaches these topics with sensitivity and insight, creating empathy and understanding in her readers. The English language used in Tearne's works is impressive for its lyrical and emotive style, which captures the nuances of emotions and places. Her writing is characterised by a poetic quality, with a strong focus on imagery and sensory details. She uses language to paint vivid pictures, allowing readers to visualise her characters' landscapes, emotions, and experiences. Her prose often contains descriptive passages that engage the senses, creating a vivid atmosphere.

Nayomi Munaweera, born in Sri Lanka, spent her childhood in Nigeria before moving to America and settling there; she writes about the experience of the diaspora in the context of their shifting identities in which traumatic memory plays a crucial role. Her own experience of a multi-national and multicultural upbringing contributes substantially to exploring the predicament of immigrants and the nature of collective trauma and their hyphenated identity. Her first novel, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, published in 2012, illustrates the trauma of the Sri Lankan civil war from the perspectives of two young girls who stand on opposite sides. Her second novel, *What Lies Between Us*, was published in 2016 and explored the impact of traumatic memory associated with childhood sexual abuse on the emotional state of the victim of trauma and the identity crisis that the trauma survivor confronts, along with the intricacies of a mother-daughter relationship.

Roma Tearne, born in Sri Lanka to a Tamil father and a Sinhala mother, is a London-based writer, painter and filmmaker who left Sri Lanka and migrated to England along with her parents and settled in South London in 1964 when she was ten years old and the civil unrest in her mother country was in the formative stage. She had her M.A. degree from the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, Oxford. Her first novel, *Mosquito*, was published in 2007, followed by other books, *Bone China* (2008), *Brixton Beach* (2009), *The Swimmer* (2010), *The Road to Urbino* (2012), *The Last Pier* (2015) and *The White City* (2017). Even before her novels gained popularity and critical acclaim, she made her own space in film and painting.

Munaweera's novel *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* portrays the ordeals of civil war that devastated the island country of Sri Lanka, inflicting an unhealable scar on the minds of its people and how the diaspora responds to the trauma of war through the lives of a few Sinhala and Tamil families who are confronted with uncertain future and significant loss. In one of her interviews in *Book Browse*, an online newsletter engaged in introducing books and authors published on 18 September 2014, Munaweera spoke about the significance of the title of her first novel: "Civil war is a state of fighting the self. The "enemy" is known to you, so close, they could be a mirror image." (*Book Browse* 2014). The statement is a testimony to her impartial views on the ethnic conflicts and civil war in Sri Lanka. Her objective portrayal of the civil war was further explained in another interview that she gave to an online news portal, National Public Radio, the public radio network of the United States of America, published on 31 August 2014:

I was not interested in not taking a side... I wasn't interested in propaganda.... The devastation was on both sides, the Tamil Tigers were really brutal terrorist force and killed hundreds and thousands of innocent people and the Sri Lankan government did exactly the same thing. So both sides are complicit. There's no really innocence here.

(NPR 2014)

The novel examines significant historical events such as the 1983 massacre, the destruction of the Jaffna Central Library - a vital symbol of Tamil culture, the emergence of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the suicide bombing at Colombo's Katunayake International Airport, and the widespread violence and bloodshed during the civil war that led to the displacement of a significant portion of the population to foreign countries.

The plot moves forward through two narrators who happen to be on the opposite end because of their distinct ethnic origins. The events in the novel's first part are unfolded by the narratives of Yasodhara, a Sinhala girl from a moderately wealthy family. Saraswati, the daughter of a poor fisherman, narrates the second part.

Yasodhara and her younger sister Lanka are forced to leave for America along with their parents Visaka and Nishan, as the family confronts a financial crisis and finds their lives insecure in the context of growing civil unrest and ethnic polarisation in the country. The young Yasodhara and Lanka mature into adults in America, facing the usual cross-cultural anguish of the diaspora in the host lands. Their lives in America are marked by their longing for the lost culture of their

homeland and their sincere efforts to assimilate into the social life of America. Yasodhara's marriage with Siddharth, solemnised under the traditional customs of their culture, is more a matter of compulsion of cultural dictate than a matter of choice and ends up in a disastrous breaking away because of Siddharth's extramarital affair. Much to her surprise, Yasodhara still fondly cherishes her childhood sweetheart Siva, though she has long left his memories in Sri Lanka. Her mother, Visakha, had a similar experience in her younger days when she fell in love with Ravan, the youngest of the Sivalingam family and the father-to-be of Siva, who was their tenant then.

Exasperated and hurt by her husband's infidelity, Yasodhara returns to Sri Lanka to join her sister Lanka who had already left America when her affair with her Afro- American art history teacher collapsed. However, Yasodhara has to cope with the new reality that her childhood sweetheart is her sister's partner now. Yasodhara's life again takes a different course when she decides to leave for San Francisco with Siva, as both are devastated by the tragic death of Lanka in a bomb explosion.

On the other side, Saraswati's life is wholly determined by the civil war as her ambition to become the village schoolteacher is crushed when the soldiers gang-raped her. Saraswati decides to join the LTTE and becomes a hardcore militant to avoid embarrassment to her parents, who have been traumatised by the loss of their sons, and to escape possible social ostracism. On an essential secret mission to carry out a suicide attack, she detonates the bomb tied to her body and gets killed along with many civilians.

Munaweera's second novel, *What Lies Between Us*, explores the way traumatic memory of the diasporic individual unsettle their psyche, and their psychic disorder may even change into temporary insanity through the unnamed narrator's life in America. The narrator's name is kept anonymous until the novel's end, when she confesses in prison that her name is Ganga. Ganga's trauma comes from her horrible experience of sexual abuse during her childhood in Sri Lanka and the repeated occurrence of traumatic memory. While in her Sri Lankan home, she was repeatedly abused allegedly by their servant Samson with whom she used to spend most of her leisure time. Her mother, hailing from an ordinary family, signals some eccentric behaviour as her husband, a history professor with considerable clout, and her hostile in-laws never admire nor they take her seriously. The loss caused by her husband's unexpected death and the indifference shown by her in-laws, who find the death of her husband as an opportunity to point an accusing finger against her, forced her to leave with her daughter for America.

Their life in America is marked by a continuous struggle to survive in the culturally different society and to address their inner turbulence: the sense of guilt in the mother that she failed to protect her daughter from her perpetrator and that she was responsible for the untimely death of her husband; the traumatic experience of sexual abuse in childhood and recurrent appearance of its memory in the narrator. Trauma follows Ganga even after she settles in America and matures into adulthood. She has mistaken her perpetrator as Samson as her innocent mind fails to ascertain the author of her trauma. Her life takes a new turn when she meets Daniel, a budding artist and falls in love with him while working as a nurse. Ganga's marriage with

Daniel opens new troubles, as her irrational behaviour of talking in sleep irritates him and worsens the situation, as she refuses to confide with him about her traumatic experience. After the birth of their daughter, Ganga seems to be engrossed in child rearing, which gives her a temporary respite from her haunting memories of childhood trauma and nightmares.

Her peace and happiness are short-lived as the traumatic past again haunts her, and Daniel leaves her, taking the daughter with him as he no longer wants to tolerate her eccentric behaviour. The final shock to her comes when she hears from her mother that her perpetrator is none other than her father; this revelation devastates her and unsettles her psyche. Remembering Daniel's intimacy with their daughter, Ganga is overwhelmed with the thought that what happened to her in her childhood may also happen to her daughter. Determined to put an end to her mental torture and to save her daughter from possible molestation, she finally kills her daughter by poisoning her before throwing her into the sea.

Teare's *Mosquito*, one of the three novels taken for this study, explores how immigrants construct their contested identity in the context of cross-cultural anguish and traumatic past, and the impact of trauma inflicted by war unsettles the psyche of the trauma victims. The novel's title *Mosquito* is significant as it indicates the female suicide bombers of LTTE who can unleash massive destruction and brutal murders. The novel opens with the return of Theo Samarajeeva, a noted writer of Sri Lankan origin in his mid-forties, from Venice to his native country, as he cannot cope with the sudden death of his Italian wife, Anna. Back home, he is drawn towards Nulani Mendis, a budding teenage artist who shows unusual intimacy with him. Theo

employs her to draw his caricature, which she takes up with great interest and dedication while Theo intends to complete his second book. Despite the warnings of Sugi, the servant and caretaker of his beach house, Theo falls in love with Nulani and makes plans for a possible marriage after he completes his second book.

As the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka moves into a full-fledged civil war, Theo's life takes a different course when the soldiers abducted him and put him into a prison in an unknown location where he is subjected to inexplicable torture suspecting that he is helping the Tamil cause, as his first book *Tiger Lily* present the Tamil insurgency with some leniency. Meanwhile, Nulani, at the advice of Sugi, goes to Colombo and meets Rohan and his wife Giulia, close friends of Theo, and under their care and guidance, prepares herself to go to London, where her brother lives, as no one has any clue about what happened to Theo. Theo is traumatised and almost mentally broken down because of the continuous torture, and he forgets everything about his past life, including the memories of Nulani.

Meanwhile, Gerard, an undercover agent of LTTE, is seducing Vikram, a young rescued Tamil militant living under the guardianship of a wealthy Sinhalese man. Gerard plans to lure him into his secret mission of toppling the government through relentless and deadly attacks on key government installations and killing political heads of the country. Soon Vikram matures to be the deadliest militant under the guidance of Gerard and carries out several ambushes and killings without being caught by the army and successfully carries out a devastating attack on the Katunayake international airport in Colombo, leaving several dead and almost all aircraft are destroyed. Gerard, finding fault with Vikram in the execution of the

bomb attack on the airport, discards him by planting a bomb in a bundle which Vikram is asked to hand over to another undercover agent of LTTE. Vikram gets killed just before he is about to alight from the train when the bomb explodes, killing many passengers. After languishing for months in the captivity of soldiers, Theo Samarajeeva has been taken into the custody of LTTE cadres after the military truck carrying him has been ambushed, killing all the soldiers. The militants soon realise that they have abducted Theo by mistaken identity. Gerard comes to his rescue, thinking of using Theo's soft corner for Tamils in favour of the insurgent movement. Recovering from his trauma, Theo starts writing his second book depicting his horrendous experience in his home country and presenting the hollowness of civil war. His suffering ends only when he is rescued by soldiers, and with the help of his publishing agent in London, he is united with Nulani.

The trauma of war-forced displacement and the experience of cultural conflicts constitute the theme of Tearne's second novel *Brixton Beach*. The novel is built around the experience of Alice Fonseka, the daughter of a Sinhala mother and a Tamil father, whose life is marked by a troublesome childhood in her home country of Sri Lanka, where the raging civil war and ethnic strife force her family to migrate to England. The first half of the novel mainly portrays the joyful childhood days of Alice in the company of her grandfather Mr Bee with occasional rifts in the family owing to her father Stanley's hostility towards Sri Lankan government and the Sinhala community. Alice's mother, Sita, hailing from a respectable Sinhala family, must face the criticism of her father and others in the family circle for marrying a

Tamil, as the ethnic polarisation in Sri Lanka is deeply rooted in the minds of the people.

Seeing a bleak future in Sri Lanka, Stanley leaves for England, hoping to improve his life with the help of his elder brother, who has already settled in England. However, Stanley soon finds that the England he imagined is not that friendly and leading a decent life is tricky. Unable to bear the mental agony of losing her second child during delivery because of the deliberate negligence of a Sinhala doctor, Sita too wants to escape from her traumatic memory and finally joins her husband in England along with her daughter Alice. In England, Stanley slowly drifts away from Sita, finds happiness in other women, and actively participates in the Tamil diaspora's activities for the cause of Eelam. On the other hand, Sita is haunted by her memory of child loss and develops symptoms of PTSD as she is unable to accept the death of her unborn child. Amid an uncertain future and estranged parents, Alice grows up as an artist with a high calibre. Her chance meeting with British national Timothy West culminates in marriage. However, the inherent contradictions in their cultural identity create cracks in their married life, and after the birth of their son Ravi, their relationship meets its inevitable collapse. Her love for another man Dr, Simon Swan, also does not materialise as she falls victim to the bomb explosion that rocks London City leaving several people killed.

The novel *The Swimmer* focuses on the cross-cultural negotiations between Ben Chinniah, a young Tamil refugee in London and his mother, Anula, who is traumatised by the tragic death of her son and arrives in London to attend his funeral. The novel is divided into three sections, with three women of different ages

and ethnicities narrating their traumatic experiences. Maria Robinson, aka Ria, a forty-three-year-old writer, lives alone in her ancestral home in a suburban village of Oxford and accidentally meets Ben, who is trying to get legal documents for staying in England as a refugee. Ben's arrival rejuvenates Ria, who has been living in the sad memories of her late father, and she falls in love with Ben despite his status as an illegal refugee and the age gap between them. However, the killing of Ben by police for mistaken identity leaves her traumatised.

In the novel's second part, Tearne deals with the trauma and agony of Anula, who has been in London to perform the last rites of her son Ben. In London, the mentally distressed Anula is drawn towards Eric, the old friend of Ria's father, as she finds another parent who lives in the memory of her dead son and is empathetic towards her sufferings. The novel's last section is narrated by Lydia, the daughter of Ria and Ben, who represents a transcultural identity carrying both the Sri Lankan identity of her father and the British identity of her mother. Her transcultural identity is further emphasised in the novel's last scene, where Lydia eagerly waits for her grandmother Anula in the London airport, indicating her accommodative and inclusive identity.

This research work is structured into six chapters to provide a comprehensive idea of each focused research area. The first chapter introduces the whole study illustrating the concepts of trauma, memory, identity, and diaspora based on the theoretical framework of trauma literary studies. A brief survey of the origin and development of trauma theory and its interdisciplinary relevance is also given in the first chapter, along with diverse contemporary approaches to trauma literary studies.

It also discusses how the traumatic experiences of individuals arouse collective trauma in the communities with whom the trauma victims share a common past and cultural practice. The relationship between memory and trauma, emphasising collective memory rooted in history, ethnicity, and culture and collective trauma in the context of a traumatic event that has a catastrophic impact on communities is also explained in detail here. This chapter also examines how narrativising the trauma in literary works helps the victims ease their mental agony and heal their psychic wounds. The role of memory in shaping one's identity and the construction of history, as illustrated in trauma literary studies, is also detailed in this chapter.

The second chapter, titled "Traversing History, Conflict and Landscape," is designed to provide a general idea of the history of Sri Lanka from the establishment of the first Sinhala kingdom to the end of the civil war that began in the 1980s as the history of Sri Lanka has always been a matter of dispute and an insight into the landmarks in the history of this island nation is crucial for a better understanding of the genesis of ethnic polarisation that led to civil war and large-scale migration. This chapter also illustrates the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and its influence on the construction of Sinhala ethnic identity, which had operated as a driving force for the formation of Sinhala nationalism in Sri Lanka. This chapter also presents the historical events that led to the Tamil settlement in Sri Lanka and the conquest of a substantial area of Sri Lanka by some of the South Indian rulers belonging to the Chola, Pandya and Pallava dynasties from the 7th century to the 10th century. The marginalisation of the Tamil population in the country's socio-political system and

the various historical forces that caused their marginalisation are also elaborated here.

It also investigates the origin and spread of Tamil nationalism, mainly as a reaction to the rise of aggressive Sinhala nationalism, which intended to dominate other sections of the population. The arrival of colonial powers like the Portuguese along with Christian missionaries and the impact of their political and religious activities on Sri Lankan people are also explored in this chapter. Further, this chapter illustrates the effects of British colonial occupation of Sri Lanka for two and half centuries on Sri Lankan education, politics, and language policy and how their hegemony drew sharp criticism from different sections of Sri Lankan society that ultimately culminated in the Sri Lankan freedom movement against British colonial rule. The thematic concerns of Sri Lankan English literature before and during the civil war and the literary responses of the Sri Lanka diaspora are also discussed in detail.

In the third chapter, "Memory Mapping: Unveiling Cross-cultural Anguish," memory representation in the select novels of Munaweera and Tearne is analysed based on memory studies as a methodology. Memory acts as a decisive force in the diaspora to construct their idea of home and the culture and landscape of the homeland, which in turn determines their identity, is also explored here. This chapter also investigates the interrelatedness of trauma and memory of the immigrants that determines the nature of their negotiation with the cultural codes of the host land as represented in the select novels of Munaweera and Tearne. The harrowing experiences of war and war-related atrocities are stored in the minds of immigrants,

and retrieving these memories often leads them to a traumatic awakening. The memory associated with the cultural practices, locality, and culinary habits is evoked when the diaspora tries to maintain a strong bond with their homeland while negotiating with the social settings of the country of their settlement as represented in the novels of Munaweera and Tearne is also examined in the third chapter. This chapter also presents the cultural conflicts that the immigrants confront in the host land as language, religion, and social customs like marriages of the diaspora pose contradictions with these practices of the host land society and create a sense of alienation in the immigrants portrayed through the characters of Munaweera and Tearne.

In the construction of the plot, Munaweera deftly integrates the political and cultural cause of the Sri Lankan civil war with the individual and collective trauma as the novel sets its tone by describing the ethnic divide that paralyses the country through the picturisation of newly independent Sri Lankan flag embossed with a lion, the ancient symbol of Sinhala community. This visual of Sri Lanka's official flag is juxtaposed with another flag with a tiger representing the Tamil ethnicity. The writer evokes this ethnic divide recurrently when the story unfolds. The frequent quarrels that appear between Sylvia Sunetra, the Sinhala landlady and the Shivalinga family, the tenants, are indicative of a more significant division in the Sri Lankan society on the line of ethnic identity that later spills into an all-out civil war between government forces and Tamil militants. Sunetra's daughter Visaka and the youngest of the Sivalingam family Ravan fall in love, unmindful of the rift between their elders, but cannot unite in marriage as Visaka is powerless to challenge the dictates

of her ethnic identity. However, the younger generation of Visaka's daughter Yasodhara and Ravan's son Shiva share a unique camaraderie in their childhood. However, the sudden departure of Yasodhara's family to America ended this relationship.

Munaweera uses the memory of Yasodhara to explore the agony and sense of loss the diaspora confronts while trying to adapt to the cultural milieu of the host land. One of the memories that flash in her mind is about the culinary practices of her home in Sri Lanka when she enters her uncle Ananda's house in America first time as she is drawn to the fragrance of her home country. The repeated evocation of the memory of the past and the diaspora's choice of food is some ways of retaining the cultural identity associated with the homeland. Immigrants also actively participate in the political discourse about their homeland in social gatherings. They also try to integrate their memory of their past life with the present social setting in which they are placed. The constant efforts of Yasodhara and Lanka to engage with the unfamiliar lifestyle in their new country are to be seen as a way of assimilation into the culture of the host land. However, the more earnestly they try to integrate themselves with the social setting of the host land, the more they are drawn towards their homeland, which ultimately leads them into a fluid existence and dual identity.

Another problem that the diaspora encounters are a language barrier, and being an identity marker language poses a significant challenge to the diaspora in their country of settlement. Yasodhara and Lanka find that their fellow American students need help comprehending their English. Like language, customs and traditions associated with marriage also define the diaspora's identity. Yasodhara's

parents are very particular in selecting a partner for her, and he should be from a similar ethnic background and community.

In Munaweera's *What Lies Between Us*, Ganga's traumatic memory of childhood sexual abuse and her struggle to cope with her chaotic psyche constitutes the novel's theme. Her memory is so overwhelming that it changes her identity and creates a fluid identity as an immigrant. Even her mother cannot escape the grip of memory associated with her daughter's tormenting experience of being abused by her father as she appears as a different woman in America, ready to shed her conservative cultural values that define her ethnic identity and accept the liberal values of American society. Despite her malleability, she always wishes to return to her homeland, as it is a source of desire and hope for every diasporic individual.

The narrator goes through different experiences of immigrants' fluid existence in America as she tries sincerely to imitate the lifestyle of her host land. However, she always feels alienated and cannot accept the frankness with which her American classmates talk about sex and romance. Her marriage to Daniel can be seen as a deliberate attempt to overcome the constraints on her cultural identity. Unfortunately, she cannot escape from her past as the traumatic memory of sexual abuse haunts her and meddles with her marital life. Daniel's decision to leave her and take their daughter with him worsens her mental affliction. Her identity as an immigrant mother is torn to pieces when she finally hears the shocking revelation that her father had abused her, not Samson.

In her *Mosquito*, Tearne explores the role of memory associated with trauma in constructing victims' identities and the extent to which the trauma can affect the

psyche through the characters of Theo Samarajeeva and Nulani Mendis. Memory, a continuous process, has a sweeping effect on Theo as he is constantly reminded of his dead wife, Anna. The memory associated with an individual's life experience can be connected to present social experience, forming a collective memory in the sense that the recollection of an individual's past can evoke the shared experience of a community in which the individual is a member. Here, Vikram's traumatic memory associated with the brutal killings of his parents and sister evokes the collective memory of all Tamil ethnic groups, as his memory represents the collective experience of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. With Gerard's provocative statements about the inhuman massacre of his family, Vikram's traumatic memory, identified with the collective experience of the Tamil minority, shapes his future identity as a hardcore militant. Tormented by the visuals of his family's brutal massacre and the nightmares and flashbacks that haunted him, Vikram concludes that retribution is the only way to calm his mind.

On the other hand, Theo, subjected to massive torture, often sinks into forgetfulness and delirium in captivity. His forgetfulness is a response to his traumatic experience and only a temporary absence of memory. His forceful recollection of Nulani and anxiety over her safety draw him closer to insanity. Later he starts to represent his traumatic memory in his writing, which helps him relieve from pain of trauma as writing seems to have a healing touch and a means of connecting to the collective consciousness of society. Theo's narrative representation of his traumatic experience can also reveal the socio-political happenings in Sri

Lanka during the civil war, as his narrative is a part of the construction of the history of his country.

For the diaspora, memory provides an active link with its homeland and culture, as seen in Giulia, the Italian wife of Rohan. For Giulia, Sri Lanka is a host country, and the experience of violence and bloodshed creates a sense of fear and alienation that prompts her to return to her home country. On the other hand, her husband Rohan, a native of Sri Lanka, feels hurt whenever Giulia speaks her mother tongue while in Italy as the memory of his country flashes. Like all other immigrants, Rohan is also caught between his loyalty to the country of settlement and his strong bond with his cultural roots in his homeland. This dichotomy has a say in his creative expression as an artist.

In *Brixton Beach*, the author examines how memory plays a decisive role in constructing a diasporic identity through the character of Alice Fonseka and her mother, Sita. Sita's recollections of her traumatic past in her homeland and Alice's childhood with her grandfather are central to their cross-cultural transactions and the construction of their immigrant identity. Being traumatised by the death of her unborn child, Sita becomes a prisoner of her memory and lives in a make-believe world by fondling the baby clothes and dolls she kept for her second child. While in England, she slips into obsessive-compulsive disorder as she irons the baby clothes and washes the dolls daily. Abandoned by her husband and devastated by trauma, Sita becomes a thin shadow of her former self and moves to the verge of insanity.

Alice's intimacy with her grandfather becomes the source of her childhood memories which she often retrieves through his voice while in England. Her

grandfather's memories are precious to her as they constitute her persona and become the most important driving force and inspiration for her rise as an artist in England. Alice's memories of her homeland landscape, especially the sea closer to her grandfather's home, are also expressed in her paintings. The name Brixton Beach given to her new apartment at Brixton is also a commemoration of the beach in Sri Lanka where she spent most of her childhood under the love and care of her grandfather. Thus, the memory of the homeland, its landscape and her grandfather significantly impact her identity as an immigrant and her creativity as an artist.

In *The Swimmer*, the author deftly combines the memories of the central characters with the detailed description of the landscape and physical setting of the novel through the narratives of three women of different upbringings and different cultural values to explore the diverse ways individuals react to traumatic experiences. The experience of forced displacement and journeys to foreign lands is portrayed through the character of Ben, whose sense of insecurity in the context of civil war and ethnic strife in his homeland forces him to leave his country and reach England after travelling via Russia. His memories of his homeland, his mother's protective and caring attitude, and the sea in Sri Lanka are instrumental to his concept of home and nation as they play a crucial role in constructing identity.

In the fourth chapter, "Traumatic Awakening: Decoding Psychic Chaos," the responses of the characters in the novels towards their traumatic experiences and the symptomatic recurrence of these experiences are interpreted in the light of trauma literary theory. This chapter further explores the impact of trauma and the retrieval of its memory on the victims' psyche and how their psychic trauma turns into the

cultural trauma of their communities. It also examines how narrativising traumatic experiences help the victims to ease their mental agony and heal their psychic wounds inflicted by trauma. The inexplicable nature of traumatic experience requires a medium like literary language to communicate its manifold impact on the victim's psyche so that the victim can comprehend its magnitude and gets relief from the mental agony caused by trauma, as depicted in the novels of Munaweera and Tearne. Further, this chapter also investigates how people who did not directly experience a traumatic event empathise with the trauma victims when they come across the representation of trauma either in narratives or in media, often termed as intermediated trauma. This chapter discusses a detailed analysis of the psycho-physical responses like recurrent flashbacks, hallucinations, nightmares, paranoia and psychic disorder of trauma victims, considering the psychological principles of post-traumatic stress disorder. Many of the characters of Munaweera and Tearne, like Saraswati in *Mosquito*, Ganga in *What Lies Between Us* and Sita in *Brixton Beach*, exhibit the symptoms of PTSD on several occasions after their traumatic awakening.

The novel *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, as a postcolonial trauma narrative, depicts the individual and collective responses of the diaspora to trauma and how trauma affects the cognitive power and psychic function of the victims. Yasodhara, though not affected directly by the horrors of war, is stupefied when she comes to know the brutal way her aunt's husband, Anuradha, was murdered by an angry mob while he was trying to save a Tamil boy. Even in America, she has troublesome nights as the image of a teenage female suicide bomber disrupts her sleep. The

memory of the traumatic event disrupts the victim's normal function of the mind. It incapacitates the victim, who will be exposed to the gravity of the traumatic impact only later when the symptoms like insomnia and nightmares occur.

Saraswati, the daughter of a poor fisherman, is not endowed with any of the advantages of Yasodhara. She cannot leave for a foreign country to escape from the maddening violence of her homeland. She spends her life in constant fear of airstrikes and communal clashes. Her Tamil identity significantly threatens her life as she is gang-raped by soldiers and socially ostracised. Her private traumatic experience of being gang-raped is a collective trauma of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka since what happened to Saraswati is not an isolated incident. Her identification with the collective and shared experience of Tamil victims of the civil war motivates her to join the LTTE as she finds the only way to ease the burden of her traumatised self is retribution and more violence against the perpetrators. Though she becomes a hardcore LTTE cadre capable of unleashing unimaginable atrocities and brutal killings, including mercilessly beheading infants and pregnant women, she does not get peace of mind as the trauma of the gangrape haunts her repeatedly. The physical symptoms of traumatic memory that she witnesses reflect her deeply distorted inner psyche and her fragmented identity as a Tamil girl that ultimately transforms her into a perpetrator of trauma rather than a victim. Soon she exhibits the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and temporary psychic disorder.

In *What Lies Between Us*, Munaweera treats trauma as an offshoot of an abusive childhood, as the psychic trauma of the narrator originates from her dreadful

experience of being sexually abused in her childhood. Since then, she has permanently been traumatised and often exhibits the symptoms of PTSD and psychic disorder as she fails to integrate her traumatic memory with her normal function of the mind. She often seems hysterical and finds temporary respite from traumatic stress by piercing her wrist with a knife. Researchers in the field of psychology have found a relationship between mental illness and sexual abuse in childhood. The narrator sinks into a kind of psychosis when she receives the truth from her mother that her offender was her father, not Samson, as the sudden flash of memory confirms the truth told by her mother as her "body naming its perpetrator" (Munaweera 238).

This belated awakening leads her into insanity, and paranoia overpowers her. She finds another perpetrator in Daniel as she remembers the intimate way he used to caress their daughter Bodhi, and she is frightened by the vision of her daughter being abused by her father. In a moment of psychic disorder, she kills her daughter by poisoning and throws Bodhi into the raging sea waves. Though she too jumps into the sea, she survives to mourn her daughter's death, opening new wounds in her traumatised psyche. Personal or collective trauma can significantly influence the identity formation of individuals and social groups. In the case of diasporic individuals, traumatic memory and the resultant psychic disorder can disintegrate their identity, as seen in Ganga.

Tearne's novel *Mosquito* explores how a traumatic experience of a single person has the potential to trigger trauma in a whole community when the community's collective consciousness is shaken by witnessing a traumatic event that

has a far-reaching impact on the community as the traumatised individual evokes the anxiety of the community over its very existence. Thus, the individual trauma of Theo or Vikram can stir the collective consciousness of their ethnic groups and thereby cause collective trauma. When Theo is recovering from his psychic numbness inflicted by prolonged torture at a detention centre, he transports his traumatic experience to society through narrativising his trauma in his second book. The narrativisation of his traumatic experience helps Theo emotionally connect to the +kcommunity and heals his psychic wounds.

Vikram's haunting memories associated with the brutal killings of his parents and sister are transformed into a strong desire for revenge because of the brainwashing of Gerard, who cleverly evokes Vikram's cultural identity by connecting his trauma to the sufferings of the larger population of Tamil minority. However, Vikram cannot heal his wounded psyche as he does not have the means to narrativise his trauma, as did by Theo.

Teare explores the effect of the trauma of displacement and cultural conflict on the diaspora's identity, besides the depiction of the distressing experience of civil war in her *Brixton Beach*. The novel examines how the traumatic memory associated with the death of her unborn child unsettles the psyche of Sita and its social angle in the context of the ethnic war in Sri Lanka, along with changes that brought to the immigrant identity of Alice. Sita's life in England is marked by her frantic efforts to safeguard her traumatic psyche from a possible downfall with the burden of a sense of loss that has incapacitated her, along with her self-imposed aloofness. The recurrence of trauma in Sita soon turns into severe symptoms of PTSD, an

uncontrollable state of mind that responds to traumatic experiences through specific symptoms and leads to psychic disorder.

The fourth chapter also analyses how Tearne portrays the effects of trauma on Ben, the illegal refugee in the novel, *The Swimmer*, while living under constant fear in the context of civil war, Anula's traumatic experience of the loss of her son and Ria's traumatic experience of witnessing the killing of Ben and how their experiences unsettle the normal function of their minds and alter their identities. To relieve her of the traumatised psyche, Anula resorts to passionate lovemaking with Eric, thereby keeping the memory of her dead son away. To heal her psychic wounds caused by the unexpected loss of her father and the loss of her lover Ben, Ria turns to the creative act of writing poetry. The acts of Anula and Ria can be seen as an involuntary act of healing the traumatised mind. Anula and Ria expand their identity to accommodate the changing realities after their traumatic experience. Ria, living alone and never experienced any forced dislocation and cultural conflicts, broadens her mind to accept a Sri Lankan Tamil man of twenty-five years and receive his mother without any cultural prejudices after the death of Ben. Anula, though she has a restricted experience of life in her village in Sri Lanka, does not have any reservations about accepting the tenderness and love of Eric, a total stranger to her.

The focus of the fifth chapter, titled "Hyphenated Identities: Negotiating Diasporic Predicament," is the concept of the hyphenated identity of the diaspora in the context of their constant struggle to balance between the unfamiliar lifestyle and cultural values of their host land and their identity rooted in ethnicity, culture, and nationality of their homeland. How the Sri Lankan immigrants reconstruct their

cultural identity through a continuous process of assimilation of the host land's social life and integration with its multicultural settings without sacrificing the core values of their homeland culture is an essential area of analysis of this chapter in the context of the novels of Munaweera and Tearne. The continuous engagement with the host land's social milieu, the homeland's memories, and the sense of loss that the diaspora confronts because of displacement and migration may put the immigrants into a fluid situation and compel them to possess a hybrid identity and double loyalty. Another focus of this chapter is how the memory of the landscape of the homeland plays a decisive role in the construction of diasporic identity in the backdrop of several journeys that the immigrants undertake within the host country and across the borders as memory persuades them to contextualise the past life in the present experience of locality in the foreign land. This process of associating the memories of locality in the homeland with the experience of locality in the host country is conspicuous in the shifting identity of Anula in Tearne's novel *The Swimmer*, as expressed by her monologues during the journeys she undertakes in England.

Traumatic memory associated with dislocation and border crossing is decisive in forming a diasporic identity. Living in a foreign country can be challenging for those with different cultural backgrounds. It is challenging to balance loyalty to both their home and host countries. They may develop a hybrid identity to express their unique perspective. Munaweera captures this hybrid identity and double affiliations of Sri Lankan immigrants in America and the dichotomy of ethnic identities such as Sinhala and Tamil that pull the country into a civil war. The

female heads of the Sinhala families, like Beatrice Muriel and Sylvia Sunetra, try to assert their Sinhala identity through their children. Both Visakha and her daughter Yasodhara have been brought up under the watchful eye of Sunetra, who used to insist that children should not be influenced by their Tamil tenants living upstairs of her house as she considers them "other". However, the sway of the ethnic identity of Yasodhara and Lanka gets loosened once they land in America as they must adapt to the culturally different society of their host land. They reinvent their identity and adopt a cosmopolitan identity that is best suitable to the multicultural and liberal society of America. However, as the diaspora is not immune to the impacts of the political happenings in their home country, Yasodhara, and Lanka, like their parents, empathise with the sufferings and pain of their compatriots in Sri Lanka. The memories of history, ethnicity, and cultural practices the diaspora shared with their fellow citizens in their original home evoke their collective identity.

This collective identity rooted in ethnicity and culture causes the failure of Lanka's love affair with her Afro-American art history teacher and prompts her to return to Sri Lanka. On the other hand, Yasodhara, heartbroken to know about the extramarital affair of her husband Sidharth, also returns to Sri Lanka, where she joins her childhood sweetheart Siva, her sister's new lover. The issue of identity again surfaces when Yasodhara and Siva start a new life in America after the tragic death of Lanka in a bomb explosion. They call their daughter Samudhra, the word for ocean, indicative of their Sri Lankan identity in which both Sinhala and Tamil ethnicity merge.

Saraswati constructs her identity on the edifice of her Tamil ethnicity and Hindu religion, which is considered as "other" by most of the Sinhala population of Sri Lanka. This ethnoreligious identity crumbles under the weight of the trauma of being gang-raped, and this identity crisis she confronts is also suggestive of a severe threat to the collective identity of the Tamil minority as a whole. Any personal experience of an identity crisis has grave repercussions on the collective consciousness of a community when faced with a catastrophic event of trauma like war or ethnic cleansing. Saraswati reclaims her ethnic identity by joining LTTE, transforms herself into a symbol of the collective identity of Tamils, and dedicates herself to the establishment of Eelam.

The fifth chapter also evaluates the determining forces that transform the diasporic individual's identity into fluidity. A double loyalty often characterises the immigrant's self, as the narrator and her mother in *What Lies Between Us* often express while negotiating their life in America and the memories of their homeland. While her mother fails to reconcile with the alien life in America, where she is a total stranger, the narrator struggles to balance her conflicting Sri Lankan ethnic and diasporic identities. Ganga's mother, brought in the Buddhist tradition of high morality and righteousness, cannot accept her distorted identity in the foreign land. To set aside the sense of guilt that issues from her failure to protect her innocent daughter from her abusive father, she expands her identity by trying to assimilate the liberal values of American multicultural society. She becomes a "broader, a part of the world, out there among people in a way that would have been unthinkable in the world she grew up" (117).

However, the identity rooted in ethnicity and culture has more significant sway over the immigrants, as the narrator's mother decides to return to Sri Lanka despite her efforts to accommodate the cultural values of her host land.

Unlike her mother, Ganga tries to think outside the frame of her ethnic identity and finds her soulmate in Daniel, an American citizen. However, she is conscious of her limitations as she cannot match the closeness and sense of belongingness that the American friends share with Daniel. The question of identity again surfaces when she gives birth to a daughter. The name Bodhi Ann given to their daughter reflects their different cultural identities. Bodhi Ann can be taken as a symbol of a new transnational identity that the diaspora often wishes to adopt. However, this sense of transnational cultural identity crumbles when Daniel leaves her, taking their daughter along with him. To compensate for this disintegration of her identity, she starts dreaming about a happy family life with Daniel and Bodhi in her homeland.

The disintegration of her identity caused by the separation from her daughter and the return of her traumatic memory becomes complete when she receives the shocking revelation from her mother that her father had abused her in her childhood. The multiple traumas and victimisation cause a severe personality disorder in the narrator. She is now obsessed with a single thought of saving her daughter from imminent molestation as she fears a repetition of what happened to her in her childhood would happen to Bodhi. She finds another perpetrator in Daniel and finally kills her daughter to save her from possible sexual abuse.

In *Brixton Beach*, Sita's psychic disorder and traumatic awakening have an expressive influence on her identity as an immigrant since the memory associated with the irreparable loss and sense of alienation felt in the host land considerably affects the construction of her identity. Alice is also affected by her mother's traumatic experience and the pathological changes that envelop her character. Identity is always a contested concept for Alice as she carries the contradictory Tamil and Sinhala ethnicity markers that make her identity fluid. Besides ethnicity, language is also problematic for Alice was forced by her mother to speak English, a neutral language in the context of linguistic chauvinism that prevailed in Sri Lanka. However, many of her classmates identified her as a Tamil girl.

While in London, Alice's memories associated with her childhood spent with her grandfather in the beach house have more significant sway in the formation of her identity as an immigrant and a flourishing artist than her association with her art teacher Mr Eliot and her passionate love and marriage with Timothy West who is indifferent to her cultural values. When this cultural dichotomy and contested identities get complicated, the marriage of Alice and Timothy crumbles and even her son Ravi becomes a stranger to her.

Thus, the fifth chapter elaborates on how the subjective experiences of individuals related to culture, nationality, and landscape constantly interact with the immediate environment in which the individuals are placed, determining the nature of their identity as shown through the characters of Anula, Ben, and Ria. In transnational mobility and migration, it is also significant that new identities can be constructed through a cultural fusion, as presented in Lydia. The novels taken for

this study illustrate how traumatic memory of individuals associated with war and childhood sexual abuse or the loss of loved ones determine the victims' future course of life and their construction of identities, especially in the context of their negotiation with culturally distant foreign countries.

The last chapter of this study is designed to summarise the entire process of the research work reviewing the objectives and hypothesis of the study and evaluate the research topic, "Memory, Trauma, and Fluidity: Cross-cultural Angst in the Select Novels of Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne" based on the findings elaborated in each chapter. The relevance of the study in the context of unpredictable political situations in Sri Lanka, where the wounds inflicted by the traumatic experience of civil war are supposed to be healed, but the cultural divide created in the minds of people by ethnic polarisation might not be addressed is also examined in the concluding chapter. The fire of civil war might be doused, but the wounds it created might not be healed as the Tamil population has yet to get sufficient participation in the country's power structure. This chapter also explicates the analysis of the concepts of memory, trauma, identity, and cultural conflicts presented in the novels of Munaweera and Tearne and how the analysis conforms to the objectives and hypothesis of the research work stated in the first chapter. The recent political turmoil and economic depression in Sri Lanka will also significantly impact the future of its people and the social harmony that prevails in Sri Lanka today. The post-war reconciliation can be effectively executed only when concerns like the sharing of power between the Sinhala majority and the Tamil minority through

legislative measures are addressed within a time frame which seems to be lagging in the present scenario of uncertainty on political and economic fronts.

The novels of Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne offer a profound exploration of the distressing memories of diasporic individuals. Their novels shed insightful explanations for the inexplicable experience of trauma when analysed through the prism of trauma literary theory. These moving narratives provide a deeper understanding of the complexities and challenges faced by diasporic individuals and are highly significant in the current discourse on trauma literary theory. This research thoroughly examines how these writers portray diasporic individuals' trauma, memory, and identity, making this subject of immense relevance considering the theories on trauma.

Trauma literary theory is all about psychological trauma, be it individual or collective trauma, and is represented in literary works as traumatic memory associated with a distressing event like war, child abuse, ethnic cleansing, and natural calamity that has a defining role in the construction of identities of individuals and communities. Though diverse interpretations are available on the meaning of the term trauma, in literary discourses and the field of psychology, the term trauma is considered a catastrophic experience capable of inflicting a permanent scar on a victim's psyche, thereby disrupting the cognitive function of the victim and remarkably influence the identity formation of the victim of trauma. Professor Cathy Carruth, one of the pioneers of trauma literary theory, in her work, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, published in 1996, defines trauma as “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which

the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, the uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (11). The catastrophic effect of trauma on the victim’s psyche is further emphasised in the definition of trauma given in the *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary*: “a mental condition caused by severe shock, especially when the harmful effects last for a long time” or it may be related to “an unpleasant experience that makes you feel upset and/or anxious” (p 1648).

Carruth emphasises two essential features of traumatic experience: the delayed response of the victim and the repeated return of trauma through nightmares and flashbacks. Here, the observation of Kai Erikson in his essay, “Notes on Trauma and Community”, is also relevant to the assumption that the recurrence of trauma is symptomatic of the incomprehensible nature of traumatic experience: “Above all, trauma involves a continual reliving of some wounding experience in daydreams and nightmares, flashbacks and hallucinations, and in a compulsive seeking out of similar circumstances” (Erickson 184). Carruth finds this inexplicable nature of traumatic experience paradoxical as it involves a voice of witness to the trauma apart from the mental affliction trauma brings to the victim. This voice of the witness alone can narrate the true nature of trauma that remains invisible to the victim till he/she is awakened to trauma through the repeated return of traumatic memory:

... that trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or

truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language. (Carruth 4)

Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub elaborate on this act of witnessing in their work, *Testimony: Cries of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, focussing on trauma narratives on the Holocaust. Felman and Laub, in their work, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, published much before Cathy Carruth came out with her seminal work on trauma literary studies, explore the relationship between the act of witnessing and testimony and how this testimony constitutes narratives. According to the literature is “a precocious mode of witnessing – of accessing reality – when all other modes are knowledge are precluded” (xx). Testimony is a crucial aspect of providing evidence in legal and personal situations. It involves a statement given by a witness to an authority, such as a court or law enforcement agency, providing firsthand information about events, situations, or emotions. Literary testimonies can take on different forms, such as first-person narrative and epistolary form. These forms provide a distinctive viewpoint on the events retold. These testimonies can provide valuable insight into the experiences of individuals and their perceptions of the world around them. One of the most captivating aspects of literature lies in its ability to delve into diverse voices, perspectives, and experiences. Readers can gain profound insights into the lives of others through various testimonies, ultimately broadening their understanding of the world. The potential of this experience is

immense, as it can enhance one's relationship with humanity and cultivate a deep appreciation for diversity. Whether through fiction, non-fiction, poetry, or any other form of writing, sharing stories and experiences holds immeasurable value.

Most early advocates of trauma literary theory, like Cathy Carruth and Kali Tal, have developed their theories based on Freud's concept of trauma explained in his works, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). According to Freud, there is a latency period once trauma strikes its victim unexpectedly, resulting in a belated awakening, and memory plays a crucial role in this delayed comprehension. Memory enables the victim to dissociate traumatic experiences from other average experiences as memory can sequence the experiences stored in the mind and assign specific meanings to each experience. In her *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (1995), Kali Tal examines trauma through the prism of culture. She treats traumatic experiences as symbols of the wounded culture and connects trauma narratives to the context of collective consciousness.

In his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud tries to unravel the mystery behind trauma that trauma can destroy the defence mechanism of the victim by repeated returns of traumatic memory and can create a kind of psychic disorder that is "a consequence of an extensive breach being made in the protective shield against stimuli" (35). The way to ease the agony of trauma and possible healing lies in reproducing or reliving traumatic experiences through narration. Therefore, narrativising traumatic experiences is vital for recovery from the catastrophic effects of trauma, like psychic numbness and cognitive disorder. Thus, Trauma literary

theory as a methodology helps explore the representation of trauma in literature and discover trauma's cultural and psychological implications on individuals and communities. In her work, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992), Judith Herman states that narrativising trauma substantially relieves the victim of the shock and pain caused by trauma, and the narrative representation acts as an agent of healing. Though traumatic memory resists integration with narrative memory, a metaphorical representation of traumatic experience is possible in narratives. In his *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001), Dominic LA Capra relates trauma narratives to the construction of history as trauma is intrinsically connected to culture.

The term 'trauma' has gained a broader meaning and significant attention with implications in the fields of clinical psychology and cultural studies in the last two decades of the twentieth century, as put by Kirby Farrell in his work, *Post-Traumatic Culture: Injury and Interpretation in the Nineteens*: "In contemporary culture ... trauma is both a clinical syndrome and a cultural trope. Something like the Renaissance figure of the world as a stage: a strategic fiction that a complex, stressful society uses to account for a world that seems threatening out of control" (Farrell 2). Since Farrell made this observation in 1998, trauma has become an indispensable concept in the literary discourse and other fields of studies associated with culture and politics. The term, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder entered the discourse of trauma studies when the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM III), a medical journal published by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 after an extensive study was conducted on the mental condition

of uncontrollable stress and psychic disorder by American soldiers returned from Vietnam war. Earlier, similar symptoms were also noticed massively in the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust during World War II. The fifth edition of the journal DSM V, published in 2013, included the inability of the victim of trauma to relish pleasure from normally pleasurable activities and exhibiting symptoms of melancholy:

It is clear, however, that many individuals who have been exposed to a traumatic or stressful event exhibit a phenotype in which, rather than anxiety- or fear-based symptoms, the most prominent clinical characteristics are anhedonic and dysphoric symptoms, externalizing angry and aggressive symptoms, or dissociative symptoms. (265)

Naturally, the research outcomes in the medical fields and debates on such findings in the academic circle would draw the attention of the larger society. The findings on the nature of PTSD, available in the public domain, gained broad interest in the people as put by Jones and Wessley in their article, “Psychological traumas: a historical perspective”, published in the journal *Psychiatry*, Volume 5, Issue 7, July 2006 (p 217-220): “A change in societal values from groups to individuals, an increase in concern for the problems of victims and a media voracious for human-interest stories have all added to the popular acceptance of PTSD” (Wessley 219). Many researchers have found a relationship between PTSD and the mental illness called psychosis, as there is a higher possibility of psychosis in persons with PTSD, especially victims of child sexual abuse. John Read, Thom Rudegeair and Susie Farrelly, in their essay, “The relationship between child abuse

and psychosis: Public opinion, evidence, pathways and implications,” observe that: “Research into the mechanisms by which childhood trauma leads to differential outcomes, including psychosis, is finally underway. ‘Symptoms of psychosis’ have psychological meaning, and they can serve a function, such as defending against intolerable feelings and memories” (36).

This new development in trauma studies attracted broader acceptance in other disciplines like feminist studies, Marxian aesthetics, etc. Marita Nadal and Monica Calvo rightly point out this broader connotation of trauma in various branches of studies in their work, *Trauma in Contemporary Literature: Narrative and Representation*:

In different manners, the increasing interest in trauma was a response to concerns about memory, politics, representation, and ethics that became prominent at the turn of the twentieth century, and which have mainly forced on the extreme forms of violence and victimization that came to light after the World War II. (1)

Critics of more recent times, like Roger Luckhurst, Michael Rothberg, and Stef Crap, are critical of the overdependence of the Freudian concept of trauma by scholars in the field of trauma literary studies pinpointing the unhealable nature of trauma. Rothberg observes that classical trauma theory was too Eurocentric to speak about the trauma perpetrated by colonialism. Too much emphasis on the Holocaust tends to ignore non-western traumatic experiences. Therefore, Rothberg advocates the decolonisation of trauma theory to make it a more inclusive study, including the postcolonial texts of trauma; thereby, a better understanding of the trauma inflicted

by racism and colonial powers on the colonised people can be possible. Luckhurst finds an inherent barrier in the representation of trauma because of the inability of the victim to comprehend the full consequence of the event and his/her failure to communicate it to others, making it challenging to narrativise. However, the recurrent appearance of traumatic memory through flashbacks or dreams will help the victim to explore the true nature of trauma, as noted by Luckhurst in his *The Trauma Question*. Luckhurst states, “Trauma, in effect, issues a challenge to the capacities of narrative knowledge. In its shock impact trauma is anti-narrative, but it also generates the manic production of retrospective narratives that seek to explicate the trauma” (79). He further explores how the term trauma has firmly footed in the Western discourses in the concepts of identity and memory as trauma “has become a paradigm because it has been turned into a repertoire of compelling stories about the enigmas of identity, memory, and selfhood that was saturated Western cultural life” (80).

Scholars like Jeffrey C. Alexander and Marriam Hirsch bring new insight into trauma literary theory by shifting the focus from individual to collective trauma. Collective trauma can be perceived as a collective response to trauma inflicted by politically and culturally dominant powers on other less powerful social groups or a social response to an unexpected calamity, either manufactured or natural, which appears to shake the edifice of the social bonding of the group. Jeffrey C. Alexander explains how a seemingly individualistic traumatic experience transforms into a collective trauma in his *Trauma: A Social Theory*: “The collective is fuelled by individual experiences of pain and suffering, but it is the threat to collective rather

than individual identity that defines the suffering at stake” (2). Stef Craps, in his work *Post-Colonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (2012), posits that conventional trauma literary theories failed to bring in a cross-cultural approach in the analysis of trauma as they ignore non-western and marginalised sections’ experience of trauma:

They fail on at least four counts: they marginalize or ignore traumatic experiences of non-Western or minority cultures, they tend to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity, they often favor or even prescribe a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia as uniquely suited to the task of bearing witness to trauma, and they generally disregard the connections between metropolitan and non-Western or minority traumas. As a result of all of this, rather than promoting cross-cultural solidarity, trauma theory risks assisting in the perpetuation of the very beliefs, practices, and structures that maintain existing injustices and inequalities. (2)

The recent trauma literary theory is pluralistic, unlike the canonical trauma literary studies, which depend heavily on the psychological interpretation of trauma. Contemporary theory also relates trauma to memory, identity, and semiotics in their transmissions in narratives. Michelle Balaev, in her introduction to *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*, observes that in the contemporary approach to trauma literary studies, the focus is on the social, cultural, and political implications of traumatic experience because: “A single conceptualization of trauma

will likely never fit the multiple and often contradictory depictions of trauma in literature because texts cultivate a wide variety of values that reveal individual and cultural understandings of the self, memory, and society” (8). Irene Visser finds it essential to incorporate modes of cultural practices and rituals of the ethnic groups to respond to trauma in trauma literary studies. In her essay, “Trauma and Power in Postcolonial Literary Studies,” Visser observes: “An important consideration is that indigenous narrative traditions and modes of representing trauma often include emphases on rituals and ceremony which fall outside the framework of trauma theory” (107). Since ritualistic mourning as a response to a traumatic incident would ease pain and horror, it can even lead to healing. According to Visser, a pluralistic approach to trauma literary studies has an advantage over classical literary theory as it can analyse trauma about language, psyche, and behaviour.

The interdisciplinary aspect of literary trauma theory is further explained in *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*, edited by Buelens et al. They point out that approaches to trauma literary studies have expanded by incorporating newer perspectives and diverse disciplines converging historical, political, psychological, medical, and cultural aspects of trauma. M. Rothberg emphasises the need for a pluralistic approach to trauma theory in the future in which the labour status under globalisation and climate change are to be considered for the analysis of trauma:

In the face of the paradoxical need to pluralize trauma while recognising the limits of its applicability, I would like to suggest that we think of the trauma category as necessary but not sufficient for

diagnosing the problems that concern us as scholars and human beings. To explore what it might mean to declare the category of trauma necessary but not sufficient, I want very briefly to add two examples of contemporary and future urgency to the important areas of concern discussed elsewhere in this volume: the status of labour under globalization and the impact of climate change. (xiii-xiv)

According to Rothberg, including labour status under globalisation and climate change in the exploration of trauma would enable trauma studies to territorialise trauma and bring more flexibility to accommodate the theories of other disciplines.

Since traumatic experience has wider ramifications and has the potential to transmit to future generations from the afflicted individual and is powerful enough to travel from one culture to another, trauma can be both transgenerational and transcultural. Many critics in trauma literary studies suggest that trauma narratives can transfer trauma from one generation to another. Gabriel Schwab, in the introduction to his work, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*, states how the concept of transgenerational trauma becomes an integral part of trauma literary studies: “During the past decades and under the impact of Holocaust studies, theories of trauma and mourning have evolved about studies of transgenerational trauma” (13). Memory plays a crucial role in the transmission of trauma from the victims to their descendants or the next generation as the latter are exposed to post-memory, as noted by Schwab: “While victims of trauma live with the scars of memory so to speak—gaps, amnesia, distortion, revision, or even fugue states or intrusive flashbacks — the recipients of

transgenerational trauma live with a “postmemory” that comes to them a second hand” (14).

Scholars like Lucy Bond observe that transcultural trauma is a late entry in trauma literary studies due to cross-cultural analysis of trauma in which experiences of slavery, apartheid, partition, etc., come under the purview of trauma theory. In their work, *Trauma*, Lucy Bond and Stef Craps point out: “Indeed, the tendency to regard trauma as a transcultural, transnational, or global phenomenon is one of the most pronounced trends in trauma scholarship of the last decade” (104). Analysing the arguments put forward by Carruth on the power of trauma to transmit across different cultures, Katja Garloff, in her essay, “Transcultural Empathy.” in work, *The Routledge Companions to Literature and Trauma*, observes that traumatic experience can bring people of diverse cultures together using witnessing to the trauma narration and produce empathy for the victims:

Trauma forces people into other times and places, where their unprocessed experience will translate into dreams, stories, eyewitness accounts and other symbolic formations that call for particularly attentive listening or reading. The exposure to the trauma of others can create new forms of transcultural empathy and solidarity in part because it fosters an interpretative sensibility that is attuned to the gaps, ruptures and indeterminacies in trauma narratives. (Garloff 211-12)

Thus, trauma narratives enable the victim to unburden the weight of torments and integrate the dissociative memory of trauma with the normal function of memory,

thereby healing the traumatised psyche; helping the readers empathise with the trauma survivor. Kate Rose, the American academician who has propounded the concept of “Socioliterature”, speaks about the healing power of trauma narratives by female victims of trauma in her essay, “Socioliterature: Stories as medicine”:

“Painstaking reconstruction of narrative can actually heal the brain, freeing the survivor from the trauma colonising her life” (2).

Trauma narratives also help the victims to build social bonding with communities with whom they share common past and cultural practices, thereby awakening their collective consciousness against the oppressive powers and perpetrators as put by Susan D. Rose in her essay, “Naming and Claiming: The integration of traumatic experience and the reconstruction of self in survivors’ stories of sexual abuse”:

Trauma narratives (whether they recount experiences with sexual abuse, lynching, or political torture) point to the unjustified violence done to people and hold abusers rather than victims accountable.

They expose the illegitimate use of force, power, and authority, and in so doing, de-authorize the credibility and legitimacy of the abusers.

(176)

Many scholars in trauma studies point out that traumatic memory stimulates the creativity of diaspora and significantly impacts the construction of diasporic identity. Vijay Agnew, in his introduction to the work *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home*, observes:

Memories can be nostalgically evocative of imaginary homelands and places of birth and origins as well as an antidote to the struggles of the present. Others who had wounds of memory inflicted on them consequent to horrific dislocations and dispossessions may find travels to the past an involuntary, albeit necessary, journey to come to terms with their present selves. (10)

Traumatic memory is detrimental to the victim's everyday life as it disrupts the function of the brain and deviates the victim from his/her usual flow of life. The observation of Judith Herman, a clinical psychiatrist at Harvard University and a researcher on trauma-related stress, in her *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence-from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, is a pointer to the toxic effect of trauma on the mental condition of the victim as "Traumatic events produce profound and lasting changes in psychological arousal, emotion, cognition, and memory" (34).

Narratives of trauma can be effective in extracting a desirable response from the readers only when it succeeds in recreating the experience of the trauma victim through a metaphorical rendering in a highly evocative diction, as pointed out by Capra in his *Writing History, Writing Trauma*:

Narrative fiction might capture the "feel" of traumatic experience even if it does not aim to reproduce facts... One might argue that narratives in fiction may [... provide] insight into phenomena such as slavery or the Holocaust, by offering a reading of a process or period, or by giving at least a plausible 'feel' for experience and emotion

which may be challenging to arrive at through restricted documentary methods. (13-14)

One of the striking features of trauma narratives is their representation of collective trauma as a response to the traumatic experiences of individuals who evoke the group's shared past and cultural memory. Laurence J. Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson, and Mark Barad, in their essay, "Introduction: Inscribing Trauma in Culture, Brain, and Body" in *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives*, emphasise the significance of perceiving the psychological trauma of individuals in relation with the context of collective consciousness: "The individual's management of painful memories and scars of experience must be considered in the larger context of the collective significance of remembering and forgetting" (16). Collective trauma or cultural trauma has an added significance in the diaspora as the traumatic experience that forces them to settle in foreign countries is often associated with civil war or ethnic cleansing, as in the case of the Sri Lankan diaspora, that might have a devastating impact on the communities and ethnic identity that hold them together. Selam Kidane, in her, *Trauma, Collective Trauma and Refugee Trajectories in the Digital Era* explains how a traumatic event stirs the collective consciousness and shared memory of a social group: "Trauma can be perceived as collective when people who have a sense of belonging to one another feel that they have been subjected to fearful and painful events, which have left a mark on their collective consciousness and memory" (18).

A narrativising traumatic memory can substantially minimise the symptomatic disorder of trauma in the victim and decisively influence the victim's

identity construction, as put by Anna Hunter in her essay titled, “The Holocaust as the Ultimate Trauma Narrative” featured in *Trauma and Literature*:

It is widely accepted, particularly within psychoanalytic approaches to trauma, that the most effective way of reducing the pathological symptoms of trauma in the survivor is to facilitate the conscious narration of the traumatic event, so that it may become lifted from the subconscious and integrated into conscious memory . . . Narrating one’s memories to oneself is a key element of identity formation. (68)

Identity construction is a complex process in diasporic individuals as they constantly try to synthesise the cultural experience of their homeland and the new social order of their host country, which may often land them in cross-cultural angst and fluid existence. Diasporic individuals in the context of postcolonial mobility and transnational settlement are trapped between the cultural ethos of their original homeland and the culturally pluralistic foreign lands, as noted by Vijay Agnew, the editor of the work *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home*:

The diasporic individual often has a double consciousness, privileged knowledge and perspective that is consonant with postmodernity and globalization. The dual or paradoxical nature of diasporic consciousness is caught between ‘here’ and ‘there,’ or between those who share roots, and is shaped through multilocality. The consciousness and identity of diasporic individuals may focus on their attachment to the symbols of their ethnicity, and they may continue to feel emotionally invested in the ‘homeland.’ (14)

In the post-colonial era, most of the Sri Lankan diaspora formations in America and Europe resulted from the fiercely fought civil war and subsequent forced displacement of a large section of Tamils and a comparatively smaller section of the Sinhala population. The term diaspora can be traced back to the dispersal of Jews in different locations from Israel, forced by religious persecution in the aftermath of the destruction of the temple built by Solomons in 586 B.C. Modern-day diasporas are social formations based on religion, ethnicity, or culture of belonging to a particular country settled outside of their country of origin but preserving the tradition and cultural practices of the homeland, longing for a possible return. The shared cultural memory and past life are central to the formation of a diaspora, as put by Femke Stock in his essay, “Home and Memory” in the work *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersections, Identities*: “At the core of the concept of diaspora lies the image of a remembered home that stands at a distance both temporally and spatially” (24).

The memory associated with the original homeland is often distressing and painful as it reminds the diaspora of the harrowing experience of violence, oppression, dislocation, border crossing, and migration. Carol Bardenstein, in her essay “Figures of Diasporic Cultural Production” in the work *Diaspora and Memory*, finds a close connection between traumatic memory:

In many mobilizations of the term as a social formation, “diaspora” is explicitly or implicitly taken to be associated experientially or discursively with trauma, a sensibility of lamentation over the lost

homeland and present painful conditions, with accompanying disenfranchisement and disempowerment. (21)

As traumatic memory constitutes the centrality of diasporic imagination and literary expressions, trauma literary theory is the key to the analysis of diasporic literature as it helps us comprehend the intricate nature of traumatised persons' character in a better way, as rightly pointed out by Ted Morrissey in his introduction to the work, *Trauma Theory As an Approach to Analysing Literary Texts*: "Literary trauma theory, [as discussed here] seeks to recognise the characteristics of the traumatised psyche in, especially, works of fiction" (12).

Trauma literary theory is also used to explore the fluid identity of diasporic individuals in the context of their cross-cultural anguish and traumatic memory that often pulls them into psychic disorder. The stressful experience of forced displacement, migration, and settlement in a new country of an alien culture where adaptation and assimilation pose a significant challenge to the diaspora, determine how they form their identity. Anna De Fina, in her work, *Identity in Narrative: A Study of Immigrant Discourse*, "The construction of a new identity is a vital process for immigrants given that establishing themselves in a new country and starting a different life, always implies a redefinition of their place in the host society and of their position concerning other social groups" (143).

This research investigates the themes of trauma, memory, and identity of Sri Lankan diasporic individuals, as portrayed in the novels Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne, taking trauma literary studies as a theoretical framework. This study explores the diverse aspects of trauma and its impact on the victims contextualising

the novels of Munaweera and Tearne. Experiencing a traumatic event can significantly impact a person's overall well-being. The effects of trauma can manifest in various physical and mental ways. Psychological effects include post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, and dissociation. It is possible to experience physical symptoms like headaches, fatigue, and sleep disruptions. Trauma can also affect a person's cognitive processes, emotional regulation, and relationships. Nevertheless, individuals need not face these challenges alone. This study evaluates all these diverse aspects of trauma concerning the novels taken for analysis.

The novels chosen for the study offer valuable insights into the experiences of diasporic individuals as they navigate unfamiliar cultures and landscapes. Through the poignant and emotionally charged narratives presented in these works, readers can gain a profound understanding of the challenges faced by diasporic individuals. This research can contribute significantly to the ongoing discourse surrounding literary theory on trauma and diasporic literature.

Chapter 2

Traversing History, Conflict and Landscape

Sri Lanka is a culturally diverse country with a history intertwined with this cultural diversity and ethnic conflicts. This island nation is placed in the Indian Ocean on the southeast coast of the Indian subcontinent and has a multicultural and multilingual society with diverse ethnic and religious groups. Apart from the teachings of Buddhism and Hinduism, Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonial rule and ethnic populations like Burghers and Moors also shaped Sri Lankan culture and politics. The majority Sinhala community follows Buddhism, whereas the Tamils follow Hinduism, except for a small section of converted Christians and Tamil-speaking Muslims. The Burghers are the descendants of Portuguese and Dutch settlers of Sri Lanka.

The history of Sri Lanka is constructed from two different perspectives in association with Sinhalese nationalism built on the principles of Buddhism and Tamil nationalism based on the Dravidian tradition of South India. This difference in attitude led Sri Lankan history to never-ending controversies that later became the source of ethnic nationalism and political divisions. Buddhist works attest to a strict Sinhalese rule centred on the north-central part of Sri Lanka from around 500 BC. Two things have generally been summarised as the unique features of this regime: initially, in this normally arid region of the island nation, agriculture flourished thanks to an effective irrigation system, and then, the Buddhist principles served as a

guide to this administration. These two traditions and how they become a matter of pride for the Sinhalese population that serve as the two pillars of Sinhala nationalism are shown by Peter R. Blood in his study, 'Historical Setting' included in the work, *Sri Lanka: a Country Study*, edited by Russell R. Ross:

The history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, especially its extended period of glory, is for many Sinhalese a potent symbol that links the past with the present. An enduring ideology defined by two distinct elements—sinhaladipa (unity of the island with the Sinhalese) and dhammadipa (island of Buddhism)—designates the Sinhalese as custodians of Sri Lankan society. (Blood 3-4)

A two-decade-long rule in the first half of the third century BC by two audacious Tamil youths from south India was the first Tamil regime in Sri Lanka. Elara, a Chola general from south India, took control over Anuradhapura in 145 BC and ruled for forty-five years. This period of Tamil monarchy sowed the seeds of Tamil nationalist identity, gaining momentum when south Indian Tamil kings posted victory after establishing their rule in some parts of Sri Lanka in the fifth and sixth century AD.

The focus area of this chapter is a retrospection of the history of Sri Lanka from its early history to the end of the civil war based on the available compiled historical records and Buddhist scriptures. The events that played a decisive role in the evolution of modern Sri Lanka through this period, such as the establishment of the first Sinhalese Empire, the spread of Buddhism, the migration of Tamils and their areas of dominance, the invasion of European powers, the beginnings of

Sinhalese and Tamil nationalisms and the days of ethnic conflict are summarised in this chapter. This chapter also explores the literary expressions of Sri Lankan writers at home and abroad during the civil war and their response to the ethnic conflicts.

The two Buddhist literary narratives: the *Mahavamsa* and the *Dipavamsa* of the fifth century B.C. and 4th century B.C., throw light on the ancient history of Sri Lanka. The *Veddas*, a forest-dwelling tribe, were the early inhabitants of Sri Lanka. Till 1972, it had known as Ceylon. The name Sri Lanka was a later invention, and this island nation was known in ancient times by different names for different people. P. Arunachalam, while elaborating on the ancient history and cultural foundations of Sri Lanka in his book, *The Sketches of Ceylon History*, describes the various names of Sri Lanka:

The Arabs called Ceylon ‘Serendib’ and the Portuguese ‘Celiao’.
 to the inhabitants of the neighbouring continent of India it was known centuries before the Christian era by the name of Lanka (the resplendent), the name it still bears among the native inhabitants, both Sinhalese and Tamils. The Siamese have added the honorific Tewa, calling the island *Tewa Lanka*, ‘divine Lanka.’ To the Chinese, Ceylon was ‘the island of jewels,’ to the Greeks, ‘the land of hyacinth and the ruby,’ to the Indian Buddhists ‘the pearl upon the brow of India.’ (5-6)

The Scholars, in general, believe that the political and cultural history of Sri Lanka begins with the migration from North India under the leadership of Vijaya, an Indian prince in exile. Vijaya established the first community settlement in Sri Lanka.

The *Mahavamsa* describes how Vijaya, a descendant of a lion (Sinha), had founded a Sinhala state. K. M. De Silva, who has conducted an extensive study on the history of Sri Lanka in his work, *A History of Sri Lanka*, comments about the arrival of north Indians to Sri Lanka, "The original home of the first Indo-Aryan immigrants to Sri Lanka was probably north-west India and the Indus region" (6-7).

Upon his arrival, Vijaya established the kingdom of Sinhala with Tammana Nuwara as its capital. The name was chosen to honour his North Indian lineage, Sinha. His brother's youngest son ascended to the throne when Vijaya died without an heir. Despite occasional conflicts and disagreements among the ruling class, Sinhala remained in power for almost a millennium, with the capital moving to Anuradhapura. The introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lankan culture occurred when Mahinda, the son of Asoka the Great, arrived and converted Devanampiya Tissa, the ruler of Ceylon at the time. Devanampiya Tissa was already familiar with the basic principles of Buddhism due to his amicable relationship with Asoka. During his meeting with the king, Mahinda realised he was intelligent enough to understand the Dhamma and preached the Cūlahatthipadoma Sutta. Following the discourse, the king and his entourage of forty thousand people embraced the new faith. The Sri Lankan people followed an early form of Buddhism known as Theravada or "the way of the elders." Since Devanampiya Tissa's conversion, Buddhism has become deeply ingrained in Sri Lankan culture and has received significant support from Sinhalese rulers. Devanampiya Tissa also built the first Buddhist monastery, Mahavihara, where Sanghamitra, Asoka's daughter, is believed to have planted a branch of the bodhi tree brought from India. The arrival of Buddha's sacred tooth in

Sri Lanka in the fourth century A.D. further cemented the widespread acceptance of Sinhala.

Sri Lanka's association with Tamils began even before the first South Indian invasion by Elara, a General of the Chola Kingdom, which took place in 145 BC. The earliest South Indian invasion of Sri Lanka was dated back to the 5th century A.D. There was no consensus among historians about the arrival of the Tamils in Sri Lanka:

There is no firm evidence of when the Dravidians first came to the island, but they did from very early times, either as invaders or peaceful immigrants. However, Tamil and other literary sources point to substantial urban and trading centres in South India in the third century B.C. There were probably trade relations between them and Sri Lanka, and the island's trade with the Mediterranean world was through these South Indian ports. By the third century B.C., the Dravidian intrusion into the affairs of Sri Lanka became very marked. (De Silva 12)

The prominent South Indian kingdoms of Chola, Pandya, and Pallava had succeeded in establishing their supremacy over a large area of Sri Lanka from the 7th century to the 10th century. Sri Lanka had witnessed the religious difference between South Indian invaders, who mainly were Saivite Hindus and Sinhalese during these periods. Sinhalese kings had claimed the heritage of the Aryan royal blood of North India.

As this divide widened over time, the Sinhalese power had concentrated in the West zone of Sri Lanka and Tamil political activities were mainly shifted to the Northern peninsula. This shifting of two culturally different populations into two centres also resulted in the linguistically separate identities of Sinhala and Tamil. The language of Sinhala, they firmly believed, was a member of the Indo-Aryan tongue. The *Dipavamsa*, the fourth-century B.C. Buddhist text references Sinhala as the country was named after a lion. The *Mahavamsa* describes the myth behind the term Sinhala: "The king Simhabahu since he had slain the lion (was called) Sihala and, because of the ties between him and them, all those (followers of Vijaya) were (also) called Sihala" (Mahavamsa 58), Sihala was the Pali word for Sanskrit Sinhala. The myth about Sinhala has become the central point for forming Sinhalese cultural identity and religious faith. These religious faiths and cultural identities gradually developed into a political ideology for Sinhala-speaking most of Sri Lanka. The Sinhala Kingdom of Anuradhapura, founded in the third century B.C., had survived for around a thousand years despite the severe threat of aggression and occasional setbacks from the invading south Indian kings. For around 25 years in the mid-fifth century A.D., the Tamils could rule most of Sri Lanka. From the seventh century onwards, the Sinhala rulers of Anuradhapura had to negotiate with the South Indian rulers for their continuation in power.

Buddhism also suffered severe setbacks during the time of South Indian intrusion. Based on the best available scholarly literature on Sri Lanka, Patrick Peebles details the setbacks to Buddhism in Sri Lanka following the South Indian invasion. In his, *The History of Sri Lanka* Peebles observes: "Buddhism lost its

position as the state religion when the Cholas occupied northern Sri Lanka from 993 to 1070, and it never returned to the position it had held.” (23) The recurrent invasion of South Indian rulers and the threat from Europeans in coastal Sri Lanka had further weakened the Sinhala kingdom of Anuradhapura. While Sinhala’s domination declined in Anuradhapura, they established their power in central Sri Lanka, with Kandy as the capital. On the other hand, Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka had emerged as the centre of Tamil rule. Despite political conflicts between Sinhala rulers and South Indian kings, the religious difference had never been an issue of contention. The Cholas, the Pandyas, and the Pallavas, who had controlled different provinces of Sri Lanka at different times, were tolerant of Buddhism and even patronised viharas and the Hindu faith.

The arrival of European forces marked a turning point in the history of Sri Lanka as it sowed the seeds of religious intolerance on the soil of Sri Lanka. The Portuguese arrived in Sri Lanka in 1505 for trade. The Portuguese trading activity based in Colombo kickstarted a rivalry with the Moors, who had already established trade relations with Sri Lanka long before the arrival of the Portuguese. Shortly after they had rooted firmly in the cinnamon trade, the Portuguese began to interfere in the political activities of Sri Lanka. With their superior naval warfare, the Portuguese successfully brought the trade under their control. They had managed to meddle with the affairs of both Sinhala and Tamil dispensations. The political and social atmosphere of Sri Lanka further got complicated by the arrival of Christian missionaries from Portugal. The militant preaching and large-scale conversions by Roman Catholic missionaries enraged both Sinhalese and Tamils. Violent clashes

and retributions in the name of religion vitiated Sri Lankan politics. The Portuguese occupation of southwest Sri Lanka had a long-lasting impact on society. The administrative system was manipulated to encourage conversion to Roman Catholicism, and converted Sri Lankans were pampered with government jobs and other favours. In contrast, Buddhists and Hindus were punished by confiscating their land and property and destroying their temples. The historian De Silva explains how measures are taken at the administrative level to promote the conversion of Sri Lankan citizens to Christianity during the Portuguese occupation of marginalised non-Christian communities. “Thus, converts were assured of preferential treatment under the law, as well as an exception from certain taxes; in brief, these converts came to be regarded as a privileged group” (147). The Portuguese introduced the first time in the history of Sri Lanka caste system. The Kandyan king Rajasingha II finally crushed the Portuguese in 1630 with the support of the Dutch East India Company. The Portuguese and Dutch occupation of Sri Lanka resulted in the emergence of two new ethnic groups- “Dutch Burghers” and “Portuguese Burghers.”

The British occupation of Sri Lanka began in 1796, and, just after two years, they were able to bring the entire island country under its control except for the Kandyan Kingdom, which had the central highland under their reign. A close analysis of the British administration in Sri Lanka reveals that the seeds of the violent clashes and ethnic conflict Sri Lanka witnessed between Sinhalese and Tamils in the later period were sown by British colonial rule. Ashoka Bhandagara, who has done a detailed study of the historical events that led Sri Lanka to ethnic

nationalism, elaborates on the conscious role of the British colonial government in dividing the people of Sri Lanka. In *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy*, she remarks that: “The fault lines between the Sinhala and Tamil communities that show up in the modern Sri Lankan conflict were drawn during the period of British colonisation from 1815 to 1948” (29). British administration perceived Sri Lankan society as a conglomeration of distinct races. The colonial government institutionalised social divisions like Sinhala, Tamil, Burghers, Moors, and Veddas. The political representation of the government was made based on race. Communal representation continued till 1931, when territorial representation was introduced. However, the divide between the so-called ‘Aryan Sinhala’ and ‘Dravidian Tamil’ widened when the British left Sri Lanka. In the education sector, British missionaries aggressively promoted evangelisation. The government, too, asserted that converting natives to Christianity was a crucial factor in its organisational strategy and attempted to dissociate itself from the age-old tradition of the Buddhist edifice of Sri Lanka. Christian missionaries also used educational institutions established by the colonial government to inculcate Christian values in the students. All these factors created unrest among the Sinhala population. To counter the missionary activities of religious conversion, resistance from the Buddhist Sinhala population intensified. The resistance movement against religious conversion soon gained momentum, led to Buddhism’s revival, and contributed to the Nationalist ideology in Sri Lanka. The main pillars of this Nationalist ideology were the notion of the Aryan myth of the Sinhala race, the common language of Sinhala, and the Buddhist religion. When the government introduced political representation based on ‘one person, one vote’, the minority

Tamils opposed the move as they feared it would give Sinhala majority total domination over others. During the 1930s communal divide between the Sinhala majority and Tamil minority widened as their political and ideological views gained endorsement from the respective communities. Though these contradictory views were mainly directed against the policies of the colonial government, they reached a flash point soon after Sri Lanka got independence, as pointed out by Elizabeth Nissan and R. L. Stirrat in their article in *Sri Lanka: History and Roots of Conflict* edited by Jonathan Spencer:

What began as a series of claims by both Tamils and Sinhala against the British was transformed into claims directed against each other.

While the British were present there was relative calm, but only eight years after Independence communal violence broke out between Sinhala and Tamils for the first time. (34)

The British colonial rule introduced a plantation economy in Sri Lanka in the middle of the nineteenth century. This resulted in a new ethnic group called Tamil migrants in Sri Lanka. Nira Wickremasinghe, in his *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History*, notes the political and cultural significance of Tamil migrants in Sri Lanka:

Waves of Indian Tamil immigrants settled on the estates and eventually became a large and permanent underclass that endured abominable working conditions and squalid housing. The census of 1911 reported the number of Indian labourers in Sri Lanka at about 500,000—12 per cent of the island's total population. The Tamil labourers emigrated to Sri Lanka from India not as individuals but in

family units or groups of interrelated families, which enabled them to maintain cultural traits where they settled. (39)

When unemployment rose in the 1930s, one of the demands of the Sinhala population was to send these migrant labourers back to India. The enumeration of the population through census was another critical factor that strengthened the racial distinction as the census categorised the people based on racial identity.

The 1921 Census recognized ten principal races in Ceylon, three pairs being subdivisions of larger groups. These pairs were the Low Country and Kandyan Sinhalese, the Ceylon and Indian Tamils, and the Ceylon and Indian Moors. The four other specified races were the Burghers and Eurasians and the Malays and Veddas.

(Wickramasinghe 52)

Though the colonial government did not patronise the Buddhist movement in Sri Lanka, by the middle of the 19th century, the official policy became conciliatory toward the Buddhist revival. However, this attitude was short-lived when the Roman Catholics targeted the Sinhala Buddhist population during the Kotahena riots in 1883. The government's unilateral decision to release the arrested Catholics without trial irked the Buddhist population. While the Buddhist revival movement was gaining momentum, the Tamils were solidifying their Hindu tradition through rituals and ceremonies as a deterrent against Christian aggression in the Northern Peninsula. The Buddhist revival in the last decade of the 19th century further widened its activities in the field of politics in Sri Lanka under the leadership of Anagarika Dharmapala, as illustrated by De Silva:

Dharmapala grasped, as few of his contemporaries did, the political implication of the Buddhist resurgence, and he never lost sight of the need to set this within the wider framework of the rise of nationalism in Asia. But he was at the same time an unabashed advocate of Sinhalese-Buddhist domination of the island. His propaganda bore a remarkable similarity to that of the great champion of the Hindu resurgence in Western India, Tilak. (374)

The temperance movement against the excise policy of the colonial government was another launch pad for Buddhist-Sinhala nationalism. The Buddhists were able to take centre stage in this movement at the beginning of the twentieth century and succeeded to a great extent in turning the temperance movement into a rallying point for the nationalist movement, though they failed to transform the movement into a political drive. This gap in political positioning was filled when The Ceylon National Congress (CNC) was founded in 1919. The leadership of the CNC was in the hands of a few conservative Low Country Sinhala elites. Tamil political aspirations were manifested by the formation of the Ceylon Reform League, which was later merged with the Jaffna Association, represented mainly by English-educated Tamils of Northern Sri Lanka. The most striking quality of the political movements in Sri Lanka in the first two decades of the twentieth century was a relatively harmonious relationship between Sinhala and Tamil political leaders. Unfortunately, this mutual reciprocation could not be sustained as the Sinhala-Tamil dichotomy surfaced with the arrival of political outfits like Sinhala Mahajana Sabha in 1919, which upheld the religious and cultural

ethos of the majority community and took pride in the supremacy of the Sinhala language. The colonial government's move to grant voting power to Indian plantation workers also provoked the Sinhala leaders. The colonial government's introduction of communal representation in the Legislative Council in 1921 further alienated the Tamils. In the general election to Legislative Council in 1931, Sinhalese councillors represented most committees.

The mushrooming of vernacular newspapers and printing houses at the beginning of the twentieth century allowed the Buddhist revivalists to counter Christian proselytisation through Buddhist literature. Nira Wickremasinghe validates how the local printers countered the Christians who had effectively used printing technology to spread their religion:

They came to be printed in cheap leaflets called *kavi kola* that was sold in markets and at pilgrimage centres and were read by the classes that had acquired literacy in the state school system. A fundraising campaign in 1861–62 for the establishment of the first Buddhist press led to the foundation of the *Lankopakara* press in Galle in 1862. *Lak Mini Pahana*, launched by the Sinhala scholar Pandit Koggala, was the first registered Sinhala newspaper published to challenge Christian missionaries. (82)

The newspapers in vernacular language played a pivotal role in spreading the patriotic spirit and Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. Hindu Tamils of Jaffna also entered the field of publication with the publication of a periodical, *Vivekananda*, in 1902 by Sri Ramakrishna Mission in Colombo. The temperance movement, revival

of Buddhist rituals and ceremonies, the establishment of Buddhist schools in the line of Sunday schools of Christians, access to Buddhist literature in vernacular language, and the spread of Sinhala newspapers contributed much to the emergence of collective Sinhala-Buddhist consciousness at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The three-century-long colonial rule has tremendously impacted the socio-political identity formation of different ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. Within the larger Sinhala ethnic structure, a division was felt between the coastal-dwelling Sinhalese and the Sinhalese of interior planes. The interior planes under the Kandyan kingdom maintained splendid isolation from the lower-class Sinhalese of coastal areas. The prominence the Kandyan culture gained in the nineteenth century played a decisive role in the identity formation of postcolonial Sinhala ethnicity. Harshana Rambukwella, in his, *The Politics and Poetics of Authenticity: A Cultural Genealogy of Sinhala Nationalism*, explains the critical role played by Kandyan culture in the construction of Sinhala nationalism: “From the late nineteenth century onwards, Kandyan Sinhala identity and culture are seen as more authentic because of their perceived isolation from European contact” (28). Soon, most Sri Lankan society started perceiving the Kandyan style of sari-clad woman as a Sinhala tradition and cultural symbol. The much-adored Kandyan dance was accepted as the representative performance art of Sri Lanka. “Many urban Sinhala couples getting married in upmarket hotels in Colombo and other urban areas of the country adopt ‘Kandyan customs’ and ‘Kandyan dress’. Similarly, Kandyan ‘objects’ are often imbued with an aura of authenticity” (Rambukwella 28).

In the first few years after independence in 1948, the socio-political situation in Sri Lanka was comparatively peaceful and disputes-free owing to the statesmanship of the first prime minister D.S. Senanayake. He had a progressive view on the nature of government and focussed on the pluralistic structure of Sri Lankan society. He succeeded in accommodating the Tamil leaders like Ponnambalam in the government. However, this harmony was shattered as attempts to assert the ethnic and linguistic identities of the two major groups – Sinhala and Tamil – became more decisive in the following years. There was a strong demand from the Buddhist Sinhala votaries for establishing an ideal state where Buddhism was the state religion and Sinhala was the official language. This demand was opposed by the Tamil and Muslim populations, who advocated equal status for Sinhala and Tamil languages. Several political parties were formed when the first general election was held. Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP), All Ceylon Tamil Congress (TC), the Ceylon Labour Party and The Communist Party of Ceylon were the most prominent among them. In the elections, Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP- People's United Front), a coalition of Sinhalese parties led by S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake got a thumping victory. The new government gave utmost importance to the revival of Buddhism, Sinhalese culture, and language.

Government's move to declare Sinhala as the official language attracted widespread protest among the Tamils. The protest march, carried out by Tamils in Trincomalee and Jaffna, was attacked, and scores of Tamils were killed. Bandaranayake agreed with the Tamil leader SJV Chelvanayakam to sign a treaty to ease the tension and bring normalcy. By this pact, known as Bandaranayake-

Chelvanayakam Pact (BC pact), Tamils were given substantial powers in the regional councils. However, all attempts to end the ethnic divide failed as opportunistic politicians from both sides scuttled the pact. The successive governments' Sinhala-centric policies created wide resentment in both Sinhalese and Tamils. The educated Tamil youths were forced to take an extremist stand as they were kept away from job opportunities. Another treaty was signed between Senanayake and Chelvanayakam after UNP came to power in the 1965 general election. By this new pact, Tamil was given the status of administrative language in the northern and eastern provinces. This was also not acceptable to the advocates of Sinhala nationalism.

The rise of the Tamil national movement was seen as a countermovement against the hegemonic Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. However, several other factors contributed to the emergence of Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka. On the driving forces that led to the rise and growth of Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka, R. Cheran, a noted researcher in Tamil studies and transnationalism, presents a different theory. In the introduction to his edited book *Pathways of Dissent: Tamil Nationalism in Sri Lanka*, R. Cheran opines that: "The emergence of Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism must be linked to colonialism and the cultural, literary and religious competition between Jaffna and Tamil Nadu" (xiii-xiv). The concerted efforts taken by Arumuga Navalar, an esteemed scholar and passionate promoter of Saiva Saivite philosophy, to revive Saivism among the Sri Lankan Tamils greatly impacted the Tamil population. His long teaching career with a Christian missionary school had given him ample opportunity to understand the tactics employed by the Christian

missionaries to preach their religion aggressively. He followed the same tactics for preaching Saivism among the Tamils. Navalar used education, a powerful tool used by Christian missionaries for evangelisation, by establishing Hindu-Tamil schools across Jaffna. He regularly gave lectures on Saivism on the temple premises and circulated pamphlets challenging Christianity. His followers continued these activities after his demise, bringing new vigour to Saivite Hinduism in the Tamils. This revival of Saivite philosophy strengthened Tamil nationalism in the coming years.

In the 1960s Tamil separatist movement entered a new era when a few Tamil activists secretly formed a 'pulippadai' (Tiger Army) to create a 'Tamil Homeland.' A few years later, Chellappan Suntharalingam, a former minister in the UNP government, published the map of 'Eylom' (homeland/State). The economic policies pursued by the MEP government gave importance to the needs of Sinhala-educated local elites and were unsympathetic to the aspirations of the educated Tamils. Many industries and companies owned by Tamils were brought under government control as a part of Nationalisation. The government continued its discrimination policy, and Tamils were deprived of opportunities for a career in government service. Apparent discrimination existed against Tamils even in the country's university admissions.

The massive victory of SLFP under Sirimavo Bandaranayake in the general election was taken as an endorsement of Buddhist-Sinhala ideology. The political and economic power was concentrated in the hands of Anglicised elites. The sense of deprivation and alienation among the educated youth belonging to lower middle-

class Sinhala culminated in the formation of a radical outfit called Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) in 1965, which took strong opposition to the Anglicised Sinhala elites and Tamils. The government took several measures to contain the radicalism of JVP and arrested its leader Rohana Wijeweera and declared an internal emergency on 15th March 1971 which lasted for six years. Meanwhile, the government turned its attention to the education sector. Two reforms of the government, such as community quota for entrance and Standardisation of test scores, substantially reduced the opportunity for Tamil youth to get admission to universities:

Access to higher education for Tamils from the urban region was limited through a system of quotas. The qualifying mark for admission to the Medical Faculty was 250 out of 400 for Tamil students and only 229 for Sinhala students, even if they sat the exam in English. Tamils had until the early 1970s enjoyed a position of dominance in the science-based faculties owing to their higher rate of literacy in English and good facilities for science education in the schools in Jaffna. (Wickramasinghe 292)

The Tamil youth started thinking their future could be safe only in a separate Tamil state and anticipated Eelam's formation.

When the new constitution took effect on 22nd May 1972, it placed Buddhism at the centre stage of the Sri Lankan government and made Sinhala the official language of the state. Chapter II of *The Constitution of Sri Lanka (Ceylon)* reads: "The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and

accordingly, it shall be the state's duty to protect and foster Buddhism while assuring to all religions the rights granted under section 18 (1) d" (4). The proposals by Tamil parties for equal status for Tamil and Sinhala, citizenship for Stateless Tamils and a guarantee of fundamental rights for all citizens were rejected. The immediate fallout of this act of protectionism was that many Tamil Politicians turned to radicalism. Tamil politicians like SJV Chelvanayakam sought support from Indian leaders for their struggle for a separate Tamil state. Soon after the new constitution was adopted in 1972, Tamil political organisations jointly formed Tamil United Front (TUF). Bandaranayake government's acts of denying permission to Tamil students to use foreign exchange for studying in India and banning South Indian Tamil films further enraged the Tamils. Young Tamils joined the radical organisation in the 1960s and 1970s thanks to the government's repressive measures. The brutal police action against the participants of the 4th International World Tamil Conference held at Jaffna on January 10, 1974, and the subsequent accidental electrocution of seven Tamils was a turning point in the Tamil separatist movement. The Tamil groups intensified their struggle for a 'homeland' of their own.

Velupillai Prabhakaran, a founding member of the Tamil Students Federation, became a key figure of Tamil Militant groups when he assassinated Alfred Duraiappa, the Mayor of Jaffna, in 1975. The Tamil Students Federation modified itself as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 1975. Velupillai Prabhakaran succeeded in placing LTTE at the forefront of the Tamil separatist movement because of his uncompromising commitment to forming a sovereign state of Eelam. The symbolic adoption of the word Tiger which was the emblem of the

Chola Kingdom gave an ideological colour to the outfit. In 1976 Tamil leaders brought all organisations working for a separate Tamil state. They formed a new political party, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), setting its goal for the creation of “a sovereign socialist state of Tamil Eelam (Wickremesinghe 294).

When UNP returned to power in 1977, Bandaranayake announced the drafting of a new constitution. Article 19 of the new constitution promulgated in 1978 incorporated Tamil as a national language. However, this gesture of reconciliation was only a tokenism, and soon large-scale violence broke out, and around 25000 Tamils were rendered homeless. What followed was an unprecedented surge in Tamil militarism and an equally brutal reprisal on the part of the government. The policy of economic liberalisation and establishment of Free Trade Zones by the UNP government gave some advantages to Tamil entrepreneurs. Under the new economic policy, Sinhala traders and entrepreneurs were deprived of the political support and special privileges they had enjoyed earlier. Asoka Bandarage, while analysing the historical context of the origin and spread of ethnic polarisation in Sri Lanka, in his *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy*, observes how the liberal economic policies implemented by the UNP government in the 1980s are disadvantageous to the Sinhala majority:

Although the new Open Economy abolished advantages the Sinhalese had previously enjoyed under the state-dominated economy, it was not designed to level the differential impact of regional and global forces on the local economic and cultural competition. Compared to

the Muslim and Tamil communities, the Sinhalese were at a disadvantage in the increasingly globalized economy. (81)

Unlike the English-educated elites who upheld the values of multiculturalism, the Sinhala-educated lower- and middle-class youth who were primarily deprived of the fruits of the new economic policies supported the ethnoreligious ideology of Buddhist nationalism.

The period between 1978 and 1981 saw Tamil militant groups targeting police officers, politicians, and civilians of the Northern province. The government retaliated by unlawful detention, kidnapping and killings of Tamil activists. Tamil separatist movement and the government's retribution reached a turning point during the election to the District Development Council of Jaffna. On July 22, 1983, LTTE cadres massacred 13 soldiers on patrol in Jaffna. The government's act of conducting a mass funeral for the slain soldiers in Colombo led to widespread violence against Tamils. In the week-long arson and looting, around 3000 Tamils were killed, another 135000 were rendered homeless, and several hundred lost their property. The most shocking was that The Jaffna Public Library, the seat of Tamil culture and heritage, attacked and burned around 90000 manuscripts. This incident was later known as Black July in the history of Sri Lanka, and the ethnic conflict soon turned into a full-scale civil war. President Jayewardene blamed the Tamils for violence unilaterally and termed the Sinhalese victims. This predisposed stand of the President led to the speculation that the violence against the Tamils was pre-planned and sponsored by the government. The pogrom of 1983 had inflicted a profound wound on the collective consciousness of Tamils.

The riots of 1983 left a lasting imprint on the collective consciousness of the Tamil people. For many it led to exile and refuge in foreign lands, for others to a heightened sense of alienation from the state that spawned radicalism; for others again, it contributed to the erasure of identity, a refusal to be incorporated in a given identity. Many Tamils clung to the illusion of a single collective agent—the Sinhala people—as being responsible for what had happened. (Wickramasinghe 301)

The conflict between LTTE and Sri Lankan military continued unabated throughout 1984. The unarmed civilians were the new target of LTTE. On May 14, 1985, LTTE massacred 146 civilians in Anuradhapura. In retaliation, Army took custody of hundreds of Tamil civilians, and most never returned to their homes. After the 1983 violence, LTTE had absolute control over the civil society of Jaffna. The Sri Lankan ethnic conflict caught international attention after the Black July violence. India was already a part of the negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the Sinhala-Tamil conflict. However, there was a deception in the Indian government's approach to Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. On the one hand, India made all efforts for peace talks between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil militants; it also gave military training and financial assistance to LTTE. While elaborating on India's initiatives to bring peace to Sri Lanka, Asoka Bandarage quotes the observation of K.M. De Silva on the paradoxical foreign policy of India about Tamil insurgency from his *Managing Ethnic Tensions*:

This double standard on separatism and terrorism – to crush separatism ruthlessly when it is seen to pose a palpable threat to the Indian polity. . . . and yet to feign ignorance of the existence of training camps and ‘bases’ for Tamil guerrillas and terrorist groups on Indian soil . . . continues to be one of the great stumbling blocks to cordial relations between India and Sri Lanka. (Bandarage 115)

The year 1987, Sri Lanka witnessed more bloodshed and devastation. The massacre of 127 passengers at Trincomalee bus station on 17 April and a bomb explosion killing more than 100 civilians at Colombo bus stations were the most ruthless attacks by LTTE in 1987. India had taken many initiatives for mediation between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil groups between 1983 and 1987. Sri Lanka announced a peace treaty with the Tamil secessionist groups on 29 July 1987, in which India was also a party. As per this accord, India sent 6000 soldiers of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to disarm LTTE. Very soon, the conflict between IPKF and LTTE erupted. IPKF suffered heavy losses as they were asked to show restraint in countering the LTTE. India was compelled to withdraw IPKF by the end of March 1990. India had to pay a heavy price for its engagement in Sri Lanka. On May 19, 1991, the former prime minister Sri. LTTE cadres assassinated Rajiv Gandhi while he was on an election campaign in Tamil Nadu.

After IPKF withdrew, the LTTE intensified their armed rebellion with new vigour. Several prominent politicians, including ministers, were killed. The attempts by the government of Chandrika Bandaranayake to restore normalcy in the country during 1994 yielded no results, as the LTTE cadres assassinated the UNP

presidential candidate Gamini Dissanayake while peace talks were undergoing. The government forces began a major military offensive against the LTTE and captured Jaffna in April 1996. The LTTE, though it had to retreat into Vanni, attacked the military base of Mullaitivu and killed around 1200 soldiers. On July 24, 2001, LTTE's suicide bombers attacked the international airport of Colombo and destroyed eight military aircraft, and six commercial planes, causing one-billion-dollar damage. Countries across the globe condemned this act, and the USA declared LTTE a terrorist organisation. Thus, the civil war in Sri Lanka had so many ups and downs for both sides and continued without any respite until Ranil Wickremasinghe, the then Prime Minister, and Velupillai Prabhakaran signed a memorandum of understanding on February 22, 2002, for a permanent ceasefire. This truce was made possible by the mediation of Norway and the international pressure on LTTE. As per this MoU, the government accepted the Demand to form an LTTE-controlled Northern and Eastern Province. However, LTTE withdrew from the pact in April 2003. Sri Lanka under Mahinda Rajapaksa defeated LTTE after several years of fierce battle, and the final announcement of the government's victory over LTTE came on 19th May 2009. Almost all leaders of the Tamil Militant organisation were killed, including Velupillai Prabhakaran ending the three-decade-long ethnic conflict.

The portrayal of ethnic conflicts and civil war in postcolonial Sri Lankan English literature is relevant to this research topic. Whether Tamil or Sinhala writers, ethnic riots and the resulting social trauma have been central to their creative expression. In one of her poems, titled 'Big Match 1983', quoted in

D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke's *Sri Lankan English Literature & The Sri Lankan People 1917 – 2003*, Yasmine Gooneratne, one of the most influential writers of postcolonial Sri Lanka portrays the desolation that gripped the lives of Sri Lankan people after the 1983 communal riots that escalated later into a civil war: "The joys of childhood, friendships of our youth/ravaged by pieties and politics/screaming across our screens her agony/at last exposed, Sri Lanka, burns alive" (Goonetilleke 80).

Against the backdrop of the contested history of Sri Lanka, this chapter examines its Anglophone postcolonial literature about the ethnic tensions and resulting civil war. Additionally, it is essential to analyse the historical factors that contributed to the introduction and proliferation of the English language in Sri Lanka and its effects on society.

English language, the official language of administration during the British colonial rule, was considered an instrument of divide and rule as it promoted the Westernized elite minority of Sri Lanka who could get English education and marginalised the rest of the population. The urban-born English-educated class absorbed Western values and received patronage from the colonial government. This Westernized privileged section never admired the national independence movement, and after independence, they made all efforts to maintain the supremacy of the English language. The English language also helped the native Sri Lankans understand Western political concepts and literary expressions. Though Sri Lanka had produced literature in English during the period of colonial rule, a substantial part of English writing by Sri Lankan authors belonged to the post-independent

period. During the 1960s and 1970s, Sri Lankan literature in English was mainly known by two illustrious writers- Michael Ondaatje and Carl Muller. Around four decades since the 1980s, Sri Lankan literature in English has been shaped by ethnic conflict and political turmoil that halted people's lives. The entry of women novelists was another vital shift during this period. The recurrent riots, terrorist attacks, and bloodshed were significant concerns of Sri Lankan English writers during the civil war. Punyakante Wijenaik, Ediriweera Sarachchandra, Nihal de Silva, James Goonewardene, and Michael Ondaatje were notable among them who represented the socio-political cataclysms during the insurgency.

The literature produced by Tamil authors during the troubled times of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka has strengthened the cause of Tamil upheaval. Literature written in the Tamil language is conversant with Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka as it evokes cultural identity associated with the place. As Chelva Kanaganayakam observes:

One of the important reasons for the indeterminacy that surrounds the relation between nationalism and literature is that both in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, the idea of Tamil nationalism has always been associated with territory. Territory, in the past, did not imply a nation, but it certainly affirmed a collective identity. Territory means much more than boundaries—it implies land, landscape and a particular way of life shaped by the constraints of space. And this has been a distinguishing factor in Tamil literary history from the earliest times when landscape determined how people lived, what values they held

and how they shaped their sense of a collective identity. (Cheran 84-85)

The undeniable influence of Western tradition was the most remarkable feature of Sri Lankan English literature in its formative years. Much of the English literary expressions during the colonial period followed Western conventions in form and content. Postcolonial Sri Lanka witnessed a gradual but steady evolution of an independent body of English literature. Novelists like Carl Muller, Raja Proctor, and Suvimalee Karunaratne depicted Sri Lankan society's rural and cultural plurality. The cross-cultural relationship was a crucial thematic concern of these writers. Carl Muller's novel, *The Jam Fruit*, published in 1993, tells the story of a love affair between a Burgher Catholic girl and a Sinhalese Buddhist young man. In his *The Illicit Immigrant*, published in 1977, Raja Proctor describes the relationship between a Sinhala Buddhist girl and a Hindu Indian migrant. The urban-rural divide is the central concern of James Goonewardene's novel *Call of the Kirala*. The worthiness of rural life is highlighted by Punyakante Wijenaik in her novels, *The Third Woman* and *The Waiting Earth*. Collin De Silva's *The Winds of Sinhala* (1983), Ediriwira Sarachchandra's *Curfew and Full Moon*, and James Goonewardene's *Acid Bomb Explosion* can be read as historical novels.

Rajiva Wijesinha, an academician turned political activist, has written four novels, two collections of short stories, and several articles. His first novel, *Acts of Faith* (1985), is a political satire written against the backdrop of ethnic conflicts. The novel's central concerns are the burning of the Jaffna Public Library and the subsequent massive violence against the Tamil population. *Days of Despair*,

published in 1989, was a sequel to his first novel. The last novel in the trilogy, *The Limits of Love*, was published in 2005. His first collection of short stories, *The Lady Hippopotamus and Other Stories*, was published in 1991. *Servants: A Guide*, the second collection of short stories, was published in 1998.

D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke's *Sri Lankan English Literature and Sri Lankan People 1917-2003*, published in 2005, is a significant academic enterprise on Sri Lankan English literature. Goonetilleke divided his book into two sections: English literature published before and after independence. He analyses different socio-political factors operated through the literary expressions of different periods. The ethnic conflicts, the civil war, identity politics, and Western colonialism all influenced and shaped the thematic concerns of postcolonial Sri Lankan writings in English. The outbreak of conflict between radical outfits like JVP and the state stirred the imagination of the short story writers like Rajini Obeyesekere and Gamini Akmeemana in the early 70s. The ethnic strife and the subsequent civil war that ravaged the social fabric of Sri Lanka have become a recurrent theme of Sri Lankan English writers since the 1980s. Suvimalee Karunaratne's *Lake Marsh* (1993) and Padma Edirisinghe's *The Curse* (1998) are two critical works that present the social life of this ethnically divided country.

The impoverished lives of villagers during the civil war are the central concern of Elmo Jayawardena's novel *Sam's Story*, published in 2001. The protagonist, Lata, of Suvimalee Karunaratne's novel, *The Vine* (2001), speaks about the "babies dashed against walls and killed, to save bullets" and brings out the ruthless massacre of Sinhala villagers by LTTE. The ideological differences

between the Tamil minority and the majority Sinhalese-led government are presented by Nihal De Silva in his debut novel, *The Road from Elephant Pass*, through the characters of a woman LTTE cadre and a Sinhala Captain. Though a healthy relationship between them blooms based on mutual love and respect, it meets with the inevitable failure as the divide created by the ethnic conflict is so powerful that it can devastate individuals' lives. The ethnicity and ideologically motivated insurgency had even caught the imagination of the Sri Lankan playwrights. T Arasanayagam's play, *The Intruder*, was set against ethnic conflict.

The early poetry in English by Sri Lankan writers during the colonial period was highly influenced by British and contemporary Indian traditions. The publication of Patrick Fernando's anthology, *The Return of Ulysses*, in 1955 marked a positive turn in poetry in form and content. He portrayed the social reality of living through two cultures after independence. Poetry in English also dealt with the pain of alienation and the sense of loss resulting from the constant communal riots and insurgencies. Jagatheswari Nagendran and Rose Aserappa were two noteworthy poets who presented the issue of ethnic conflict and the role of LTTE very vividly in their poems. Punyakante Wijenaikē also pictured the terror unleashed by LTTE in her poem, 'An Enemy Within':

I lift my head. Black clouds of smoke
 Came drifting towards me.
 Red tongues of flame dance in between
 The black smoke to the tune of water hoses.
 Where am I?

My eyes getting accustomed to smoke,
 See in the distance the dark shapes of towering buildings.
 But they stand in darkness like
 Tombstones licked by tongues of fire. (Goonetilleke 23)

Jean Arasanayagam's *Apocalypse '83* collection was woven around her experience in a refugee camp after the Black July incident 1983. The growing clout of LTTE among the Tamils was symbolically depicted in the poem, 'Two Trees' by Nagendran through a juvenile tree, 'flaunting as youth and girth' (Goonetilleke 99). Rose Aserappa's poem, 'Lost Childhood,' depicts a rescued child LTTE cadre reflecting on his life as a militant and still longs for 'the gun, bullet and capsule' (Goonetilleke 101)-all images of destructive power. The deliberate choice of a hybrid parentage of Sinhala mother and Tamil father for the poetic persona in Anoma Rajakaruna's poem, 'I am Somawathee, Woman of the Border' (Goonetilleke 96) exposes the futility of identity politics. Anne Rosalind's poem 'July 1983' is a deliberation on the civil unrest and communal disturbance that ruined the peace of Sri Lanka after the Black July incident. Poets like Jean Arasanayagam, Kamala Wijeratne, and Yvonne Gunawardena addressed the issue of ethnic conflict in their poems.

The short story is another critical area where Sri Lankan writers in English stamped their presence after independence. Some of the notable figures in the short story are A. Santhan, Punyakante Wijenaike, Chitra Fernando, Lalitha K. Witanachchi and A.V. Suraweera.

Postcolonial Sri Lankan English literature also has an international milieu in the background of active participation of the Sri Lankan diaspora in the political and social movement in the home country. The term diaspora has been an essential concept in the academic discourse in the postcolonial context. The word has gained immense relevance in the twentieth century's transnational and cross-border migration. The concept of Diaspora has been frequently used to explore immigrants' complex identities and political inclinations worldwide. With the advent of globalisation, the diaspora was extended to more terms like immigrants, expatriates, refugees, overseas communities, and people in exile. One of the most critical factors behind migration is man's strong instinct for survival: survival from natural calamities, religious persecution, and political and ethnic violence. A strong desire for better living standards and opportunities also contributes cross border migration in the present century. This led to the creation of many sub-groups like labour diaspora, imperial diaspora, military diaspora, student diaspora, victim diaspora, trade diaspora, and refugee diaspora within the concept of diaspora as described by Robin Cohen in his seminal work on diaspora studies, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. One important perceptive feature of the diasporic community is its intense desire to maintain a connection with the homeland. Nostalgia is a condition commonly experienced by refugees forced to migrate from their home countries to foreign countries due to internal conflict, revolutionary political changes, occupation by a foreign country, or religious discrimination. This is because the immigrants have an inseparable connection with the land, the cultural heritage and its related experiences manifested in all aspects of life, such as customs, rituals, festivals, social gatherings, etc. This cultural environment of the motherland plays a

significant role in shaping the identity of immigrants. The sense of loss that immigrants often harbour is transformed into an ardent desire to reclaim, at least on an emotional level, the lost homeland.

Even as cultural heritage continues to link undocumented immigrants to each other in the same country, the painful memories associated with displacement and cross-border experience create an intense longing for their motherland. Vijay Agnew explains in the introduction to his edited work, *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home*, how memory triggers a desire for reclaiming homeland: “Memories can be nostalgically evocative of imaginary homelands and places of birth and origins as well as an antidote to the struggle of the present” (10).

Avtar Brah, in her *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, authenticates the reasons behind the movement of population across the borders of countries in the present century as:

Economic inequalities within and between regions, expanding mobility of capital, people’s desire to pursue opportunities that might improve their life chances, political strife, wars, and famine are some of the factors that remain at the heart of the impetus behind these migrations. People on the move may be labour migrants (both ‘documented’ and ‘undocumented’), highly qualified specialists, entrepreneurs, students, refugees and asylum seekers, or the household members of previous migrants. (Brah 175)

Today, the term diaspora is widely used in the discourse of migration, memory, identity, transnational culture, and cultural trauma. Anh Hua, in her article, 'Diaspora and Cultural Memory', which was included in the book *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search for Home* edited by Vijay Agnew, states that the concept of diaspora is central to the discourse related to home-land host-land negotiation, transnational identities and the traumatic memory of people in exile.

Diaspora theorizing opens up the discursive or semiotic space for a discussion of many ideas: identification and affiliation, homing desire and homeland nostalgia, exile and displacement, the reinvention of cultural traditions in the New World Order, and the construction of hybrid identities, as well as cultural and linguistic practices, the building of communities and communal boundaries, cultural memory and trauma, the politics of return, and the possibility of imagining geographical and cultural belonging beyond and within the nation-state formation. (191)

Diasporic communities often feel alienated in their host land because of racial discrimination and socio-political marginalisation. To counter this prejudice, diasporic communities actively participate in the cultural and political discourse of their native countries. They struggle to revive and reinvent their homeland's artistic, linguistic, and cultural traditions. In this struggle against assimilation into the host culture, individuals of diasporic communities are connected to the collective history, culture, and memory of their home country despite apparent differences in class, gender, and language.

Sri Lankan migration across the globe has a long history, even before colonial rule. The Buddhist monks from Sri Lanka had reached several parts of the world for religious preaching. During British colonial rule, educated youth and professionals were recruited to various colonies for British Empire's service. After the Independence, Sri Lankan migration to other parts of the world occurred mainly because of ethnic conflicts and the civil war that had ravaged the country for three decades. *The Encyclopaedia of the Sri Lankan Diaspora*, edited by Peter Reeves, describes the history of Sri Lankan migration to Southeast Asian Countries as follows:

Long before the advent of colonial rule, Buddhist monks and nuns who crossed the Bay of Bengal influenced religious developments in Southeast Asia. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, large numbers of educated Sri Lankan Personnel were procured to develop the frontiers of the British Empire. While the flow of professionals continued well after Sri Lankan independence, new movements from the island emerged in the late 20th and early 21st centuries of refugees escaping the civil war and semi-skilled and unskilled labourers seeking economic opportunities abroad. (16)

Today, Sri Lankan diasporic communities have a strong presence in Canada, Australia, the USA, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, India, and European countries like France and the United Kingdom. One remarkable fact about the global Sri Lankan diaspora is that it is not a homogenous community. However, it is an incoherent group with different ethnic identities, such as Sinhala Diaspora, Tamil

Diaspora, Burgher Diaspora and Moor Diaspora. With their excellent command of the English language, the Tamils of the northern province were able to take advantage of the colonial government's decision to recruit Sri Lankan civilians for their colonies in other parts of the world. Most of them permanently settled in the new destinations. The influx of Sri Lankan migrants in the UK accelerated after World War II. Most Sri Lankan immigrants who settled in the UK during the 1950s and 1960s were medical professionals. The migration process to the UK continued without any interruptions until the government passed the Immigration Act of 1971, by which the entry of immigrants to the UK was restricted substantially. Another phase of Sri Lankan migration to the UK began when large-scale riots broke out after the Black July incident in 1983, and soon ethnic conflict turned into a civil war. Though there is no specific data about the number of Sri Lankan settlers in the UK, the Labour Forces Survey of 2006 estimated their number as more than 100000. The rise of ethnic conflicts and communal riots that devastated the island between 1983 and 1996 triggered large-scale migration, mainly from Tamil minorities to other countries like the USA, Canada, Malaysia, Singapore, and Western Europe. As per the data published by *Migration Profile of Sri Lanka* by the Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare on Sri Lankan diaspora: "The diaspora was estimated at one million as of 2010, one-quarter of all Sri Lankan Tamils with significant diaspora population in Canada (200000-300000), UK (180000), Germany (60000), France (40000-50000), Switzerland and Australia (40000)" (29).

As Sri Lankan diaspora communities in Europe and USA did not share collective and cultural identity because of their fragmentation based on ethnicity,

their response to the socio-political movements in their homeland also varied according to their ideological affinity. On many occasions, the Tamil diaspora in the UK openly came out in the street to protest the repressive actions of the Sri Lankan government against the Tamil minority and raise funds for the cause of an independent Tamil state. Such expressions of solidarity with militant groups often undermined the reputation of diasporic communities in their host country. The political activism in support of LTTE on foreign soil created tension among the natives, and they tend to perceive the Tamil diaspora as a security threat. The migrants were seen as 'other'. Camilla Orjuela, in her article, "Divides and Dialogue in the Diaspora during Sri Lanka's Civil War," explains how the Tamil diaspora in UK and USA mobilised support for the armed struggle for an independent Tamil State in Sri Lanka under the LTTE:

The strong diaspora support for the LTTE was demonstrated by the massive participation in the events organized around the world on Heroes' Day in November where LTTE martyrs were honoured and the yearly speech of LTTE's leader was broadcasted. The diaspora, through well-organized and skilled advocacy work, its ability to mobilize large-scale protests and-in some constituencies in Canada, and its UK significance as a vote base, were able to use the space of the host countries to further their political projects in ways that were impossible for Tamils remaining in Sri Lanka (Orjuela_71)

On the other hand, the Sinhalese diaspora was relatively minor in size and too actively responded to the political turmoil in their homeland. However, their voice

was not louder though they were committed to preserving Sinhalese identity at any cost and safeguarding their country from Tamil separatism. Unlike the Sinhala diaspora, the Tamil diaspora was more expressive and aggressive in their protest against the oppressive Sri Lankan government during the civil war. The Sri Lankan Tamil immigrants across the globe could easily connect emotionally with the sufferings of their brothers in the homeland since they carried within them the traumatic memory of the violence and bloodshed related to the ethnic conflict. On the other hand, the Sinhala diaspora was mainly unaffected by the civil war in the homeland since their migration had essentially not connected with their homeland's political turmoil. The other side of the story is the diaspora's constructive participation in their host land's political activities. Despite their distinct and opposing ideologies, the Sinhala and Tamil diaspora members could maintain a harmonious relationship with them. The provision shops, owned mainly by Tamils, were the meeting point for both Sinhalese and Tamils. One remarkable fact about the Sri Lankan diaspora is that the Tamils always had the upper hand due to their numerical strength in most European countries.

Many Sri Lankan expatriate writers have represented the horror and savagery of the civil war that devastated Sri Lanka. Yasmine Gooneratne, the Sri Lankan Born Australian writer, portrays the problem of acculturation of Sri Lankan immigrants in Australia in her novel *A Change of Skies* (1991). She depicts the cross-cultural anguish of a young Sri Lankan couple in Australia. Though this novel is silent on the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, Gooneratne's second novel, *The Pleasures of Conquest*, addresses the mutual animosity between the ethnic groups in

her homeland. She portrays the rise of ethnic nationalism and the role of British colonial rule in creating an ideological polarisation among the island nation's population that ultimately leads to civil war. Nihal de Silva's novel *The Road from Elephant Pass*, published in 2003, gives us graphic details of war and survival. The theme of this novel is the love between Vasantha Ratnanayakayam and Kamala Velaithan, who belong to two different clans. The novel expressively portrays the difficulties the lovers encounter because of the civil war in Sri Lanka and the subsequent realisation of love abroad. His second novel, *The Far Spent Day*, describes the political upheavals in Sri Lanka during the twenty-first century's first decade. De Siva exposes the unfair and corrupt political system in Sri Lanka that allows self-serving politicians to manipulate society and government for personal gains. The author also gives a significant space for portraying the ethnic strife and the brutality of the civil war.

The central concern of Romesh Gunasekera in his collection of short stories *Monkfish Moon* (1992) is locating the identity crisis of Sri Lankan immigrants in Britain. His first novel *Reef* published in 1994, also explores the diasporic sense of rootlessness. This novel has been written in the pattern of culinary fiction portraying the indigenous food of Sri Lanka. Memory mapping is a central concern of the novel through which the novelist explores the idea of home. Gunasekera further develops the theme of the identity question of the diaspora in his next novel, *The Sandglass*, in which he explores the inseparable bond between individual identity and the collective identity of the diaspora.

Another British Sri Lankan writer who wrote on the ethnic war in Sri Lanka was Ambalavaner Sivanandan. He was very popular in Britain as a black socialist activist. His much-celebrated novel *When Memory Dies* (1997) narrates the history of Sri Lanka through the lives of three generations. His impartial analysis of the roots of ethnic conflict helps the reader understand Sri Lankan ethnic politics and how it has destroyed the country's social fabric. Diasporic memory plays a vital role in the novel in recreating the historical and political background of the civil war in Sri Lanka.

In her novel *If the Moon Smiled*, Chandani Lokuge, the Australia-based Sri Lankan diasporic writer, sketches the psychological unsettling of immigrants in the host land. This novel's thematic concerns are dislocation, migration, and cross-cultural negotiation. She portrays the alienation and cultural conflicts confronted by the immigrants through the character of Manthiri. Manthiri's mental struggle to integrate herself with the culture of her host land while retaining the collective culture of her homeland is representational. Chandani's next novel, *Turtle Nest* (2003), explores the theme of identity and the search for roots. The novel presents the distinct landscape of Australia juxtaposed with coastal Sri Lanka. Aruni, an adopted girl by a Lankan couple settled in Australia, undertakes a trip to a coastal village in Sri Lanka in search of her biological parents. In *Encyclopaedia of Sri Lankan Diaspora*, Peter Reeves describes the inner conflicts of the protagonist in search of her cultural roots and the subsequent identity crisis:

Aruni, adopted by Sri Lankan parents in Melbourne returns to Sri Lanka to find her roots. With her orphaned eyes, Aruni's perspective

is bereft of the security of position, she is disposed of both mother and motherland and through her story of return and discovery, Lokuge explores both the temptations and torments of belonging to places and people. (67)

Chandani portrays the dual loyalty of immigrants in her third novel, *Softly as I Leave You*. The novel represents the fragmentation and divided self of the diasporic community through the character of Uma.

Michelle de Krester, an Australia-based Sri Lankan diasporic novelist, writes about immigrants' identities. Her second novel, *The Hamilton Case*, published in 2003, is written in the form of a thriller. Set in pre-independent Sri Lanka, the novel vividly depicts the island nation's history and the ethnic divide imposed through the British cultural invasion. Krester, being a member of the Burgher community, is conscious of the cultural divide in her homeland, which finds a place in the novel. The main concern of her third novel, *The Lost Dog*, is her quest for knowledge. In *Questions of Travel* (2012), Krester attempts to analyse travel's political and philosophical aspects.

Antony Jesuthasan, better known by his pen name Sobhasakthi, portrays his experience as an LTTE child soldier in his novel *Gorilla* (2008). This France-based Sri Lankan diasporic writer represents the predicament of refugees and migrants in his short stories and novels. The novel *Gorilla*, which is autobiographical in content, depicts the actual account of his involvement in the civil war as an LTTE child soldier. The novel deals with forced displacement, migration, and changing identity.

His second novel, *Traitor* (2010), is based on the massive violence and bloodshed in Sri Lanka after the burning of the Jaffna library, the symbol of Tamil heritage.

V.V. Ganeshanathan is another influential Sri Lankan diasporic writer who has explored the transnational identity of Tamil immigrants in North America in his novel *Love Marriage* (2008). The novel is about the Sri Lankan diaspora in America and their hybrid cultural association. Through the character of Yalini, the novelist depicts the double loyalty of diasporic individuals and their fluid existence in the host land.

The American Sri Lankan writer Ru Freeman is concerned with the class consciousness of Sri Lankan society. Her first novel, *A Disobedient Girl* (2009), presents the impact of class divisions on the individual's relations with others. In the friendship between Latha, a servant girl, and Thara, the only daughter of wealthy parents, the former faces unexpected difficulties caused by a society structured around class hierarchy. Freeman depicts the ravaging civil war and its resultant communal polarisation in Sri Lanka in her next novel, *On Sal Mal Lane* (2013). The street named Sal Mal Lane in Colombo symbolises the deeply entrenched division in the pluralistic society of Sri Lanka.

America-based Sri Lankan anglophone writer Marry Anne Amirithi Mohanraj mostly writes about cross-cultural negotiations and the collective identity of the Sri Lankan diaspora in America. Her novel *Bodies in Motion* (2005), structured around two Sri Lankan migrant families, advocates healthy sexual practices.

Shyam Selvadurai, a Sri Lankan expatriate in Canada, was born to a Tamil father and a Sinhala mother. Most of his novels deal with the ethnic conflict in his motherland. His first novel *Funny Boy* (1994), is an autobiographical novel that centres around the character Arjie. Through Arjie, the author depicts his homosexuality. The novel objectively portrays and narrates the ethnic conflict and civil war in Sri Lanka. The catastrophic effect of war on children is the highlight of the novel. In *Cinnamon Garden*, Selvadurai presents the fag end of British colonialism in Sri Lanka. He also explores the role of colonial rule in strengthening the class consciousness and racist mindset of Sri Lankan society.

Karen Roberts, a California-based Sri Lankan expatriate, writes about the cultural clash confronted by the Sri Lankan diaspora in California. This dichotomy of double loyalty is vividly presented in her first novel, *Flower Boy*. The most unforgivable act of burning the Jaffna Public Library by the Sri Lankan soldiers and subsequent bloodshed are persuasively portrayed in her second novel *July* (2002).

Sri Lankan diasporic literature also evokes wide-ranging critical responses from various quarters. There are extensive critical writings on Sri Lankan diasporic fiction. However, the representation of civil war and ethnic discord in Sri Lanka in the literary expressions of expatriates have been explored and studied from various angles. Maryse Jayasuriya, the author of *Terror and Reconciliations: Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature*, has published numerous articles on Sri Lankan women's diasporic writings. In her article, "Legacies of War in Current Diasporic Sri Lankan Women's Writing", published in the journal *Asiatic*, Volume 10, June 7, 2016, she examines the trauma of war represented in Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand*

Mirrors. In her article ‘Terror, Trauma, Transitions: Representing Violence in Sri Lankan Literature’, Jayasuriya describes how the postcolonial Sri Lankan writers represented the 1983 riots against the Tamils in their works. She analyses how contemporary writers depict the burning of the Jaffna Public Library, an icon of Tamil culture and tradition and the subsequent ethnic conflicts that led to large-scale violence against the Tamil minority. While commenting on the treatment of ethnic polarisation portrayed in Nayomi Munaweera’s *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, Jayasuriya elaborates on the depiction of the female suicide bomber in the novel.

In her article, ‘Violence as a Site of Women’s Agency in War: The Representation of Female Militants in Sri Lanka’s Post-War Literature.’ T. N. K. Meegaswatta describes how the representation of female militants in the Sri Lankan novels written after the civil war deconstructs the image of stereotypical powerless woman rooted in the mindset of the society:

These women challenge interpretations of female militants as misguided pawns of a male patriarchal project. In spite of the youthful malleability they exhibit in their response to LTTE ideology at the early stages of their membership in the LTTE, they have evolved with experience to emerge with a strong sense of individuality and critical thought independent of the dominant rhetoric of the movement. (37)

The female suicide bomber, like Saraswati in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, represents the liberated woman instead of a victimised woman.

Sanghamitra Dalal, in her chapter titled, ‘Identity and Mis/Identification: The Asylum Seeker in Roma Tearne’s, *The Swimmer*.’ in the book *Literature, Memory, Hegemony* edited by Sharmani Patricia Gabriel and Nicholas O. Pagan, discusses the concept of identity in the context of transnational mobility and forced displacement as represented in Roma Tearne’s novel *The Swimmer*. According to Dalal, in *The Swimmer*, Tearne is concerned with the deliberate reconstruction of diasporic identities in the context of growing suspicion and hatred towards immigrants, as revealed in the brutal killing of Ben Chinniah by the police:

Ben’s shocking murder by the Metropolitan Police, who mistake him for a Pakistani terrorist, signifies the increasing problematics of identity construction in moments of crisis, specifically in relation to the loss of the right to asylum and resources in a nation increasingly gripped by the terror and fantasy of the “British other.” (94-95)

Thus, “Lankan protagonist, Ben Chinniah, whose identity is dramatically transformed from Sri Lanka’s “Tamil other” to a “Pakistani terrorist when arrives in Britain, the country he had hoped would give him sanctuary” (Dalal 103).

Sanghamitra Dalal also writes about the hostility of natives against asylum seekers in the context of the looming threat of terrorist attacks in the context of rising international terrorism.

Jeslyn Sharnita Amarasekera and Shanthini Pillai published an article entitled “Re-arranging Sri Lanka as a site for reconciliation or a perpetuation of trauma: Roma Tearne’s *Brixton Beach*” in *South Asian Diaspora*. They explore the intricacies of war-torn Sri Lanka’s relationship with the various ethnic groups

narrated in *Brixton Beach*. Alexandra Watkins' *Problematic Identities in Women's Fiction of the Sri Lankan Diaspora* examines the contributions of Sri Lankan woman diasporic writers to Postcolonial literature. Marianne Godard, in her master thesis *Sri Lankan Migrants and Identity in Contemporary British Fiction: Roma Tearne's Art of Memory*, explores the historical and political dimensions of Roma Tearne's novels in the context of Postcolonial South Asian diasporic fiction.

In chapter 3, titled "War, Violence and Memory: Gendered National Imaginaries in Tahmima Anam, Sorayya Khan and Contemporary Sri Lankan Women Writers" in *Contemporary Diasporic South Asian Women's Fiction: Gender, Narration and Globalisation*, Ruvani Ranasinha explains how Sri Lankan diasporic women novelists represent personal and collective memory associating them with the violence and brutality of the civil war. Ranasinha examines how Roma Tearne narrativises the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka objectively without going into the historical details. However, according to Ruvani, Tearne's depiction of the civil war and ethnic conflict lack depth in her novel *Mosquito*: "Tearne's dehistoricised, exoticised mapping of Sri Lanka's conflict overlooks its entanglement with the brutal Sinhala Marxist insurrection and equally vicious countersuppression in the South: it simplifies the conflict in terms of an endemic Sinhala-Tamil binary" (122).

In her article "Fragmented Ethnic Identities of Individual Women: Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*" in *Women Writers of South Asian Diaspora: Interpreting Gender, Texts and Contexts*, Shashikala Muthumal Assella explores how Munaweera has treated the historical forces that shaped Sri Lanka's

ethnic identities in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*. As presented in the novel, the experience of dislocation and cross-border cultural transactions determine the diasporic identity. While analysing the characters of Yasodhara and Saraswati, the narrators of *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, Asella finds that the territorial shifting significantly impacts their identity formation:” spatial locations influence the power hierarchies manipulating power and ethnic identities for both the protagonists. Thus, ethnic identity and most importantly the significance of one’s ethnic identity changes depending on place and location” (9). Munaweera also portrays the transformation of the value system of Sri Lankan society in tune with the changing power equation in the post-independent period.

In his essay, “Polarization, Civil War, and Persistent Majoritarianism in Sri Lanka” in the book *Political Polarization in South and South East Asia: Old Divisions, New Dangers*, Ahilan Kadirgaman explores the historical and social forces behind the ethnic polarisation in Sri Lanka. According to Kadirgaman, along with cultural identity, other factors like religious beliefs, caste distinctions, linguistic chauvinism, regional imbalance, and class consciousness also played a crucial role in creating ethnic polarisation in Sri Lanka: “In Sri Lanka, as in many other countries, polarization cannot be reduced to a contest between two competing forces, but instead involves multiple poles of varying levels of power” (Kadirgaman 54). In the article titled “Role of Diasporas in homeland conflicts, conflict resolution, and post-war reconstruction: the case of Tamil Diaspora and Sri Lanka,” published in the online journal, *South Asian Diaspora*, Amba Pande analyses the involvement of the Tamil diasporic community in the ethnic conflict and civil war in

Sri Lanka. She argues that the general perception that the Tamil diaspora played an aggressive role in strengthening the insurgency should be challenged. According to Anba Pande, the Tamil diaspora can play a decisive role in reconstructing the war-ravaged country. The government should accommodate the Tamil diaspora in reconciling and restructuring the post-civil war Sri Lankan society.

Postcolonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka, and the Question of Nationhood, written by Sankaran Krishna, presents an in-depth analysis of the historical and political forces that worked to construct national identity in India and Sri Lanka. The book also highlights India's engagement with the Sri Lankan government and Tamil militants during the height of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. In the second chapter of the book titled "Producing Sri Lanka from Ceylon: J.R. Jayewardene and Sinhala Identity," he explores the evolution of the ethnocentric monolithic Sinhala nationalism in Sri Lanka based on his analysis of *Golden Threads* (1984), a book authored by J.R. Jayewardene, the former president of Sri Lanka. The Buddhist legacy of Sri Lanka, the supposed purity of the Sinhala language owing to its genetic connection with the Aryan language and the long history of monarchy are emphasised by Jayewardene for strengthening his argument in the construction of Sri Lankan- Sinhala nationhood.

In the introduction to her edited work *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home*, Vijay Agnew traces the origin of the concept of diaspora and its meaning through different phases of history. She also examines how memory is closely associated with the diasporic imagination; in the chapter titled 'Language Matters', she writes about how immigrants' mother tongue becomes a barrier to

integration into the host country. In their article “Touring Terrorism: Landscapes of Memory in Post-war Sri Lanka,” published in the journal *Geography Compass*, Jennifer Hindman and Amarnath Amarasingam analyse the different perceptions of the civil war in Sri Lanka. They detail how the hegemonic Sinhala ruling class constructed a prejudiced history of the ethnic conflict in the post-civil war period to consolidate Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism.

Sri Lankan diasporic writers mostly thematise a common concern in their creative works. They problematise the social polarisation created in the context of ethnic conflicts in their homeland through their narratives. The thematic concern in the diasporic literature such as the existential emptiness, transition, the inextricable relationship with the culture of the mother country, the alienation faced in the new country, and the fear of losing their cultural identity through contact with the cultural values of the new country are said to be the foundation of the expatriate community's existence.

Chapter 3

Memory Mapping: Unveiling Cross-cultural Anguish

Memory mapping as a method of representing the diasporic centrality contributes to the thematic concerns in the novels of Munaweera and Tearne. The historical and cultural landscape of Sri Lanka is a driving force for conceptualising the setting and constructing the theme of their books. Both represent the diaspora's transnational cultural negotiation and identity in the backdrop of the ethnic conflict in their homeland of Sri Lanka and the enforced displacement. The sense of dislocation and alienation that the diasporic individuals confront in the foreign land is compensated by a longing for their cultural roots. There are diverse theories about the relationship between memory and trauma narratives, and this chapter attempts to interpret the novels bearing in mind ideas in Trauma Narratives.

The diasporic individuals' intense desire to reclaim their lost culture of homeland is emphasised by Anne Whitehead, the Senior Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Literature at Newcastle University, in her *Memory: The New Critical Idiom* as: "Displacement is countered by a quest for roots (the contemporary fascination with genealogy is especially marked among immigrants and diasporic populations) and a desire for mementoes of lifestyles that have been lost" (2). This desire for roots often materialises through narrativising the memories of the lost culture, and both Munaweera and Tearne seek to establish it in their novels. Memory, being fluid and often impalpable, might be lost over time. In his *Cultures*

of Memory in South Asia: Orality, Literacy and the Problem of Inheritance, D.V.

Rao emphasises this elusive nature of memory: “Memories are intangible. Memories are the perennially endangered inheritances of the body” (9). The narrative memories protect the memories from fleeting into oblivion.

Nayomi Munaweera’s first novel, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, is a poignant reminder of the harrowing experience of the Sri Lankan civil war. Narrating the tale of two families of three generations – both Sinhala and Tamil – the novel captures the vast gulf created by the ethnocentric politics of strife-torn Sri Lanka. Sylvia Sunetra rents the upstairs of her house to the Sivalingams, a family of Tamils, but in no time, the presence of the Tamil aliens becomes a pique to her. When her daughter declines the proposal of marriage by Ravan Sivalingam, the enmity between these two families escalates. The burning of Jaffna Public Library, the seat of Tamil culture and heritage, in 1983 sparked violent protests and subsequent insurgency of Tamil radical groups, and the dissonance passed to the next generation. Yasodhara, the granddaughter of Sunetra, leaves the island with her family and settles in the USA. But even in a foreign land, the cycle of violence that shattered her homeland continues to haunt her, leaving a permanent scar on her psyche. Besides capturing the Sri Lankan civil war from diverse perspectives, the novel also explores the intricacies of immigration and how the Sri Lankan expatriates negotiate their culture and memories of their homeland with the new American home. On the other side of the conflict is Saraswati, a young Tamil girl who is not as fortunate as Yasodhara and could migrate to a foreign state to escape from the traumatic experience of the homeland. Haunted by the devastating

experience of rape and war, Saraswati joins LTTE and becomes a suicide bomber by choice.

In *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, Munaweera deftly narrativises the memories carried within by the individuals on their dispersal to a foreign land. Set in the postcolonial political turmoil in Sri Lanka, the novel captures the memories of the central characters with anticipation of devastating civil war on the line of ideology. The historically rooted contradictions become apparent even in conceptualising the newly emerged independent island nation's flag. Sri Lankan national flag is juxtaposed with another flag representing the ethnic minority of Tamils. The emblems of ferocious animals embossed on the flags of the majoritarian Sinhala government and Tamil nationalist force reflect the aggressive stands taken by the two ethnic groups in their attempts to establish their supremacy over the country. The author sets the mood of the novel by symbolically portraying the deeply seated ethnic polarisation of the Sri Lankan population at the beginning of the novel:

Behind the retreating Englishman, on the new nation's flag is poised a stylized lion, all curving flank and ornate muscle, a long, cruel sword gripped in its front paw. It is the ancient symbol of the Sinhala who believe that they are descended from the lovemaking between an exiled Indian princess and a large jungle cat.... But in the decades that are coming, race riots and discrimination will render the orange stripe inadequate. It will be replaced by a new flag. On its face, a snaring tiger, all bared fang, and bristling whisker.... A raffle toting

tiger. A sword gripping lion. This is a war that will be waged
between related beasts. (Munaweera 10)

At the novel's beginning, a prognosis of the impending political conflict that dragged the island nation into a bloody civil war for about thirty years is presented. The attempts to assert the ethnic and linguistic identities of the two major groups – Sinhala and Tamil – became stronger after Sri Lanka emerged from the shadow of British colonial rule as an independent nation. There was a strong demand from the Buddhist Sinhala votaries for establishing an ideal state where Buddhism was the state religion and Sinhala was the official language. This demand was opposed by the Tamil and Muslim populations, who advocated equal status for Sinhala and Tamil languages. Munaweera has portrayed the hostility lying deep in the Sinhala population against the Tamil minority through the words of Seeni Banda, a servant of the Rajasinghe family. During one of his visits to the local tea shop, he speaks to a group of children “We Sinhalas are Aryans, and the Tamils are Dravidians. The island is ours, given to us from the Buddha's hand long, long before they came” (26). When Mala, the young daughter of Rajasinghe, questions the rationale behind his theory, he continues his outburst against the Tamils: “Tamil buggers, always crying that they are a minority, so small and helpless, but look! just over our heads, hovering like a huge foot waiting to trample us, south India full of Tamils. For the Sinhala, there is only this small island. If we let them, they will force us bit by bit into the sea. Swimming for our lives” (26).

The early signs of distrust between the Sinhala majority and the Tamil minority have already started to disturb the otherwise peaceful atmosphere of Sri

Lanka in the late 1950s. Though Nishan, the Rajasinghe boy, is relatively immune to the alarming tea shop rumours of “They are killing Tamils in Colombo” and “This is a Buddhist country. Such things cannot happen here” (27), his school days are being spent under the shadow of impending disaster.

The Oxford-educated Ranasinghe, who is called the Judge living in a posh house in Wellawetta town, is careful to assimilate the etiquette of the elites to maintain a distinct identity from fellow Sinhalese. His unexpected demise and financial crunch force his wife Sylvia Sunetra to give the upstairs of her newly built house on rent. Though she has strong resentment against the name Sivalingam, her prospective tenant, she rents the upper portion of her house to the Tamil family. However, there start disputes soon with the new tenant, as quarrels become frequent, exposing the cultural difference more apparent as “overnight the upstairs becomes foreign territory, ruled by different gods and divergent histories, populated by thick braided, Kanjivaram sari-clad women, earnest bespectacled young men, a gang of kids, one walnut lined grandmother and the unsmiling patriarch” (38). The cultural clash between the Tamil tenant and Sinhala landlady moves into a new dimension as the Tamil film songs interrupt the Buddhist hymns.

The Tamils, fond of classical music and occasional film songs, are orthodox against the Sinhalese taste for modern music. Sunetra’s outburst, “Bloody Tamils everywhere. What all have I done in another life to deserve this invasion business?” (39), is self-expressive of the mounting tension created by the forced negotiation with “other” culture. Sunetra is ignorant of the blooming romance between the youngest of the Sivalingas and her daughter Visakha. The adolescent romance

between Ravan and Visakha gradually develops into a passionate relationship. It crumbles when Ravan proposes to her, which she cannot endorse as she cannot believe that “the difference between them could be blown away like dusty cobwebs” (44). Ravan has no qualms about accepting a girl of his family’s choice as his wife, while Visakha marries Nishan. Ravan’s Tamil wife and Visakha give birth on the same day, and the birth of Yasodhara and Siva brings the two warring families of Sunetra and Sivalingams closer to each other. Siva and Yasodhara grow up following the pattern of Ravan and Visakha, and three years after the birth of Yasodhara, Visakha gives birth to another girl – Lanka. However, Sunetra is not ready to accommodate the culturally alien Tamils and her impulsive comment on the ethnic background of the three-year-old Siva during a photo session embarrasses Yasodhara: “Are you teaching my granddaughter Tamil?” (62) and makes her reflect on the first time that she is different from Siva: “It was the first time we knew without question that we were different, separate and that this difference was as wide as the ocean” (62).

This difference is mainly established through the difference in the cultural practice followed by various communities. Yasodhara is made aware of her ethnicity created by perceived cultural differences and territorial separation. As Stephen Spencer observes: “an alien subjectivity, a being who exhibits characteristics notably different from our own, whether gender, race, class, custom or behaviour” (8). The constant reminder of the other creates a group consciousness which makes it distinct from other groups, creating a separate identity. Stephen Spencer further argues that “The construction of a group as ‘other’ depends on the social and historic

character of a nation and is parasitic on developments in science, social theory and belief systems that function to create an identity a sense of nation” (11). The social and historical character of Sri Lanka and its belief systems have evolved through the continuous conflict between Buddhist-Sinhala culture and Hindu-Tamil culture, where other ethnic groups like Muslims, Christians and Burgers play minor roles. Yasodhara’s Sinhala identity is forced upon her by her mother during social interaction, allowing the dominant culture to construct an individual’s identity.

Though the younger generation grows up listening to the frequent racist comments by elderly people like Sunetra – “They are darker. They smell different. They just aren’t like us” (73) – at the age of ten, Yasodhara and Siva are re-enacting a life that was once a part of their mother and father. The secret underground room is their destination of the paradise of childhood pleasures though the country is witnessing cataclysmic political fallout due to the ongoing ethnic conflict. The ethnic conflict was a full-fledged civil war when the Jaffna Library was on fire. Terror has struck the entire country as sheer madness in the name of race and ideology has engulfed society, forcing the Sivalingas to flee the country, leaving Yasodhara helpless in grief and despair.

Among many memories, Yasodhara’s memory of the island is the distressing scene of the final journey of her uncle Anuradha who was brutally murdered by a mob of Sinhalese while he was trying to protect an innocent Tamil boy. The traumatic memory associated with the violent death of her uncle and the frustration and grief of Anuradha’s mother has created a dent in her psyche. The traumatic memory associated with the ethnic conflict and terror of war significantly impacts

Sri Lankan society, divided into the lines of ethnicity and language. This individual memory related to traumatic events becomes a social experience of the larger group in which the individual is a member, forming a collective memory.

Fear and insecurity force Yasodhara's family to leave Sri Lanka for their new destination of America, where Yasodhara's maternal uncle, Ananda, arranges their accommodation. The loss and dislocation and the haunting memory of the family tragedy loom larger in their life in America. The Wellawatte house and the dark body of Siva frequently visit in her memory. However, the strangeness of the new homeland disappears once they settle in the large house of Ananda, as the family is greeted with all the native Sri Lankan spices in the house. Contrary to their expectation of exotic odours, they are "greeted with most unexpected scents, cumin, cardamom, chilli frying" (76). Ananda, being a diasporic individual, recreates his sense of homeliness by adhering to the food culture of his native country, and this recreation of this cuisine has brought solace to the feeling of dislocation of the migrants. The memory of the homeland and loyalty to the cultural practices of their community is crucial for the existence of the diaspora: formed when a section of people, either ethnic or religious, flee from their mother country towards multiple destinations, either voluntarily or forced, and try to cope with the alienation and identity crisis while trying to find a place of their own in the cultural life of the host land by holding on to the cultural identity of their own country through the reliving the memory of shared experiences in the past. In their struggle to create a space of their own in the new cultural milieu, they must evoke the memories of their

homeland and adhere to the cultural ethos of the motherland. As Peter Reeves and Rai observe in *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian Diaspora*:

A diaspora exists precisely because it remembers the ‘homeland’. Without this memory, these migrants and settlers would be simply people in a new setting, into which they merge, bringing little or nothing to the new ‘home’, accepting in various ways and forms the mores and attitudes that already exist in their new country and society. The people of the diaspora, however, do not merely settle in new countries: they recreate their socioeconomic, political, and cultural institutions as the version of ... that homeland that they remember. (18)

In diasporic formations, food and dietary habits are crucial in preserving the ethnic bond with the homeland. However, the culinary practices of diasporic groups also represent a paradoxical intersection where loyalty to homeland culture is asserted along with resistance to the intrusion of the host culture. The South Asian diasporic writers describe this paradox as the cross-cultural anguish of the diasporic groups who must constantly negotiate with their homeland's cultural practices and the reality of the host land. What Anita Mannur, in her *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture*, has stated on the culinary practices of the South Asian Diasporic communities is relevant to the Sri Lankan diasporic communities of America represented in Munaweera's novels:

For South Asian diasporic cultural texts, the “culinary” most typically occupies a seemingly paradoxical space – at once a site of affirmation

and resistance. Affirmation, because food often serves to mark defining moments in marking ethnicity for communities that live through and against the vagaries of diasporic realities, marred by racism and xenophobia. Resistance, insofar as the evocation of a culinary register can deliberately and strategically disrupt the notion that cultural identity is always readily available for consumption and commodification and always already conjoined to culinary practices. (8-9)

Further, the emphasis on culinary practices of the homeland by the diasporic communities gets a significant space in South Asian diasporic writing as food is a marker of ethnic identity and creates a sense of homeliness and belonging, as opined by Anita Mannur: “Food, as a central part of the cultural imagination of diasporic populations, becomes one of the most viable and valuable sites from which to inquire into the richly layered texture of how race is imagined and reinterpreted within the cultural arena, both to affirm and resist notions of home and belonging” (8).

The memories of the homeland preserved through the cultural practices are to be contextualised with the immigrant’s experience in the host land. The immigrants’ continuous engagement with their homeland’s cultural life and attempt to synthesise it with their present reality is rightly pointed out by different diaspora studies scholars. In the essay titled ‘Home and Memory’ in work, *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersections, Identities*, Famke Stock observes, “The act of remembering is always contextual, a continuous process of recalling, interpreting and

reconstructing the past in terms of the present and the light of anticipated future” (24). Yasodhara and Lanka reconstruct the experience of their past life in the present reality by continuously engaging with unfamiliar ways of life in their new ‘home’. Their family moved to a one-bedroom apartment six months after they arrived in the U.S., and dissonances started resonating between their parents, Nishan and Visakha. Nishan, preparing for his engineering examinations, like every migrant, is also obsessed with a strong desire to make a fortune out of the opportunities in the host country: “He has contracted the recent immigrant’s fever. He wants more, so much more. He wants to conquer this new country. Make it recognise his talents, his abilities, make it see him” (105). This passion for integrating into the mainstream social life of the host land may not always be successful. The diasporic individuals’ struggle to cope with the host country’s culture leads them to a fluid situation as their longing for the homeland and their concerted efforts to preserve its cultural practices are always alive in them. This is what happens to Visakha in America, as rightly pointed out by Yasodhara when her mother fondly touches their old family photograph: “For all her determination to build a new American life, we can see her longing to return to that lost weave of women” (107).

The locality and landscape experience challenges assimilation as the reality of the territorial presence often evokes the memory of the homeland’s landscape. Yasodhara and Lanka notice the striking difference between the experience of the Sea in America and their homeland. In contrast to the icy waters of America that make them shiver, the ocean they grew up with in Sri Lanka is warm and tender.

The more they try to assimilate the mainstream culture of their host land, the more their sense of separation surfaces; in school or the market, their otherness becomes visibly marked. Yasodhara outlines this frequently reminded otherness in terms of physical features:

In school, we learn quickly that the smell of our bodies is shameful, and must be dissipated by perfumes, and deodorant. That the hair on our legs, that fine down which we had never noticed before, must be daily shaved to smoothness. That certain kinds of clothes are acceptable and that these do not include the ones we have brought with us from the ‘old country’...” (110)

Language, one of the manifestations of culture, is also a marker of the otherness of the immigrants, as the Sinhala-accented English of Yasodhara and Lanka is incomprehensible to their fellow students. They observe that adaptation and emulation are necessary for their survival in the new country, and they change themselves in tune with the practices of the host land. However, the memories associated with the homeland are ingrained in the mind and often occupy a substantial space of diasporic individuals’ creative discourses. The landscape and greenery of her motherland find expressions in Lanka’s paintings. Lanka vividly captures the landscape and vegetation of her homeland in her paintings to regain her lost culture because of dislocation. It is an attempt to recover what is lost to the immigrant in the process of dislocation. The diasporic individuals recreate the internalised homeland experience through their artistic constructions, as Yasodhara remembers: “The entire island will burst from her brush so that entering a room

containing her paintings, one will feel the air suddenly wet, the hair will stick to one's forehead" (113). The island nation is never a distant memory for them though they are far away from it; instead, it is an integral component of their existence in the foreign country.

Adherence to religious customs and upholding the cultural norms established by social institutions are other ways the diaspora reflects its social constructions in the host land. Marriage is one such social construct, and Yasodhara's marriage with Siddharth is a pointer to the aggressive way the immigrants follow the traditional practices of getting married to someone from the same community. This unadulterated loyalty to the ethnic and religious traditions of the diaspora has been unambiguously pointed out by several theorists engaged in diaspora studies. Gabriel Sheffer, in his *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*, describes how diasporic individuals and groups maintain loyalty to the traditional values rooted in the ethnic identity in their homeland:

Furthermore, in most cases, those who maintain that sense of belonging to the same ethnonational family believe that they have common ancestors, that the same blood runs in their veins, that they have a collective history closely connected to a specific homeland, that they share cultural and social mores, values, and traditions, and that they owe a degree of loyalty to their nation, and especially to that segment of the nation that resides in the homeland. (12)

Yasodhara's bonding with her husband is triggered by his despair about the devastation caused by the civil war in his native country and the insecurity he

experiences in the host land. Despite years of happy marital life, Yasodhara's life suddenly drifts into rough weather when she discovers her husband's extramarital affair. Siddharth was forced into the marriage with Yasuhara owing to the cultural dictate of his home country and his enthusiasm to send a message to his fellow expatriates that he, too, is rooted in the traditions of the motherland. The freedom provided by the host country may favour extramarital affairs though it is considered against their homeland's cultural ethos.

In a way, Lanka's love affair with her art history professor springs from her sincere efforts to assimilate the host land's culture and way of life. However, the affair turns out to be unsuccessful because of its inherent contradictions. The art history professor who has encouraged Lanka's passion for him and has taken sexual advantage of the affair soon abandons her when he finds another crush. Heartbroken with the realisation of the infidelity of the man she loved, Lanka leaves for Sri Lanka forever.

The cultural dichotomy and the double affiliation that the diaspora encounters in the host land are vividly portrayed in Munaweera's second novel, *What Lies Between Us*. Culture is the totality of human codes that bind the members of a social group by practising these codes in all aspects of their lives and living in a land defined by geographical boundaries. In his *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity of Political Theory*, Bhikhu Parekh defines culture as "a historically created system of meaning and significance or what carries to the same thing, a system of beliefs and practices, in terms of which a group of human beings

understand, regulate and structure their individual collective lives. It is the way of both understanding and cognizing human life” (142-43).

A person’s culture evolves through his assimilation of a social group’s common traditions and way of life, which is the primary cause of their identity formation. Cultural conflict can refer to the battle of diverse and contradictory cultural values. Religious beliefs, linguistic differences, differences in dress, food choices, and ritual practices contribute to cultural conflicts. The concepts of cultural dichotomy, alienation and cultural integration are crucial in understanding a diaspora’s formation. These cultural dichotomy and alienation create great psychological stress among the migrants. They try to maintain an existence derived from the culture of their motherland with all its disadvantages, and at the same time, try to integrate their acquainted identity with the cultural life of the host country, leading to internal conflicts.

The cross-cultural anguish has a bearing on the concept of motherhood presented in the novel. The legend about the Moon Bear narrated in the novel’s prologue is used as a metaphor for motherhood that symbolises the strange nature of love between a mother and a child. The whole plot of the book is constructed through the memories of Ganga, the narrator whose name is kept in anonymity till the closing chapter of the novel, who is languishing in a prison in America for the demonic act of killing her daughter. The psychologists, doctors and lawyers who visit the narrator in prison believe that what she has done might be the impact of the trauma of the civil war in her native country. However, her version seems different: “They think that maybe growing up in a war-torn land planted this splinter of rage in

me, like a needle hidden in my bloodstream. They think that all these years later, it was this long-embedded splinter of repressed trauma that pierced the muscle of my heart and made me do this thing. “PTSD,” they say” (60). A section of her memories is associated with her troubled childhood in Kandy, Sri Lanka. The tormenting experience of being sexually abused in childhood determines the entire course of her life in the new country of her settlement. More than the horror of war immobilising fellow citizens’ lives, the narrator is affected by the traumatic experience of being haunted by a sexual predator. She is fighting a different kind— a war within herself, participating in her body and mind as she describes, “It was enacted within my body and between my bones. It took the small, delicate creation that I was, smashed it with a hammer, and set it upside down. All my pieces fell in the wrong order. I was separated from myself, and empty, echoing spaces were opened in me for a darker inhabitant” (61).

The memory of this devastating incident of molestation at the tender age of twelve shapes her perception of the world connected with her lived experience in the host country. Unaware of the perpetrator’s identity of such a heinous crime, she attributes it to Samson, their domestic help. The enormity of the impact creates a fatal injury in her psyche, and she carries the memories of the sacrilege forced upon her innocence to the new country of their settlement, constantly haunted by Samson’s image. However, leaving her familiar locality for an unknown territory is difficult as she goes through everything integral to her life: her language, the landscape, and the familiar faces. Everything in California seems to provide an instant surprise to the narrator: it is easy to live anonymously in a foreign locality,

unlike in Sri Lanka, where people find it quite natural to know the family history of each other. Like any other immigrant, she must cope with the cultural differences in the host land where assimilation appears to be a significant challenge: At school, the narrator is almost alone and is considered chiefly exotic, and she struggles to become one among her fellow students of California: “I want to be like the white girls; I want to stalk the hallways like them and wear my hair like in spiked shapes around my face like them. I want to feel some sort of belonging in this new place” (110).

Memory as a determining factor in forming a diasporic identity and social construct is also delineated through the characterisation of the narrator’s mother. The haunting memory of her inability to protect her innocent daughter from the incestual act of sexual assault by her father unsettles the psyche of the narrator’s mother. Her disposition undergoes a significant transformation in America, where the cross-cultural anguish and the shifting identity of the narrator’s mother are expressed in her own words as a testimony to the predicament of immigrants in a foreign land:

There was the before-mother and here now is the after-mother.

Another way of saying it: is the Sri Lankan mother and the American mother. Whereas the earlier had been delicate and controlled (except when she was not), kept like a hothouse, flower amid the beautifully carved furniture, the American mother is broader, a part of the world, out there among people in a way that would have been unthinkable in the world she grew up in. (117)

However, this transformed mother does not abandon the intense longing for her motherland and its landscape with rivers and sea. The experience of a real or imagined home is central to the imagination of the diaspora, and this experience is often connected to the concept of a location of desire and hope. However, the location is beyond the physical reach. There is always a contradiction in the diasporic idea of home: the imagination of the original home conceptualised through geographical space and the localised home: the new home where the diaspora engages with the host land's social settings. This contradiction about the home in the diasporic imagination is well expressed by Avtar Brah, in her, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* while explaining the concept of home as a paradoxical construct: "A home is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality" (188). Thus, the home follows the narrator's mother through memories of their life in Sri Lanka. This lived experience is also intrinsically associated with the memory of trauma, dislocation and crossing the border. Despite nurturing an intense longing to return to the home, the diasporic community also tries to assimilate with the cultural practices of the host land, leading to a kind of divided sense of belongingness. Diaspora negotiates between the culture of the homeland and the culture of the host land.

The narrator's memory of her school life in America depicts the immigrants' concerted effort to adapt to the ways and forms of social order in the new home. The narrator becomes a part of the student community and begins to share all the little

pranks and joys of students' life. However, something inside her always reminds her about her otherness. Her involvement with her fellow students is deliberate and forced as she observes, "Yet there are moments when I feel a continent apart when their belonging seems easy and unforced and my own is only pantomime" (127). She cannot accept how these American students frankly talk about private matters like divorce and rape, which are considered a disgrace in Sri Lanka. Her determination to overcome the mental block to assimilate fully into the American culture culminates in her marriage to an American artist, Daniel. The birth of Bodhi Ann has changed their lives in two different directions. Even while the narrator is busy with child rearing with the utmost devotion, the memory of her childhood trauma haunts her, and the picture of Samson intrudes in her dreams regularly. Abandoned by Daniel and haunted by the traumatic past, she seeks solace from her mother. The revelation of her mother that it was not Samson but her father who had done the most sacrilegious crime of molesting his daughter splinters her personality. The memory of the predator entangled in mystery becomes apparent: "A hand landing huge and heavy on my shoulder, spinning me around weightless as a top, a blast of arrack in my face. A gasping shudder from deep inside me. My body naming its predator" (268). Thus, the memory of the childhood trauma has a devastating impact on her identity.

The memory associated with the traumatic past in the homeland is integral to Roma Tearne's novels. Her novel *Mosquito* vividly pictures the ethnically polarised Sri Lankan society during the Tamil national struggle. Theo Samarajeeva, a Sri Lankan-born reputed novelist, returns to his homeland leaving behind the memory

of his Italian wife, Anna. He cannot explain his impulsive return to war-torn Sri Lanka when everyone tries to escape. Perhaps he wants to escape the painful memory of his beloved wife, Anna, as he “needed to put the past finally behind him” (4). However, his memories follow him in his native place until he meets Nulani Mendis, a budding artist in her teens. Nulani has drawn towards Theo, and slowly, a relationship blooms between the middle-aged widower and the budding teenage artist. Nulani’s tenderness and sympathetic attitude evoke in Theo the memories of his late wife: “Anna would have loved a child, he thought. Her generosity would have rushed in like waves, enveloping Nulani” (15). While Theo commissions Nulani to paint his portrait amid the raging ethnic conflict, Vikram, a rescued child soldier of LTTE, is growing up as a maladjusted adolescent boy indifferent to the security and comfort his Sinhala guardian has given him. Vikram lives in the tragic memory of the carnage of his family by the government forces, and the memory has created a space in his heart. He has developed a kind of indifference to everything and everyone: “The enemy entered Vikram’s house in Batticaloa and raped his mother and his sister. They raped them many, many times ... Then they took them away” (46). Memory is the process of recalling events that happened in the past and are stored in the unconscious layer of the mind. Memories can be analysed through individual and social viewpoints as an interpretation of an event from one's life, where individuals combine their past experiences to form collective memories. Memory, as an individual’s function of revisiting the past, expresses unconsciously static images of the past to the external world, thereby connecting to society and collective memories. Collective memories are socially constructed based on shared feelings, values, and the current circumstances in which the group identifies itself.

Vikram's memories, though intensely personal, are shared memory in the sense that those experience of Vikram has an intrinsic connection with his ethnic identity. The memories he recollects are the experience of the same that of other members of his ethnic Tamil group. The memories of traumatic past of Vikram are a part of the collective memory of the Tamil Ethnic minority in Sri Lanka in the sense that the memory recollects by the individual is symbolically transported to the consciousness of a particular group that can be culturally differentiated from others, thereby forms the cultural memory of the Tamil minority. Jeffrey K. Olick, in his "Collective Memory: Two Cultures", points out the relationship between individual memory and social memory: "Collective memory . . . indicates at least two distinct, and not obviously complementary, sorts of phenomena: socially framed individual memories and collective commemorative representations and mnemonic traces... (225).

Vikram's life takes a different turn when he meets Gerard, a gun shop owner who is secretly working for LTTE, who could easily trigger the unpleasant memories of Vikram's past with a handful of questions: "How do you feel about being adopted by a Sinhala? ... They killed your family. And they hate the Tamils, don't they?" (51). Gerard succeeds in tapping the anger and frustration of Vikram and slowly indoctrinates him along with a small quantity of arms training. The memory of the terrible childhood becomes a haunting nightmare for Vikram as the anniversary of the massacre of his family is nearing. He is tormented by sleeplessness and nightmares: "And, always, he would wake with a skull full of anger punctured as though by knives" (67). There is always an inexplicable aspect in

Vikram's memory, and Gerard slowly brings Vikram into his plan and begins giving him specific minor assignments. Vikram carries out his first assignment with clinical precision, and soon he is taken to Batticaloa for training in the LTTE camp. Thus, the memory of the brutal killing of his family is determining force that shapes Vikram's future course of life. He reconstructs his past through memory and perceives his future through the present social reality incorporating the lived experience of the past. By synthesising his memory with the current reality, he is associating his memory with the collective memory of the Tamil minority of Sri Lanka. Though usually, the individual perceives memory as an exclusively private experience, it operates on the cultural context in which the individual is placed. Here the memory of Vikram, though centred around his personal experience of witnessing the massacre of his own family, manifests the collective experience of the ethnic formation of Tamils in Sri Lanka in the backdrop of the ethnic conflict. Vikram's memory associated with the horrible incident of the massacre of his family when he was in his budding childhood can be taken as a purely personal experience. However, the same unique experience has a broader significance in the context of large-scale violence against the Tamil ethnic population to which Vikram belongs. Thus, Vikram's traumatic past is a shared memory of his community through which he forms his cultural memory. How an individual's psychological response to personal tragedy and its impact on their cognition is not only shaped by their hold on the memory of that tragedy but also by external forces like historical and political happenings of his time is well-established by Jas Assmann, a noted theorist in the field of memory studies. Assmann's definition of cultural memory validates the argument that Vikram's memory associated with childhood trauma has a broader

significance since it represents the wounded consciousness of the Tamil ethnic population of Sri Lanka. Jas Assmann defines cultural memory in the introduction to his *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* as:

Cultural memory refers to one of the exterior dimensions of the human memory, which initially we tend to think of as purely internal – located within the brain of the individual, ... However, the contents of this memory, how they are organised, and the length of time they last are for the most part not a matter of internal storage or control, but the external conditions imposed by society, and cultural contexts.

(5)

In Tearne's *Mosquito*, the social conditions prevailing in Sri Lanka in the context of ethnic polarisation, Vikram's private memory only manifests the more significant collective memory of the Tamil ethnic minority.

As Theo's soft corner for Nulani Mendis gradually deepens into a more intense relationship, the stories of ambushes and explosions pour in from different corners of the country. Nulani's soothing presence brings out tremendous changes in Theo as the painful memory of his late wife dissipates, and he begins to feel it as something to be remembered with peace of mind. Nulani continues to draw Theo, even though he is away in London, to discuss the matter of his second book with his agent. Vikram, on the other hand, gets deeper into the situation of LTTE's operating system. Along with Gopal, another teenage militant, he is entrusted with the mission to blow up the Katunayake Airport. The mission's objective is to paralyse the

government, as the chief of LTTE stated: “We shall grind this country to a halt. We have to let the world see that we mean business. Only then, after we’ve taught them a lesson, will they listen. There will be no aircraft. No runway, no way out! What will they do then, men? (138). The timely intervention of Gerard saves Vikram from the security forces as his companions have been killed either in the explosion or by the security forces. While returning from London after a short visit, Theo escapes uninjured from the attack on the airport by Vikram and his men.

Theo has been kept as a captive by Army in an old building far amid an impenetrable jungle and is subjected to unspeakable mental and physical torture. He lives between consciousness and unconsciousness, whacked in blood and sweat. On the fourth day of his detention, Theo is taken to another secret destination, and his captivity by Army and imprisonment in an unknown location for an extended period creates a certain kind of intersection of memory and forgetfulness in him. Memory and forgetting are interconnected, as remembering something from the past may lead to forgetting another thing. This forgetfulness may be triggered by an unexpected violent incident in an individual’s life, as in the case of Theo. The random detention and untold torture by Sinhala soldiers have triggered forgetfulness in Theo. He forgets his entire life: his memory of his late wife Anna, his memory of Nulani, his memory of Sugi – all that constitutes his past life was forgotten. Forgetting is not a total lack of memory; instead, it is a temporary failure to retrieve the experience from the stored memory. Thus, the act of forgetting, though brief in the case of Theo Samarajeewa, cannot be considered the opposite of memory. In this way, the relationship between memory and forgetting is to be understood as associative and

integrated functions of the mind as argued by Ernest Bloch, quoted by Peter Krapp, while analysing the relation between memory and forgetting in his *Deja vu*:

Aberrations of Cultural Memory:

Forgetting is not the opposite of recollection, for its opposite would be a complete breakdown, one that no longer concerns anyone, that offers no admonishment, and to which no consideration can lead. For the same reason, forgetting is not the opposite of hope-remembrance, rather it is a mode of memory as of remembrance, it is that lack, which is called absence in memory, treason in recollection.

Forgetting is a lack of faith, and here again not a lack of faith to ashes, but unfinished business. (63)

Memory slowly starts flooding his mind, and he realises that Nulani's uncle has assaulted him in the garden of his Beach House, and the memory of the girl makes him more anxious about her safety. In these moments of distress, only the memory of Nulani and his late wife Anna alternatively creeps into his mind. Their memory seems to be a relief from the pain and suffering, and he deliberately tries to relive the time he spent with Anna to distract his heavily blurred mind. For him, happiness is a thing of the past because "Happiness, he saw had left silently, slipping through a crack in the door, an open window, vanishing into the night, unnoticed, going even as death arrived" (181). To keep away from the present reality that he is a prisoner and his survival depends on the mercy of the army, he forcefully leads his mind towards the joyful days he had spent with Anna. This deliberate remembrance of Anna seems to be Theo's way of avoiding the memory of Nulani.

Theo and many other so-called traitors are handcuffed and hooked above his head in the new detention centre. He has been subjected to unimaginable cruelty and torture for nearly fourteen months in the detention cell. Dirt and filth become unavoidable in his life: “He could barely eat. The foul odours of sweat and filth, and the cramped conditions made the very act of eating repugnant” (188). He struggles to cope, and the shock and disorientation have silenced him. The memory of Nulani and anxiety over her safety draws him closer to insanity. The bitterness of his loneliness slowly dissipates when other inmates interact with him. He finds a new way of keeping his creative skills vibrant by constructing stories and telling them to the inmates following the grand tradition of Buddhism. His physical and mental affliction takes a new turn when Tamil militants abduct Theo after ambushing their vehicle in the deep forest while he is taken to an unknown destination. The torture continues, but the perpetrator is different, and Theo loses the count of days and time does not have a meaning to him as “He did not recall being dragged by his feet to a cell where semi-naked and bleeding, he was left for dead” (205). In his semi-conscious and often unconscious state, the memory of Nulani flashes his mind. He sees her in his dreams, describing how her father had been brutally burned in the daylight. Later he is told that he has been abducted by mistake, and when he regains consciousness, he finds himself in a hospital bed in Kandy. Gerard, who is now taking care of Theo, has plans for him, as the former finds an opportunity to use the reputation of Theo as a famous writer with a soft corner for the Tamils’ struggle for justice, illustrated in his book, *Tiger Lilly*.

Now fully conscious, Theo feels an intense urge to write, and narrativisation of memory is an established practice for transporting the lived experience of the individual to society, thereby transforming internalised memory into a collective experience. Theo's narratives of his memories enable the larger community to construct the history of the nation which will not be chronicled in the official construction of history. Further, reports of remembrance also allow the social groups to comprehend better historical, social, and political contexts that led to the construction of memory in the lived experience of the individuals. While analysing the interconnectedness between individual memory and cultural memory, Jeanette Rodriguez and Ted Fortier, in *Cultural Memory: Resistance, Faith, and Identity*, comment on the role of narratives in the formation of collective memory:

One means by which memory is transmitted is through narrative. The narrative emphasizes the active, self-shaping quality of human thought. Its power resides in its ability to create, form, refashion, and reclaim identity. This characteristic of the narrative is useful for our work because it illuminates the diverse modes of attending to and conveying those stories. (7)

Theo's attempt to pen down his memories contributes to the social construction of Sri Lanka's history of the ethnic war and the social polarisation that the civil war created. The excruciating experience of torture and social ostracism of Theo is to be perceived in terms of the socio-political realities of Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the Civil War. Gerard, to revitalise his creative energy, hands over to Theo a copy of his first book, *Tiger Lily*. The book's reading evokes a flurry of

memories in him and strongly urges him to transcribe his traumatic experience. What he now writes is a critical rejoinder to the ideological and ethnic war that has been devastating the island country, turning the lives of thousands of people despondent: “There is no such thing as freedom, he wrote. Nor do I want to have an ideology. I see no sense...To have an ideology means having laws; it means killing those who have different laws” (217). Although he is physically relaxed now and actively involved in documenting his memories, the tension within Theo is growing daily as Gerard is impatient and insists that Theo should write his second novel about the plight of the Tamils.

The writing exercise enables Theo to ponder deeper into his memories that, begin with the fond memories of Anna and move to the memories of Rohan and Giulia, the artist couple who have been significantly closer to him for a long time. Every detail of his life with Anna comes crystal clear to his mind from his first meeting with her, the days they spent together, the pleasures of marital life and finally, the unexpected demise of Anna – all sorts of details now get a rebirth through his pen. He is virtually knocked down when the memories of Nulani and Sugi flood his mind. It occurs to him that he is retrieving the most precious part of his past life, though it happens unexpectedly. The loss of memory and its retrieval is associated with the mind's defence mechanism. Theo's streaming of memory stops when he reaches his beach house after four years of untold suffering. The truth dawns in his mind when he comes to know that Sugi is no more, nothing is known about Nulani, and he does not get even a trace of Rohan's house in Colombo. Heartbroken with the enormity of the loss, Theo decides to complete his second

book about “hope, and about survival. About war, and also indifference” (268) and sends the first part of it to his agent in London. By this time, Nulani has found a niche for herself in London as a painter. Her solo painting exhibitions become huge successes drawing art lovers in multitudes and receiving critical acclaim from connoisseurs. The media publish articles about her painting sensibilities, and Theo’s agent in London finds some of the caricatures drawn by Nulani have a close resemblance to Theo and persuades Theo to come to London. Upon completing his second novel, Theo flies to London, where his agent turns out to be instrumental in the reunion of Theo and Nulani by arranging a meeting of the separated lovers.

An essential focus of diasporic imagination constructed on the imagined or real homeland impacts other characters in the novel. The concept of home in diasporic imagination embodies an incongruity, as rightly pointed out by Jasbir Jain in her *Diaspora Writes Home: Subcontinental Narratives* while discussing the dichotomy in the concept of home for diaspora: “The immigrants over time acquire two homes: one, the native country with its linguistic and cultural ties and other, the country to which they have migrated. Moreover, even while living in the four walls of a house abroad, they confront this division” (43). In a sense, Giulia, the Italian wife of Rohan, is an immigrant in Sri Lanka, though she is not a victim of forced dislocation. The civil war creates a sense of insecurity and fear of imminent catastrophe in Giulia. She reflects on leaving the war-ravaged island nation for the safety of Rohan, who may have to confront the same fate as Theo Samarajeeva. The frustration and insecurity of an immigrant are expressed in her loud monologue, “All I want to go home” (183). The unexpected arrival of Nulani in their house in

Colombo flashes the horrors of war in Rohan and Giulia. They are frightened to consider their responsibility to take Nulani to a safer place. After Nulani's departure to London, Rohan and Giulia must face an uncertain future in Colombo as illegal detention and disappearance of those under the army's watchful eyes become common. Giulia observes:

People didn't survive disappearance in this place. It was well known. The army came for them in the night, and then they vanished. Years later, having waited in vain, having finally given up all hope, the relatives received news. Years later the clothes of the missing were sent back. A bundle of torn and bloodied clothe, a pair of shoes with soles hardly worn, a wallet with a photograph in it was all the word they had of an unmarked death. (182-83)

Foreseeing a severe threat to their life, Rohan and Giulia leave for Venice, but Rohan carries within him the images of the beautiful beach in his homeland. He is a changed man now as the memory incapacitates him from painting. In Giulia's words, "leaving Sri Lanka had broken him in a way that she had been unprepared for" (227). The agony of dislocation is so acute in an immigrant that it changes the character and worldview of the diasporic individual. It is natural for a diasporic individual to retain a cultural link with their native land by constructing memories associated with the experience before displacement. One way to maintain the cultural values of the homeland is a kind of religiosity in preferring one's mother tongue. While in Venice, whenever Giulia enjoys the pleasure of speaking in Italian, she realises the enormity of Rohan's loss of root: "Every time she delighted in her

native tongue, she felt his loss keenly. He had escaped with his life, but other things had been lost instead” (228). The memory of war-torn Sri Lanka has put Rohan in total disarray, straining his relationship with Giulia as the fear of abandoning creeps into the heart of Giulia. She finds new meanings in an earlier remark of Rohan on the predicament of immigrants and his longing for Sri Lanka, “My country is damaged. This war will continue in the people’s minds long after it ends. They will try to pretend it’s forgotten but how does one forget when your father and your mother and your brother have been slaughtered before your eyes?” (232) The war will continue in the victims’ hearts as the wound in the psyche will torment the survivors, and a sense of estrangement clouds his bond with Giulia.

The war and consequent dislocation have affected Rohan’s creative expression: “All that had been familiar and certain vanished from his work. The war was embossed on Rohan’s life like a watermark, visible only under close scrutiny” (243). His paintings’ use of colours and textures changes as he becomes obsessed with crimson and pink, which suggest death and devastation, but his new experiments with colours bring him critical acclaim and fame. Despite his newly attained popularity as a successful painter, he is constantly reminded of the agony of the diasporic individual in a foreign land. The newspaper report about the trial and deportation of a few Tamil youths for their involvement in a credit card scam is a pointer to the predicament of the immigrants: “Young Tamil boys who left their homeland hoping to provide for their impoverished families could soon be returning in disgrace often to a worse situation than the one they left behind” (270). The immigrants are trapped in a situation where they must continuously negotiate with

the reality of the host land's cultural life. On one hand where they are often considered foreign, and on the other hand, they are in a constant struggle to adhere to the values of their lost culture. In this never-ending struggle, what helps them to hold on to their roots is the shared memory associated with an imagined homeland. Rohan's rude comment about the dilemma of the people in exile is self-explanatory in the context of the cross-cultural anguish of diasporic individuals. It is a reality check on the transnational misery of the diaspora: "Once an outcast is always an outcast. Memory is all we have to rely on" (270).

This articulation of memory is also central to the construction of diasporic identity in Roma Tearne's novel *Brixton Beach*. The art of reclamation of experience through narratives is integral to forming a diasporic individual's self. In *Brixton Beach*, Tearne verbalises the memory of the diaspora by retrieving the lived experience of home while attempting to assimilate the social practices of the new land. This mapping of cultural memory can be articulated in different ways. Tearne uses memory as an overriding force in constructing a diasporic identity in terms of nationalism and transnationalism in the novel. Diaspora uses the memory of the shared past as an agent for forming their collective identity, and this collective identity is an integral component of the diasporic concept of nationhood that differentiates their identity from others. When Edward Mallot speaks about the inherent connection between memory, narrative and national identity in his *Memory, Nationalism, and Narrative in Contemporary South Asia*, he observes how diaspora uses the memory of the shared past as an agent for forming their collective identity and this collective identity is an integral component of the diasporic concept of

nationhood that differentiates their identity from others: “memory can serve to articulate or consolidate identity, validate or deny the identity of others, celebrate or mourn past events, or establish claims to the agency, justice, or nationhood” (3). Edward Mallot’s observation can also throw light into the way Roma Tearne uses memory as an operating force in the identity formation of diasporic individuals in her novel *Brixton Beach*. A significant part of the narrative in the novel is woven around the memory mapping of Alice Fonseka, the daughter of Stanley, a Tamil and Sita, a Sinhala. The marriage between Stanley and Sita, carried out in secret, has been looked upon with suspicion and fear by many in the context of ethnic conflict. Sita’s father, Bee, has expressed his displeasure about Sita marrying a Tamil though he maintains a good relationship with many Tamil families. The interreligious marriage of his daughter has not gone well with the father as “it was impossible to deny the change that was sweeping across the country. Life would not be easy for Sita. Rumours of violence in the north, in Jaffna and the eastern part of the island were rife” (24).

Terror and hostility have a free hand in the social life of Sri Lanka, with a prominent absence of a civilised society. The death of Sita’s unborn second child owing to the negligence of the doctor and Stanley’s sense of alienation because of his preoccupation with his Tamil identity cause a schism in Fonseka’s family. The unpredictable political atmosphere, manhandling of Stanley by some unknown miscreants and the termination of her pregnancy force Sita to support Stanley’s plan to migrate to England. She says to Alice, “We have to get out of this place. the way your father has been treated, what happened to me, all these things we can’t stay

here any longer” (59). However, Sita fails to keep away from the memory of her bitter past since she carries the traumatic memory associated with her dead child. The only way to evade this painful memory is to create an alternative story of the traumatic event. Thus, she convinces herself that the child has not died, and her fondling of the baby clothes kept for the unborn child is symbolic of her unwillingness to accept the truth and safeguard herself from self-destruction: “Those long monsoon afternoons, when she used to dream of the unborn son who would change the world, had vanished. Knowing there was no longer any point in resurrecting her hopes, she carefully packed her soft cotton sorrows inside the large empty trunk that seemed to have travelled her mind” (88).

Sita carries the weight of the lost child every day. Her love for the dead child is trapped inside her, and she indulges in the memory as though she is trying to save the child from death. Her attempts to map the dead child's memory repeat like a ritual practised regularly. Sita fondles the baby clothes she brought to England like the dead child was alive and living with her. Alice finds, “Her mother had begun taking the baby clothes from the shoebox and ironing them” (244). The collapse of Sita's marital life and Stanley's parting away further change her character. Now the single most preoccupation of Sita's life is the haunting memory of her dead child. Sita's obsession with the memory of her dead child can be best understood from a medical perspective. Sita's act of ritualistic repetition of ironing the baby clothes of her dead child is a symptom of a mental disorder – obsessive-compulsive disorder – ensuing from memory hoarding. Some noticeable symptoms of OCD are unremitting agony and involuntary concentration on a particular thought. A close

observation of Sita's conduct of her daily chores and her pre-occupation with the maddening idea of a dead child reveals her mental condition of OCD as she exhibits all the symptoms of this mental condition listed by David Veale and Rob Willson in the second edition of their book titled, *Overcoming Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder*:

The main symptoms of OCD are obsessions and compulsions.

Obsessions are recurrent intrusive thoughts, urges or images which cause significant distress and can seem impossible to get rid of, no matter how you try. Compulsions are actions which are linked to your obsessions. You might carry out compulsions in the form of physical behaviour, or as a mental act. (19)

Sita's repeated act of ironing the baby's clothes manifests the persistent and disturbing thoughts about the dead child, which she cannot ignore. This obsession with the memory of the child's tragic death leads to behavioural aberration. Her unconscious mind has trapped the traumatic memory and frequently flows out through unnatural behaviour. She hoards the memory associated with the death of her unborn child and releases it through psycho-physical manifestations. *Mental Health and Mental Disorders: An Encyclopaedia of Conditions, Treatments, and Well-Being*, edited by Len Sperry and others, defines hoarding disorder as "a mental disorder characterised by persistent difficulty discarding or letting go of possessions regardless of their actual value" (552). Each time Sita recalls her memory of the dead child, she accumulates the stock of her tragic memory. In other words, she is hoarding memory which leads to behavioural disorder. Jan Fawcett defines hoarding in *The Encyclopaedia of Mental Health* as: "Hoarding, or compulsive hoarding, is a

form of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) characterised by excessive acquisition and saving of possessions and difficulty discarding possessions, usually resulting in excessive clutter” (224).

Years spent in helplessness in a foreign country with the painful memories of the past have made Sita a different person, and she fails miserably to adapt to the culture of the new government: “She had never stopped complaining of the cold, she had never been able to adapt, never been able to wear western clothes. Instead, she wore cardigans over her saris, thick stocks on her feet and a headscarf tied on her head. For this reason, as much as any other, she had begun to hate going outside” (310). Sita’s obsession with the memory of her dead child gets deeper after the marriage of Alice and a British national, Timothy West, a British citizen. The behavioural disorder connected to hoarding memory enters another phase as she takes the large doll brought from the town as her unborn child. Alice describes how Sita creates a real-life situation of her love and affection for the unborn child: “Recently she had brought a large doll from the market. The clothes, made eleven years ago, were small enough to fit the doll. Taking it out of its hiding place, she began to wash it. After that, she dried and dusted it with talcum powder. And began to dress the doll in her dead child’s clothes” (324). She is manifesting an obsession associated with OCD. The irresistible urge to fondle the baby’s clothes and substitute the unborn baby with a doll is caused by the painful memory of the tragic fate of the unborn child. An obsession is “a distressing and persistent intrusive thought, doubt, image, sensation, or urge. These mental activities can be triggered by objects or events or maybe by a distressing thought that just pops into your head”

(Veale 55). The distressing thought that instigates Sita's abnormal behaviour is the memory of the tragic demise of her unborn baby.

If Sita's memory mapping ultimately leads her into a kind of psychic disorder, Alice's retrieval of her memories associated with her childhood days spent in Sri Lanka can be perceived as a part of how she reshapes her identity as an immigrant. As an immigrant in the multi-cultural society of Britain, Alice must locate herself in the social groups. She creates a sense of homeliness amid looming uncertainty in the host land and needs to wade through the ocean of memory while struggling to spread roots in the land of unhomey. Memory mapping in literary expressions is often carried out through remembering and nostalgia. How narratives make use of memory mapping as a literary device to create a sense out of an individual's encounter with present reality, as in the case of Alice in *Brixton Beach*, is established by Dennis Walder in his *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation, and Memory*: "Situating ourselves in time and space involves us in constructing a thread of meaning that enables us to know, or think we know, who and what we are in the present: in other words, by narrative" (6). Alice tries to situate herself in the present reality of her status as a diasporic individual, thereby reshaping her identity. Retrieving her memories enables her to negotiate with the cultural practices of the host land.

Alice's self-imposed solitude at school in Sri Lanka and later in Britain has its roots in the inter-religious background of her parents. While at school in Colombo, she feels alienated as "there was no one else she wanted to be friends with. The Tamil girls in the class looked at her curiously. She was supposed to be a

Tamil, but she didn't look much like one; nor could she speak proper Tamil. Even the food in her tiffin was different from theirs" (91). This sense of otherness follows her even in the new country of her settlement, though in a different way, and in Britain, she often slips into the memory of her childhood pleasures. She is fond of riveting in the memory of the sweet moments she spent with her grandfather at the Sea House in Colombo. When her art teacher Mr Eliot comments on her painting, the memory of the days spent with her grandfather in his studio suddenly flashes in her mind "She stopped abruptly, for one sharp moment her grandfather's studio flashed before her eyes and she smelled linseed oil. A shadow fell across the whitened beach" (272).

Though the departure of Alice and Sita is well anticipated and expected by Bee, it has altogether changed his life. He cannot cope with the absence of his daughter and granddaughter, and a sense of loss and agony constantly torments him. The departure of Alice has created a permanent scar on his psyche: "The sense of bereavement cut deep into his flesh, its wound would never heal, like a lost limb, he felt their absence constantly" (260). Their absence also affected his creativity; though his paintings were marked with the visuals of seascapes in the past, they are nondescript and scratched with defaced faces manifesting his disconcerted mind.

Alice remembers her childhood days and her hometown in Sri Lanka through her grandfather's voice, which resonates in her ears. The voice of her grandfather appears in all crucial moments of her life. Some of the memories she carries within herself are associated with her ancestral home at Mount Lavinia, which has an emotional connection to her as her grandfather reminds her: "This is your first home,

you were born here” (221). Her anxiety and fear of the unknown destination where she is going to settle forever have been dispelled by her grandfather. He instils hope and confidence in her. The voice of Bee seems to be reassuring her: “If you are capable of seeing beauty in one place then you will see it in another. You must simply learn the way of seeing it. You must make it a habit, Alice. To survive, to become a painter” (222).

Thus, Mr Bee becomes a source of inspiration and a determining force in her growth as a successful artist. After her modest wedding ceremony with Timothy West, Alice moves to Brixton in their new house, which reminds her of the Sea House in Colombo. “... a sudden memory of the Sea House broke over Alice like a squall of monsoon rain. It caught her unawares and took her breath away, floating in the September sky like a kite released from its string...” (324). It is pertinent for a diasporic individual to remember the homeland and locate it in the process of assimilating the socio-economic and cultural practices of the host land. The diaspora views these practices as altered versions of the social institutions of their original country. This kind of retrieval of the memories of the original homeland in the context of dislocation and settlement enables diasporic individuals to have a hybrid identity. Alice, while trying to establish herself as a flourishing artist, also mediates with the cultural edifice of her homeland through her paintings. Memory acts as the driving force behind this mediation. Her longing for the Sea and past become intense with her attaining motherhood: “She felt an urgent desire to replicate those things that once had been her for the sake of the sleeping infant; her son, Ravi” (331). Alice’s imaginary conversation with her dead grandfather increases during her

pregnancy: “The past, returning out of banishment, was paying her a long overdue visit” (326). The past chases her everywhere, and the memory of her mother walking in through the Sea House gate and her grandfather haunts Alice. The more she tries to bury the memory of her past life in her homeland, the more it rattles her. The freshness of the beach where she spends her summer with her son Ravi and Timothy fills her heart with a strong urge to paint again. However, something that is the hallmark of Colombo penetrates her paintings. The Colombo Express and the wardrobe in her grandparent’s old garden find a place in her paintings. The birth of her son Ravi brings back memories of the Sea House in Colombo. She is overwhelmed with a strong urge to reproduce all those beautiful images for her son, as the name Ravi is restitution for the loss of her mother’s unborn child.

Her marriage with Timothy West, a Westerner, and years of living with him in England could not erode her cultural values. The predicament of an immigrant in negotiating with the host land culture is evident in the relationship between Alice and Timothy West. Timothy, being a British citizen, appears to be a total failure in understanding fully the cultural positioning of Alice, and Alice, being an Asian, can never fully assimilate the values of Timothy. This cultural dissonance is expressed by Timothy when he comments about the strained relationship between them, that “he had married her without understanding this whole Asian thing” (333). Timothy cannot bear the monotony of their marital life and ends it by leaving her. He can no longer take the stress associated with Alice and her country: “I am tired of hearing about all your dead relatives, the endless war in your savage country, your talk of politics, your spicy food, your foreign ways” (344). Once again, the memory of Bee

and his resounding voice rescue Alice from a possible mental breakdown. Her grandfather exhorts her to concentrate on bringing up the child. Timothy's tirade against Alice is directed towards all that constitutes her identity as a diasporic individual: her affinity towards the cultural ethos of Sri Lanka, her longing for roots in her homeland, her construction of diasporic identity through the retrieval of lived experience in the original home and her sense of belongingness.

All those things that Alice keeps closer to her heart are alien to Timothy. Timothy is unconsciously questioning the fluid existence of the immigrants in a foreign land who have to live with the dichotomy of double identity, which can be explained by the term "cultural hybridity" used by Waltraud Kokot, Khachig Tölölyan and Carolin Alfonso in their introduction to the edited work, *Diaspora, Identity, and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research*. The broader significance of the concept of diaspora is explained as the "global process of de-territorialization, transnational migration and cultural hybridity" (1). This cultural hybridity of the diasporic individual forces them to have a divided loyalty towards the homeland and the settled country, leading them to cross-cultural anguish.

The unexpected arrival of her childhood friend Janake's letter reminds her of her joyful childhood days with her grandparents. She feels nostalgia for her imperturbable life on the Colombo beach with her grandfather. The images of rocks, the coconut palms, and the catamarans rush into her mind. Later, after a few months of meeting with Janake in London during his short visit, she is drawn to his memory. Though she tries hard to bury the parting image of Janake, the realisation that he was more than a childhood friend pricks her conscience.

Sita's silent death leaves Alice powerless while struggling to cope with the reality of Timothy's sudden desertion. To add to her woes, her son Ravi starts showing detachment from her. All her attempts to communicate her intricate experiences to Ravi culminate in further estrangement. Ravi's insensitive attitude devastates her: "You are insane", Ravi shouts at her. "You and your bloody memories are nothing to do with me! I belong here" (363). The memories of Alice are beyond the comprehension of Ravi as he is alien to her memories associated with the island nation. These memories are weird for Ravi, and he cannot connect with them. Many scholars in the field of memory studies acknowledge the transgenerational nature of memory; for instance, Harald Welzer, in his essay, 'Communicative Memory' in work, *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, observes:

... it is established knowledge that individual memory only takes on form within social and cultural frameworks, that countless aspects of the past have a direct and lasting impact on current interpretations and decisions, that there are transgenerational transmissions of experiences whose impact reaches even into the biochemistry of neuronal processes in later generations, and that non-simultaneous bonds can suddenly and unexpectedly guide action and become historically significant. (286)

However, this concept about the transgenerational nature of memory does not satisfy the response of Alice's son Ravi towards his mother's preoccupation with her memory of the homeland. It is not always necessary for the descendants to find

significance in the traumatic memory of their parents as there is always a discontinuity in the transmission of memory from the actual victims of the traumatic event and their descendants, as substantiated by Ernst van Alphen in his article, 'Second-Generation Testimony, Transmission of Trauma, and Postmemory':

The normal trajectory of memory is fundamentally indexical. Memories, partial, idealized, fragmented, or distorted as they can be, are traces of the events of which they are the memories. There is continuity between the event and its memory. And this continuity has an unambiguous direction: the event is the beginning; the memory is the result. In the case of the generation of survivors, the continuity between event and memory is hampered. There has been an indexical relationship, but the memory in which it results is too unprocessed, that is, un-experienced. (485)

Ravi, the son of an English man, has grown up assimilating the cultural practices of his father without being influenced by his mother's cultural background as the continuity of the memory is hampered since his mother's memory is an unexperienced experience for him.

In *The Swimmer*, memory mapping is integrated with the description of the locality and the theme of travel by using a multi-layered narrative technique engaging three female characters to interlace memories with localities. All three narratives together constitute the centrality of memory mapping. Using three different narrators who present the memory associated with the same person helps bring out the contradictory ways the individuals relate the experience of tragedy and

personal loss motivated by their cultural upbringing and status in a social group. The three narratives woven around the memories of three different women of different ethnicities and localities give the novel a polyphonic expression through which multiple layers of truth and history can be constructed. Locality in the host country and how the diasporic individual negotiates with it play a decisive role in the concept of home in dislocation. The memories of Anula, Ria and Lydia focus primarily on the past, present and future, respectively, revealing how personal and collective memory shape the identity of individuals and shift the course of their life.

Mobility across borders and memories of the homeland are recurring patterns of diasporic imagination. The diaspora's travel, either within the country of settlement or across international borders, contributes significantly to the vision of its longing to return to its original or imagined home. For a diasporic individual, the sights of certain new places and landscapes may evoke memories of the homeland. The landscape Anula sees on her way back to the airport after attending her son's last rites evokes memories of the familiar terrain of Sri Lanka and not only reminds her of her identity rooted in ethnicity and locality but also evokes the thought that she is a stranger in the land where she has arrived. This intersection of memories of the homeland in terms of locality and the reality of the host land in terms of space is often a determining force in the diasporic imagination as presented in *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersections, Identities*. Femke Stock states in the second chapter titled "Home and Memory" that: "At the core of the concept of diaspora lies the image of a remembered home that stands at a distance both temporally and spatially" (24).

This distance of time and space vanishes when the diaspora starts to negotiate with the territory and landscape of the host land.

That the migrants' experience of journeys, border crossing, and short and long journeys through the landscape of the host land they undertake to establish roots in the new land at times remind them that the geography and topography of their home country is the central point that Sabine Marschall explains in the introduction to her edited work titled *Memory, Migration and Travel*:

Memories of other journeys and destinations fuel the imagination and filter into the ways the original homeland is 'remembered' or imagined. Some members of the diaspora suddenly discover emotional resonances, a deeply felt affinity with places that they have never seen before, but in which they believe their ancestral roots run deep. (14)

In Tearne's, *The Swimmer, the immigrant's experience of dislocation and memories of their homeland are constantly correlated with their physical journey*. Ben, the Tamil refugee in England, often recalls his experience in his home country of Sri Lanka. Ben's memories of his homeland and the perils of ethnic conflict are contextualised with his arduous journey from Sri Lanka to Russia and Russia to England. *The Swimmer*, divided into three sections, portrays how memory drives immigrants to construct their idea of home and identity formation. The first section of the novel, narrated by Ria, begins with her memory of a chance encounter with a mysterious swimmer in her house in the suburban of East Anglia. The unknown intruder's presence in her premises triggers the memory of her father: "A place

where my beloved father had walked with me in the matchstick woods, and the place where, after his death, I returned to briefly in despair” (11). Thus, the relationship between place and memory is established in the beginning. Ria’s recollection of Ben’s first physical appearance establishes his ethnic identity: “I could see he was young, and as he turned and picked up the shirt that lay on the grass, I saw he was very dark, and somehow I felt, even from this distance, foreign” (13).

Ria’s memory mapping is not presented linearly, as her memories of Ben overlap with those associated with her strained relationship with her brother Jack. These overlapping memories of Ria juxtapose the insurmountable hazards of an illegal immigrant and the hostile political atmosphere in the host country. Jack, being vociferous against unlawful migration, represents the growing hostility among the locals against the immigrants in Britain. Ria’s life engulfed with monotony, has been overshadowed by inner solitude though external and material dreariness dampens her spirit. She ruminates: “Solitude creates a peculiar inner life” (16). This inner life is marked by her barrenness and the departure of her husband, Ant, who could not think about a family without children. One of Ria’s sweetest memories is associated with the experience of breastfeeding her brother’s daughter. Since she cannot become a mother, the only way she can feel the pleasure of the body of a lactating woman is by secretly holding the newborn baby against her breast. She “picked Sophy out of her cot and held her against my cotton T-shirt. Then I put her mouth against me. I had wanted someone to suck my breast.... I wanted to feel what it was like to nurse her. I wanted to feel the tug and demand of another life” (27)

The arrival of Ben in this solitude surprises her and changes the course of her life as this mysterious swimmer has radically changed her body and mind. Even before her first encounter with Ben, Ria feels a rejuvenation of her creative power. The thought of a possible meeting with the unknown intruder in her privacy enables her to compose a new poem. Earlier, while struggling to overcome the sterility of her mind, she complains: “Everything had dried up inside” (14). The parallel life she has imposed upon herself becomes repetitive: “Unbroken silence, frightening, to begin with, soon becomes a way of life” (16). However, the rhythm of her inner life changes with Ben’s arrival and her mind’s sterility transforms into fertile as she is abuzz with poetic creation. The magical transformation from sterility to productivity is outlined: “The emptiness I carried around within me receded slightly. I felt moulded in wetness and light” (18). The repeated reference to the barrenness of Ria is juxtaposed with Ben’s memory of the sea in Sri Lanka, and Ria’s passionate love affair culminates in her attaining motherhood.

The part of the riverbank closer to Ria’s house is a landmark of hope and frustration for the immigrants. Ben meets Ria in this part of the riverside, in the same spot where he meets his tragic end. The space located on the riverbank thus becomes highly symbolic. Ben swims across the river to reach Ria, who leads an imposed inner life characterised by her sterility. On the other hand, Ben’s connection with water is evident as he emerges from the river. His association with water is further emphasised through the memory of Anula when she calls him her swimmer. One of the most loved passions in Ben’s life in his homeland is spending hours together in the sea. On his arrival in England, Ben’s first thought was that he

would not survive in the country's bitter cold and yet the sea's sight has a healing effect on him as it reminds his native place though he is miles away from Sri Lanka. Ben brings the landscape of Sri Lanka through his memory to the landscape of East Anglia, thereby converging the two geographically distant localities. The story subtly suggests that the concept of locality, home, and identity are constantly changing in the context of transnational migration.

Ben, who appears as a mysterious swimmer, can be identified with the element of water and ends the sterility of Ria and this illegal migrant, a security concern for locals, providing a new life to Ria. Tearne has problematised the dichotomy of the host-land-homeland cultural conflict where the diaspora's constant worry about the assimilation of host land culture and the native people's reservations against the illegal immigrants are looked through the prism of transnational identity and acculturation. The sense of otherness the immigrants often possess in their host land while negotiating its cultural setting is also questioned here. Through the passionate love between Ben and Ria that culminates in the rise of a new culture represented by their daughter Lydia, the writer has depicted the synthesising aspect of cross-cultural interactions. The possible conflict between the two contrasting cultural identities of Ben and Ria weakens through the hybrid identity of Lydia, whose ethnicity does not have any significance. This dwindling cultural conflict is also explicitly presented through the mutual love and intimacy between Sri Lankan Anula and the British Eric, who is a well-wisher of Ria and had been a close associate of her father. The disappearance of ethnicity and the emergence of transnational identity is further envisaged in the last scene, where Lydia eagerly

awaits her grandmother at the airport. Lydia's wholehearted acceptance of her grandmother counters the rejection and exclusion experienced by Ben while seeking asylum in Britain and Anula's frustration over the indifferent bureaucracy with whom she was forced to negotiate. On the other hand, Lydia's cultural hybridity, because of her mixed parentage with different ethnicity, is poised to contest the cultural and ethnic constructs that differentiate human beings along the lines of ethnic identities.

The narrative technique of interconnecting all three memories of three female characters of different generations and ethnicities also indicates this cultural synthesis in the context of transnational migration and dislocation. What began as memories of individuals became the narratives of collective memory. The writer narrativises the memories of three individuals into the collective memory by keeping the continuity of their recollections and associating these recollections with their respective countries' historical, social, and political contexts. Most of Ben's memories of his mother are recollected during his intimate moments with Ria, and Ben's picture of his mother is that of a brave woman. Ben must negotiate with dual concerns of his identity: the indifferent government from whom he seeks asylum and the political turmoil in Sri Lanka. Though Ben must cope with the anguish of dislocation, he cannot escape the emotional burden he carries within him of his country as the news about the attack on Sri Lankan cricketers in Pakistan has moved him greatly. His longing for his homeland and the pain with which he was forced to leave his country is explicit when he remarks: "Leaving wasn't a simple thing. I

stood on a tarmac stairway and smelled the air and looked over the land where I was born” (99).

The immigrant’s intense longing for the homeland and emotional connection with the past life have a haunting experience in Ben. Ria, a British woman who never had a cross-border experience, cannot understand the cross-cultural anguish experienced by Ben, despite having a solid relationship with him. Neither could she emotionally connect with his knowledge of forced displacement and transnational cultural conflict. While Ben meditates on the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, Ria keeps silent as she knows: “Whatever experiences had defined him, I would never be a whole part of” (99). For her, all those traumatic memories of Ben are things of the past and have nothing to do with the present.

Anula’s sense of loss over her son's death in a foreign country is inherently connected with her grief over her husband's disappearance from her home country. On her journey to the airport, Anula shares her loss with an Italian woman. Her tragedy is transformed into a collective failure and bereaving not only her son’s death but the genocide of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. This sense of collective shock is again reiterated when Anula shares her grief with Eric, who, in turn, narrates his loss as his son was abducted and killed brutally in Afghanistan. The personal loss of an individual gets a broader meaning when shared by others who have similar experiences, irrespective of time and place. An individual’s memory associated with their loss is a part of collective memory as the site plays a significant role in evoking the memory of failure, as seen in the shared grief of Anula and Eric. How the personal memory of loss is associated with collective memory through the

place is the emphasis of Julia Creet's argument in her introduction to *Memory and Migration: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Memory Studies*: "Individual memory is a product of collective memory rather than the other way around, and place, particularly linked to the idea of truth, is as much an effect of collective memory as collective memory is produced by place" (7-8). The locality where the individual has been placed acts as an agency for forming collective memory. Ben, while in conversation with Ria, recollects his cousin's death:

One memory, my cousin went to the hospital to work as usual.... As he cycled up to the entrance, an army officer shouted to him to stop. So, he stopped and started taking out his ID. The officer shouted at him to raise his arms above his head. My cousin tried to get his hand out of his pocket but wasn't quick enough and the soldier shot him in the face. (58)

The brutal murder of Ben by British police reminds us of the violence unleashed against the Tamils by Sinhala soldiers and other government agencies of Sri Lanka.

Violence and bloodshed in Sri Lanka are replicated through the relentless chasing of the suspected terrorist by London police and the subsequent killing of Ben. The demarcating line between the nation's borders becomes irrelevant for the immigrants as the deterritorialisation of locality is an essential aspect of the diasporic imagination of home. The nostalgic memory of Ben, the refugee, the traumatic memory of Anula and Ria, and Lydia's transgenerational memory converge in a particular locality of Suffolk countryside. The three narratives of

memory transcend time and space, thereby evolving into a representation of collective memory.

Although Anula shares her grief with Eric and later with an Italian woman, she shows certain contradictions in her perception of her hosts and host land. This notion makes her think of Ria as a “cold, white woman without feeling” (147), though she considers Eric soft and understanding. Her experience with British colonial rule in Sri Lanka might have influenced her view. However, unlike her innate dislike for the British, Anula falls into a passionate relationship with Eric. This paradox can be best explained as migrants’ struggle to negotiate with the culture of the host land and their fluid existence. Anula’s reflections on the fate of Ben are shaped by her experience of British colonialism in her country. Her status also moulds her perceptions of Ben’s tragedy as a foreigner in Britain. On the other hand, Lydia’s narrative acts as a uniting force of two different cultural worlds: Anula’s constructed world of Britain and the real world of Britain with all its contradictions experienced by Ria.

The news about her son’s death upsets Anula, and every sound and movement around her brings back her son’s memory. “The truth was everything made me think of him. The whole world was tied up with him, the sun, the moonlight on the sea, a small animal scurrying across the garden, a bird in flight, a fish arcing through water” (126). She associates the vitality and vibrancy of all lives around her with the young and energetic Ben. The words of the police officer informing the accidental killing of her son pierce deeply into her mind. The sight of

her son's belongings, such as his clothes, his toys from childhood and his certificate, paralyses her with shock and grief:

Memories rushed forward, rolling, and flattening out against my lucid brain, giving me word pictures again and again. So, even as I struggled to deal with one image, raising my head above the waters, I was knocked back by another. Remember, remember, my mind screamed. My mind had turned into a monster. (130)

The concept of home in the discourse related to diasporic imagination needs to be clarified in the context of transnational migration and the cross-border mobility of people worldwide. This shift in the meaning of home is well explained by Eric when he considers a particular locality as meaningless as he cannot continue within a territory in the context of the global mobility of human beings in the present era: "The twenty-first century is full of non-places. There are waiting rooms and stations, and airports. There is no fixed place called home anymore, so they tell me.... People carry their homes in their heads. It's how things are now, and we must live with this change. To find home whenever we travel is a gift" (171).

The geographically situated home is replaced with an imagined home in diasporic imagination. In his *Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities*, Zlatko Skrbis defines the concept of homeland as "spatial representations which are influenced by political and cultural factors, rather than a simple fact of geography. It is important to view the homeland as a constructed and imagined topos rather than a definable entity" (38). Thus, the notions of home and homeland are constructed images in diasporic imaginations as diasporic individuals

are forced to build their homes in the country of settlement, replacing their original homes. In making a home, immigrants integrate themselves with the cultural stream of their host land. Along with the memory of the geographical, political, and cultural impacts of their original homeland, the socio-political factors of the host land are also considered for this constructed home.

Anula's decision to draw her son's face before his body is taken for a funeral is the most potent act a mother might have done in her whole life. She pulls her beloved son's face sitting beside his lifeless body. It seems to Anula that she is chronicling the entire life of Ben through remembrance while drawing his face. It might be her ritualistic offering to the dead son. With each stroke of her pencil and each feature of his face, she is also drawing him in her memory. It does not need extra effort to draw Ben's face as she "knew instinctively, with the past my brain still functioning, there would be the long years when I would do nothing else" (203). Surprisingly, the details of Ben's funeral elude her memory. Her thoughts drift away as the priest, and a few mourners sing hymns associated with the ceremony. It is important to note that forgetting does not mean a total loss of memory but rather a momentary inability to recollect past events. The interrelatedness of forgetting and remembrance is well established by Anne Whitehead: "Forgetting is an active agent in the formation of memories, and it is because memory and oblivion stand together, are entirely 'complicit' with one another, that both are necessary to enable life" (121). Anula's forgetting of the funeral details can be considered a temporary absence of memory.

Lydia, the fifteen-year-old daughter of Maria Robins (Ria) and Ben Chinnaih, constructs her past on the structure of her memory associated with her mother. The entire memory mapping of Lydia is carried out while answering the queries of Stephanie, a psychological counsellor. She recalls that her mother had frequently visited a lawyer, but Lydia was clueless about the purpose of these visits. When the police inform her of the news of her mother's death, Lydia typically responds and shows no sign of agitation. Something uncanny is there in the recollection of Lydia on her journey to the hospital where her mother's dead body was kept. She is so specific about the expressions and reactions of police personnel and hospital staff rather than her thoughts about her mother. Only when she is taken to her mother's dead body does her suppressed emotions find expression through screaming as she watches the lifeless face of her mother "squashed and flattened and with a purple bruise that seemed to cover her forehead" (237). She remembers that Eric had consoled her though he struggled to contain his pain. The old kitchen in Eric's house becomes the most comfortable place for Lydia while she is mourning her mother's death.

Lydia's memories do not flow in a linear movement. Her memories move around Eric and his eel-catching, and she remembers how she went with Eric for eel-catching in a boat. One of her memories is about how her schoolmates had taunted her about the Mongolian blue spot on her bottom. This memory is significant because it is a testimony of her mixed origin. According to Eric, it is a birthmark she got from her Asian father. However, the unexpected tragedy that has befallen her changes the attitude of her fellow students towards Lydia. First time in

her life, she starts thinking about how she is different from others because of her mixed parentage. During their eel-hunting adventures, Lydia learns more about her father and his country from Eric. Lydia's recollections on the details of her father's homeland presented by Eric reveal how the history of a nation is constructed by dominant power during the colonial period. From her narrative, the image of colonial Britain is built as a benevolent nation that had brought development and progress to Sri Lanka. The British "built roads, and astonishing narrow-gauge railways...." (254). Lydia also recollects what Eric told her about her Tamil father, a qualified doctor forced to leave his country to save his life. Lydia's visit to the exact spot where her father had been killed is significant as she represents a new culture of the transnational generation. Lydia goes to the site of her father's tragic death along with Eric at her wish. While standing where her father was shot dead, Lydia can recreate the incident in her imagination with all details, including the flight of her fear-stricken father, hoping to get across the river before the police could catch him. It is in the same spot in Ria's private garden on the bank of the river Ben first reaches by crossing the river in the darkness of the night and stealthily entering her house. Though coincidentally, the place where Ben first meets Ria is the exact spot where he is shot, and it carries a symbolic sense of a site that represents the meeting point of hope and frustration that the refugee ultimately confronts.

Ben's death needs to be seen through the lens of British society's attitude towards refugees, as the tendency to equate refugees, often with terrorists, remains strong in British civil society. The indifference and hostility of British citizens towards the immigrants are indicated in the first section of the novel through Jack's

outburst against the illegal immigrants. The way the British Government deals with the issue of refugees is reflected in the newspaper headlines Ria happened to see while travelling to the Home Office. The newspaper's headline, "SOFT TOUCH BRITAIN. JOBLESS IMMIGRANTS STAY HERE AND GET £ 715 A WEEK BENEFITS" (101). The headline sounded highly sarcastic to Ria as she managed to read the details under the headline: "Tighter borders are what is needed with fingerprinting of every visa applicant wishing to travel to the UK. We are also cracking down on illegal workers, with more enforcement raids than ever before" (102). The way the police hunt down Ben indicates the racist mindset of the British ruling dispensation. Ria's somewhat detached witnessing of the last moments of Ben is described in an impersonal tone: "I saw Ben, blown backwards, in the act of trying to wrench the pain from his eyes wildly and then his body, convulsing like a rabbit, turned over until at last, it lay still" (120). The killing of Ben is portrayed in terms of animal imagery and evokes the memory of the brutality against innocent animals described at the beginning of the novel. The newspapers have reported several incidents of the slaying of domestic animals in the suburban of Oxford, where the police allegedly suspected the hands of some suspected terrorists.

All five novels selected for this study construct a memory of individual immigrants situating it in a transnational cultural milieu presenting Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. Yasodhara and Lanka in *An Island of Thousand Mirrors*, Ganga in *What Lies Between Us*, Alice Fonseka in *Brixton Beach*, and Ben and Anula in *The Swimmer* constantly revisit their homeland through memory. Their intense longing to return to their land is not merely for territorial access but a desire to retrieve the

culture and the network of relationships they have left behind in their homeland. This longing for the motherland is what Dennis Walder terms as ‘postcolonial nostalgia’ in his *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation, and Memory*: “Nostalgia is usually thought of in terms of longing and desire – for a lost home, place, and/or time. But it is also more than that: it is a longing for an experience – subjective in the first place, and yet, far from limited to the individual. It is possible to speak of a group or even a whole society as nostalgic” (4).

Nostalgia for a lost home for diasporic individuals is thus associated with their specific cultural affinity with their nation and its history. Nostalgia plays a vital role in mapping the memories of immigrants in the context of postcolonial transnational mobility. Yasodhara and Lanka find themselves misfit in the country of their settlement as their private life crumbles, and they fail to assimilate into the social life of the host land. Their experience of forced dislocation and cross-cultural anxiety are intrinsically connected with their shared memory of their community in the homeland. They are burdened with double loyalty on account of their adherence to the cultural practices of their ethnicity and their attempts to assimilate the socio-cultural values of the host land. The trail of their memory is genetically rooted in the collective memory or the cultural memory shared by their counterparts in their homeland.

However intensely personal, all the lived experiences of individuals are related to the social, political, psychological, and cultural background of a community in which the individuals are members in a particular historical context. The individual memory, though constructed from the psychic residue of an

individual's past life, operates only in connection with collective memory, as personal memory is a manifestation of the shared cultural memory of the community. The cultural memory entrenched in the psyche of the diasporic individuals places them in the incongruity of two homes. Gaura Narayan, in her essay, "Tears Down This Wall: Borders, Limits, and National Belonging in South Asian Postcolonial Literature" in *Displaced: Literature of Indigeneity, Migration, and Trauma*, speaks about the dual belongingness of immigrants who carry within them the cultural memory of their homeland: "This cultural memory is channelised by the refuge-seeking migrant who seeks a safe place of material belonging in the host nation while also carrying a sense of home in the recesses of the psyche. The refuge-seeking migrant, thus, inhabits two homes at once and simultaneously" (25-26). The diasporic individual's survival in the country of settlement with their complex identity demands the retention of the cultural practices of their homeland, and this cultural retention is carried out through memory mapping and its narrativisation. Narratives effectively communicate a diasporic community's shared memory and cultural experience operating through an individual's psyche. Amid racial polarisation, in an entirely explosive political environment, the concept of home becomes an imagined destination. The home in the novels of Munaweera and Tearne conceived by the characters is to be understood in the backdrop of ethnic conflict and the problematic vision of nationhood created in the collective imagination of the Sinhala majority and Tamil minority.

Narratives play a significant role in connecting a person's memory to the historical events related to his country. Each report is the chemistry that codifies the

individual's and society's diverse life experiences and makes them accessible to the reader's senses. When individual memories become narratives, the community's collective consciousness understands the meaning of life experiences. Further, these life experiences of individuals are transformed into the history of their memories subject to constant interaction with socio-cultural historical events. The narratives are a precise explanation for investigating how individual memory interacts with social memory. The novels of Munaweera and Roma Tearne explore how personal and social memories interweave through diasporic imagination and demonstrate how history reconstructs the flow of social life from individual and collective memories.

Chapter 4

Traumatic Awakening: Decoding Psychic Chaos

A comprehensive theoretical framework is crucial for analysing postcolonial trauma and understanding the complex physical and psychological responses of those who have experienced it. Trauma narratives raise numerous questions, such as the impact of trauma symptoms on victims' mental states, the uniqueness of traumatic experiences, and the connection between trauma response and collective memory and history. While "trauma" originally referred to physical injuries, it now encompasses psychological wounds in fields like Psychology and Trauma Literary Studies. Unlike physical injuries, psychological traumas are often viewed as unhealable and require communication and understanding.

Narratives are a powerful tool for transforming seemingly incomprehensible and unhealable traumas into experiences that can be comprehended and healed. Nayomi Munaweera and Rome Tearne's novels explore the traumatic experiences of diasporic individuals, demonstrating how these experiences can lead to psychological chaos. A comprehensive theoretical framework is crucial for analysing postcolonial trauma and understanding the complex physical and psychological responses of those who have experienced it. Trauma narratives raise numerous questions, such as the impact of trauma symptoms on victims' mental states, the uniqueness of traumatic experiences, and the connection between trauma response and collective memory and history.

The novel *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* depicts how the traumatic awakening of the dislocated victims of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka destabilises their psyche. Looking at the politics of ethnic rife in Sri Lanka from the perspectives of the Sinhalese and Tamil people, this novel emphasises how the victims of the war respond to trauma and how such reactions affect their cognition, action, and behaviour. The horrors of violence and bloodshed shatter the adolescent world of the students of Sri Lanka. The sudden surge of attacks and counterattacks mar the peace of student life. On one occasion, Nishan, a teenager and the prospective father of the narrator of the novel Yasodhara, witness the selective killing of Tamil students by Sinhala radicals after stopping their train where “boys and girls are flung like bits of paper from an enormous and uncaring hand, bright blood blooming on white uniforms and bare-chested, saronged, machete-armed men enter the carriage, stalk heavy footed down the aisle” (28). Radhini, with whom Nishan has a soft corner, has been caught by the ruffians thinking she is a Tamil girl. The timely intervention of her teacher saves her from the clutches of death. “She’s Tamil. That’s enough. They take our land, our jobs. If we let them, they will take the whole country” (29) was the popular narrative for perpetuating violence against Tamils.

The animosity between the Tamil ethnic minority and the Sinhala ruling class grew into enormity when the Jaffna Library, the icon of Tamil culture, was set on fire by the Sinhala army. The open justification of this vicious act by Sinhala politicians aggravates the situation. The voice of hurt even echoes in the younger generation: “Your people burnt up our history” (76), says Siva says to Yasodhara. The ethnic tension has now entered into a full-fledged civil war. Terror has struck

the entire country. Anuradha, the husband of Mala, falls victim in the hands of a rioting mob of Sinhala youth while he tries to save the life of a Tamil boy. The sight of Anuradha and the Tamil boy engulfed in flames is shocking as “two vaguely human figures lurching in an almost comic fashion, garlanded, each, with a flaming tire. Hands bound, black rubber melting onto skin, red flames dancing skyward, funnels of smoke obscuring wide open mouths, a glimpse of damaged eye” (86). These brutalities inflict permanent marks of wounds in the minds of the survivors. However, they are not fully conscious of the depth of the traumatic experience at the time of the incident because of their belated comprehension.

The trauma of witnessing the most brutal scene of the brutal killing of her husband strikes at the foundation of Mala’s existence as she gives birth to a lifeless child prematurely. Traumatic experiences can have a profound effect on a victim's memory. When a person has a traumatic experience, their brain may temporarily shut down, and standard memory recording stops. The traumatic experience of the victim and their memory are characterised by what Professor Cathy Carruth states in her *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*: “radical disruption and gaps” (4). These temporary disruptions in the brain’s normal functioning incapacitate the victim from fully comprehending the nature of trauma. After a time gap, the survivor will only be conscious of the trauma through traumatic symptoms. Traumatic symptoms are the survivor’s response towards the traumatic event that happened in the past. These responses vary from individual to individual, depending upon the situation in which they are placed. Mala’s traumatic experience of witnessing the brutal killing of her husband haunts her memory and has a lasting impact on her life. Dominic LaCapra,

in his *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, while explaining the significance of narrativising traumatic experience, comments about the lateness of trauma: “Trauma indicates a shattering break or cesura in experience which has belated effects” (186).

Belated awareness of the trauma may occur through recurring symptoms, dreams, or a new experience that resembles the first experience. Such experiences can lead the trauma survivor to a traumatic awakening. This belated appearance of traumatic memory unsettles the mind of Yasodhara, the principal narrator of *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*. Yasodhara and her sister Lanka and their mother, Sunetra Sylvia, migrated to California with the help of their maternal uncle Ananda. The growing intolerance and life-threatening situation in Sri Lanka necessitated their dislocation. Despite all her involvement in studies and enjoying the glitzy experience in the host land, Yasodhara is haunted by the traumatic memory of her past life in the homeland. Trauma visits her in nightmares. Often, she dreams of their house in Colombo in front of the glittering lagoon and the image of a teenaged female suicide bomber: “While she unpins the sari fold at her shoulder and pulls it away from her, I see sunset-coloured bruises on her delicate clavicles. When she undoes her sari blouse, I see the grenades tucked like extra breasts under her own” (122).

On another side of the Sri Lankan coast, a Tamil family envisages becoming affluent through their children. Saraswati, the family’s fourth child, aspires to be the village teacher. However, she knows the challenges ahead of her amid an ongoing civil war. She often feels that “the war is a living creature, something huge, with a pointed tongue and wicked claws. When the tanks rumble past in the far fields, I feel

it breathe; when the air strikes start, and the blood flows, I feel it lick its lips” (124). She has already been traumatised by the memory of her brother’s martyrdom and living under constant fear of air strikes, during which her family has to rush to the trench outside their house to keep themselves unharmed. Saraswati despises the sight of rubbles of the homes destroyed in the bombing as “they look like dead bodies or mad people. Laughing through their open-mouthed doorways” (130). She gives an account of witnessing one of the recruitment drives conducted by LTTE in the Tamil populated areas. The video showing Sinhala soldiers' brutal massacres of Tamils is the critical component of such recruitment drive: “We see bodies, burned red and black, beaten into shapelessness, hung by the feet. Men slashed across the neck, limp women with babies crawling on them.... They show us burning houses, burning kovils, burning churches” (139).

Thus, what seems to be the personal horror of Saraswati is transformed into the collective trauma of the entire Tamil minority of Sri Lanka. While explaining how individuals’ experience of trauma transforms into collective trauma through cultural association, Jeffrey C. Alexander, in her work, *Trauma: A Social Theory*, takes up the observation made by Kai Erikson, the famous American sociologist and behavioural scientist. Erikson, in his *Everything in its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*, presented a sociological model on individual trauma and collective trauma as a part of his study on the effect of a devastating flood on a closely-knit community:

By collective trauma, I mean a blow to the primary tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and

impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with “trauma.” But it is a form of shock, all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared: . . . “We” no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body. (Alexander 9)

The large-scale violence against Tamils, like brutal massacres, destruction of religious centres and burning of houses circulated through videos, can evoke a sense of solidarity with the victims and survivors of the Sinhala onslaught. The attack against cultural symbols like temples and churches also creates a sense of collective loss, which is felt as a collective trauma by the larger social group of Tamils. The enormity of violence and the fear psychosis it creates is enough to melt away the sense of unity that connects the Tamil population. Collective trauma occurs when a community's unifying sense of belongingness gets dented by a traumatic event of a grand scale. Kai Erikson, in his work, ‘Notes on Trauma and Community’ featured in the book, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, edited by Professor Cathy Carruth, observes:

... gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared ... “I” continue to exist, though damaged and maybe even permanently changed. “You” continue to exist, though distant and

hard to relate to. But “we” no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body. (187)

The LTTE cadres' secret visits to the Tamils' houses are another threat the Saraswati family fears. The woman tigers who have visited their house insist that her father send Saraswati to an LTTE training camp. They argue, “Our leader teaches that women are as brave as men. We too can fight as fearlessly, as ferociously” (142). Although familiar with the horrors of war, Saraswati's most traumatic event happens when a group of soldiers forcefully takes her to their base camp. She has been dragged in front of the curious neighbours and onlookers. She has been gang-raped repeatedly by the soldiers. The ghastly incident has inflicted a deep wound in her psyche, and she has to live with this mental shock till the end of her life. The brutal invasion of her body and its trauma have been entrenched in her memory forever.

I am pulled apart, uncovered, exposed. They hold me down. Their sweat falls in shining drops and they will not let me avert my face. I am drenched and soaked. The mouths came down upon me like the salivating tongues of dogs. They tear me apart with their nails, bite me with their fangs, and their spittle falls thick across my breasts. They breathe into me. Burying their starch deep inside my body while they pant like dogs over me. Until I no longer smell like myself. Until this body is no longer mine. Until I am only a limp, bleeding, broken toy. (145)

At night, lying between her parents, Saraswati is stricken with the horror of trauma. She is unable to sleep, trembling and grinding her teeth. Trauma has penetrated so deeply that it unsettles her psyche:

I will not sleep because then the soldiers return. As soon as my eyes close, they climb all over me. Their smell drops over my head, pushes its way into my nostrils, deep into the caverns of my skull until I am full of it, fighting, kicking and scratching and then I wake, limbs thrashing, teeth grinding, fighting Appa who has climbed over me and is holding down my wrists, his face a crumpled mask from which tears drop onto me, making me fight even harder, remembering other shining drops falling. (148)

The physical turbulence she exhibits results from the psychic chaos she experiences as trauma penetrates her inner psyche. The consciousness of trauma prompts the victim to respond to the traumatic experience through specific psycho-physical manifestations. These psycho-physical manifestations are the traumatic symptoms of the traumatic awakening. Saraswati's frantic behaviour bordering on mental illness can be connected to the traumatic sign. This unusual symptom might be a reaction to a traumatic awakening.

After this devastating incident, she knows that the stigma of being a spoiled girl will stay forever, and society will not accept her. The only way to heal the wound is retribution. The determination and willpower of the women cadres shown through the videos inspire Saraswati. The conviction of the women LTTE cadres is well reflected in the words of a younger cadre: "This is the most supreme sacrifice I

can make. The only way we can get our Elam is through arms. That is the only way anyone will listen to us. Even if we have to die. As the leader says we will fight even for a hundred years for Elam. But if we are willing to kill ourselves it will take less time” (182).

The training she received from the LTTE camp transforms her into a wild jungle cat ready to pounce upon her enemies. She shows extreme kind of brutality when Sinhala villagers are massacred. Her own words bear witness to the ghastly way she kills innocent babies and pregnant women:

We want to leave dead babies and bludgeoned women with streams of blood curling down the sides of their faces. To this end, I have learned to swing my machete through the flesh of babies. I have clutched the arm of a screaming toddler and swung off her head with a single blow as her mother stood with outstretched arms, voiceless in shock. (177)

The transformation of Saraswati from a victim of trauma to a perpetrator of trauma explains that she is in a state of psychic chaos. This psychic chaos might be a defence mechanism to heal her psychic wound, and this can be done only by using violence and turning herself into another perpetrator. According to Randy Borum, an eminent psychologist associated with the Department of Mental Health Law and Policy, University of South Florida, “A desire for revenge or vengeance is a common response to redress or remediate a wrong or injustice inflicted on another” (2004:24).

Despite gratifying her hunger for vengeance, the nightmare of the gangrape continues to haunt her, shutting all the escape routes and creating a permanent scar of a defect in her psyche. Though she has chosen the path of retribution, Saraswati cannot put aside the traumatic memory of being gang-raped by the Sinhala soldiers. This is because the victim will not fully comprehend the traumatic event itself at the time of occurrence, but the belated awakening of the trauma unsettles the psyche. This contradictory nature of trauma is explained by Cathy Carruth in her introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*: “For the attempt to understand trauma brings one repeatedly to this peculiar paradox: that in trauma the greatest confrontation with reality may also occur as an absolute numbing to it, that immediacy, paradoxically enough, may take the form of belatedness” (6). This belated traumatic awakening makes the victim’s life a continuous encounter with traumatic memory. The survivor is forced to confront the horrors of psychic trauma in the present and the future, as observed by KM Fierke in his essay, “Bewitched by the Past: Social Memory, Trauma and International Relations” in the work *Memory, Trauma, and World Politics: Reflections on the relationship between Past and Present* edited by Duncan Bell: “The experience of trauma is thus becoming fixed or frozen in time. It refuses to be represented as past, but is perpetually reexperienced in a painful dissociated traumatic present” (120).

Her reactions to her traumatic experience begin a new course when Saraswati begins to show post-traumatic stress disorder. Repeated flashbacks, nightmares and even temporary psychic disorders can be the symptoms of PTSD. The psychosomatic responses to traumatic experiences like rape are considered to be

post-traumatic stress disorder. In her *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Carruth establishes a direct connection between post-traumatic stress disorder and psychic chaos:

Post-traumatic stress disorder reflects the direct imposition on the mind of the unavoidable reality of horrific events, the taking over of the mind, psychically and neurobiologically, by an event that it cannot control. As such, PTSD seems to provide the most direct link between the psyche and external violence and is the most destructive psychic disorder. (58)

Since PTSD is directly associated with psychic function, it may change the individual's behaviour. In his *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*, Scott Barbour defines PTSD as: "The term post-traumatic stress disorder, also commonly known as PTSD, refers to an anxiety disorder that some people get after witnessing or experiencing a traumatic event. An anxiety disorder is a mental illness in which the sufferer feels an exceptional level of fear and apprehension" (5). Flashbacks and nightmares of the traumatic experience, temporary mental breakdown and disruption in sleep are associated with post-traumatic stress disorder. The victim of the trauma often encounters vulnerability and nervousness. One with PTSD must relive the traumatic past, and images of the perpetrator of trauma repeatedly intrude in the victim's mind.

In the case of Ganga, the narrator in *What Lies Between Us*, the trauma is an offshoot of an abusive childhood. The narrator's friendship with Samson, the servant, becomes the reason for her psychic trauma. Representing the trauma

resulting from sexual assault is extremely difficult. Language can pose a significant challenge when describing what happened. However, by representing the trauma experienced by victims of sexual violence through literary narratives, it is possible to bring this topic, which society is reluctant to discuss, into the mainstream. The narrator's encounter with trauma begins when she is over eight years old. Once while playing with her cousins in the garden, she accidentally stumbles upon some thorny plants and gets hurt. Samson takes her into his room and pulls the thorn from her foot with tweezers. She feels a very unusual sensation running through her veins. Samson had her on his lap and was moving her body as if in a swing. She is aware that he moves her very strangely: "under me, he is rocking in the strangest way, in a motion that I had not been aware of before. A sort of fog descends, a white cloud, it's hard to see through. My father's face. He would save me, a fierce grasp, and then he releases me and smooths down the back of my dress" (45). Her innocent childhood is trampled upon. The experience of sexual exploitation by the man whom she thinks to be Samson dominates her thoughts and plunges her into the depths of never-ending fear. The memory of the repeated act of abnormal motion and gasping of the offender makes her realise that she has been subjected to sexual assault several times.

Three weeks after her eleventh birthday, she undergoes this horrific experience of being sexually abused. Little did she know then that the trauma created by this experience would haunt her for the rest of her life. After that incident, she thinks she is always under Samson's watch. While observing the mandatory rituals for seven days on attaining puberty according to the customs and the presence

of males is forbidden as the narrator believes that the male gaze would invite great dangers. However, Samson accidentally sees her, and the sight of Samson terrifies her. "I have unravelled all of Amma's plans, all of Thatha's trust. It feels as if Samson has pierced my skin, pulled back the plunger on a syringe full of shame, and shot it deep into me" (52). Since the advent of puberty, a sense of guilt along with the deep-rooted myth about the female body ingrained in her mind by her mother constantly reminds her of the sanctity of her body. This sense of sanctity attributed to the female body is further solidified when the older women exhort her about the importance of virginity.

While the narrator is entering into the adolescent world with all kinds of older women's guidance and haunted by the constant fear of being sexually abused, sudden changes in the political spectrum of Sri Lanka with its ethnic conflict are taking a dire turn which is going to change the trajectory of her life.

When driving in the night a family can be stopped and asked if they are Tamil or Sinhala. If they give the wrong answer, if they are Tamil facing a Sinhala mob or Sinhala facing Tiger cadres, they can be pulled out of their car and dragged in the dust by the back of their shirts, the women hauled away into darker corners. (59)

Nevertheless, even as the insurrection progressed, sowing great calamities, it did not directly affect the narrator's and his family's lives. None of her acquaintances or immediate relatives was victimised. Though the narrator does not have a first-hand experience with bomb blasts and suicide attacks, she is aware of the destructive power of such incidents as the media bring all of them to her drawing room.

Therefore, the trauma resulting from war is not directly felt by the narrator; she is very much conscious of the ravages of war through the media, though her experience of the trauma of war is mediated trauma.

It is not necessary for an individual to be a direct victim of a traumatic event like war or childhood abuse to understand the mental affliction caused by such a traumatic experience, as mere watching of the visuals of a traumatic event in the media is enough to feel the pain and anguish of the victims. The trauma transmitted by media is analysed by many trauma theorists, as done by Alison Landsberg, who, while elaborating on the concept of prosthetic memory in her introduction to *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, comments on the role of mass media in triggering traumatic memory of past events in individuals who are not direct victims of such traumatic event: “These memories are thus neither essentialist nor socially constructed in any straightforward way: they derive from a person’s mass-mediated experience of a traumatic event of the past” (19).

With the advancement of visual media, horror and violent incidents reach the masses very fast. Such visuals of bloodshed and brutality may create a psychological malfunction in the spectators. Allen Meek, a researcher in the field of media theories on trauma and a senior faculty at the School of English and Media Studies, Massey University in New Zealand, makes a valid point in his article titled ‘Trauma in the Digital Age’ published in *Trauma and Literature*, edited by J. Roger Kurtz: “The Research on media has long included a concern with the psychological effects of witnessing violence. The constant availability of images of human suffering has led

cultural critics to either foster empathy for others or to lament the collective “numbing” of the media viewer” (170).

Visuals of violence transmitted through mass media can create uneasiness and pain in the spectator, which may often traumatise the spectator. An excellent example of this kind of visually mediated trauma is the collective trauma that the Europeans and Americans experienced after the attack on the World Trade Centre was watched live by millions of TV viewers. Thousands of Europeans and Americans who watched the live broadcasting of the suicide attack on the World Trade Centre were affected by trauma. In this context, the observation of Jeffrey C. Alexander on mediated trauma is very relevant. In his essay, ‘Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma’, published in work titled, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, Jeffrey C. Alexander argue that “Events are not inherently traumatic. Trauma is a socially mediated attribution” (8). Though the narrator is immune to war horrors, another war rages inside her. It is the trauma of the sexual violence perpetrated against the innocent childhood that moves her into inner turbulence.:

There was a war, just not the one they are thinking of...., there was another smaller one. It was enacted within my body and between my bones. It took the small, delicate creation that I was, smashed it with a hammer, and set it upside down. All my pieces fell in the wrong order. I was separated from myself, and empty, echoing pieces were opened in me for a darker inhabitant. No one knew, no one suspected. And yet even the smaller war is not my excuse. (61)

The narrator's traumatic awakening drives her into psychic disorder. Her body and mind are in a constant struggle to claim her being. Her muddled psyche sends out signals of PTSD. She feels that Samson's gaze constantly follows her everywhere:

My body held tight. A lurching against me. Hands fumbling on my chest, rubbing against my nipples. Fingers across my mouth. A throat against my nape. He rubs against my skin, and there down below I can feel it smashing up against my flesh, grinding against my buttocks ... I know that I will never again be alone in my body. (63)

A person develops PTSD when the memories of the trauma are constantly haunting them and cannot be integrated with their identity. This failure to integrate the traumatic experience and its recurrent repetition through memories on the part of the trauma survivor is elaborated by Bessel A. Van Der Kolk and Alexander C. McFarlane in their chapter titled, 'The Black Hole of Trauma', published in work *Traumatic Stress: The Effect of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society* edited by them along with Lars Weisaeth: "The core issue is the inability to integrate the reality of particular experiences, and the resulting repetitive replaying of the trauma in images, behaviours, feelings, physiological states, and interpersonal relationships" (7).

Sexual abuse in childhood may create a severe kind of psychic disorder in the victim. Her body's reflexes invaded her mind all the time. The narrator feels her body becomes alien to her, and the physical scars continue to remind her of her defiled body. Traumatic memory devastates her mind and body.

Something has started happening inside my skin. Sprouting from my shamed heart, a dark, fibrous waterweed grows and spreads along the nerves of my body. It reaches to every far capillary and vein, turning them green, the green of algae or stagnant water. I am cornered, choked up, clogged on the inside. I know that if I am cut, I would not bleed red, but instead, a rotted putrid green. (65)

The sweeping effect of trauma has now rooted firmly inside her growing like an unwanted creeper that drains her lifeblood. It is as though an alien creature has intruded her mind. Her behaviour can be explained in terms of Freud's concept of hysteria. Freud formulated his idea of hysteria by relating it to the childhood traumatic experience of the victims. According to Freud, the cause for hysteria is "a passive sexual experience before puberty" (as in Neil J. Smelser 32). This passive sexual experience may be molestation or seduction by a close blood relative or a servant. The memory of this incest is separated from the conscious mind for the time being and accumulates in the unconscious mind. However, when the victimised child grows up, this repressed memory emerges into the conscious mind as trauma. In Freud's view, the traumatic experience of a child is more devastating, as "traumas of childhood are all the more momentous because they occur in times of incomplete development and are for that reason capable to have traumatic effects" (Smelser 33).

Soon she develops an unusual behaviour. As the memories of the sexual abuse overpower her, she pierces the skin of her wrist with the sharp edge of a knife. Until a single drop of blood comes out, she lets the knife's sharp edge pierce into her skin. This will give her a temporary respite from the burden of trauma.

Childhood trauma such as sexual abuse can lead to severe mental illnesses later, as stated by Paul Hammersley and Ruth Fox when they share the findings of their study conducted on patients with bipolar disorder who were victims of childhood trauma in their work titled “Childhood trauma and psychosis in the major depressive disorders”, published in the book *Trauma and Psychosis: New Directions in Theory and Therapy*, edited by Warren Larkin and Anthony P. Morrison. They emphasised analysing the connection between childhood trauma and adult psychic disorder. They have noted an association between childhood sexual abuse and mental illness in adulthood. They sum up their findings as:

The researchers found psychotic features in depressed adolescents to be significantly associated with an increase in comorbid PTSD, noting that traumatic events may result in perceptual distortions in adolescents that may be expressed as psychosis, PTSD or both conditions... When the events that caused the PTSD were examined, it transpired that the two most commonly reported events were sexual assault by a family member or someone known to the patient or sexual assault by someone unknown to the patient. (155)

Traumatic awakening significantly affects the narrator’s studies. She is unable to concentrate on her studies. “There is a bum in my head, a sort of heaviness and buzz that makes it impossible to pay attention. My body is always awake, wide stark awake and waiting for danger, but my head is clouded. It’s hard to pay attention to the teacher” (66). The person who defiled her is slowly leading her to sexual ecstasy. His touch, especially on the centre of her body, appears to be a

pleasing experience to her. “I am melting, like I am sweetly and softly dying” (69). A few days before her fourteenth birthday, she undergoes another sexual violence. This time it turns out to be an utterly life-shattering experience. Recognising her mother's presence, the narrator frees herself from Samson’s bear hug. But the look of pity and pleading on her mother's face makes her nerves freeze. Realising the implications of what has happened plunges her into the depths of horror. “I lie on my back, staring at the ceiling, my fingers clutching and releasing the sheets. A beast sits on my chest pushing out all the air, making it impossible to inhale. I will choke here alone” (71).

Although her parents' conversation following the incident contained some allusion to her abuser, she has neither the intelligence nor the foresight to comprehend the reality. Her mother’s accusation that “I saw it! With my own eyes. How can you say I didn’t?” (72) directed against her husband is loaded with meaning. She does not realise that her father's accidental death during that monsoon and Samson's disappearance are connected. Samson's presence and the harm he has done to her repeatedly appear in her mind with more vividness. The trauma overwhelms her even more. She has recurring symptoms of PTSD. “I can’t sleep. Every time I close my eyes, I hear him creeping up the stairs, coming for me. No one knows if he has run away or is hiding somewhere, waiting” (79). Just as she is thinking of a way to escape from the haunting memory of Samson, her aunt Mallini invites them to America. Accepting her aunt's invitation, she and her mother leave for America, thinking that she has found a way to escape the memories of Samson.

With the support and care of her maternal aunt, Mallini and her husband, Sarath, the narrator, and her mother have finally migrated to America. During their stay in Sarath's house, she shared her cousin Darshi's room. However, often in her sleep, she has been woken up by her cousin since she calls his father's name out loud and utters the word, Samson. She is constantly haunted by dreams of the ordeal she believes she received from Samson. Later, after she moves to an independent house of their own and lives with her mother, she is again thrown into the trauma of her childhood experience as the new school evokes the memory of her traumatic past. Fear and persecution syndrome overpower her differently. The physical proximity of boy students in the school reminds her of the trauma of sexual abuse in childhood. "Something deep in me shrinks every time a boy's eyes touch me. Some memory raises its head from deep within and I have to walk fast past the boy before it rises fully and erupts out the depth" (110). The memory of the traumatic past has always been there in the abyss of her heart, and it is ready to smother her in fear with the slightest provocation, like the closeness of a boy. Any boy's gaze evokes Samson's memory and reminds her of the trauma of sexual abuse in her childhood. The only way, she finds, to escape from the clutches of the traumatic memory is to keep away from the boys.

However, she has overcome the fear of the physical intimacy of boys when she starts studying at university. Her occasional escapades with boys and physical intimacy by hugging and lip-locking again draw her into the traumatic memory of sexual abuse in her childhood. Every single act of physical intimacy with boys leads her to extreme kinds of physical disquiet and nervousness. Whenever she tries to

respond to the physical advances of the boys, she always feels that: “There is always an accompanying panic, that seething of the waterweed all along my veins, a rancour rising in my throat, and I must push the boy away, leave before he realizes I am gone” (128). It is the traumatic memory of sexual abuse in childhood that leaves her disgusted, bewildered and paranoid about the lustful moves of boys.

After taking up the profession of a nurse, the narrator leads an almost isolated life. She distances herself from the opposite sex and avoids all kinds of social gatherings. However, her sheltered life ends when she meets Daniel, a budding British artist. Gradually she is drawn towards him, and a romantic love affair blossoms between them. Their relationship enters an exciting phase when Daniel starts living with her in her apartment. However, the trauma of childhood sexual assault continues to follow her in the days and nights while living with Daniel. The traumatic experience of her childhood haunts her repeatedly as nightmares, and she finds her life through sufferings a very stressful experience. Whenever the trauma visits her, she feels her “skin tearing slowly. A child crying in a hidden place. water rushing over my head. I gasp awake, gulp air” (159). The child who was sexually abused is still alive in her unconscious mind, and the past trauma can darken her present and unsettle her psyche. Annoyed by her unnatural behaviour and troubled nights of sleep, Daniel suggests she consult a professional counsellor. Though she knows that the traumatic past haunts her and the image of Samson overshadows her nights, she dismisses her rare abnormality as an everyday thing.

Despite the internal turbulence, the narrator falls madly in love with Daniel, and they get married. The narrator’s unexpected pregnancy after three years of

marriage creates a dilemma as they are not mentally prepared to welcome children. After much deliberation with Daniel, she finally decides to have the child. The birth of Bodhi Anne reminds her of the Buddhist concept of the sacredness of life. Motherhood brings significant changes in her disposition and actions as she is plagued with insomnia in the first year after becoming a mother, though she is relatively happy. A gradual but visible estrangement occurs between the narrator and Daniels after the birth of Bodhi Anne since she finds no time for physical intimacy with Daniel as she feels that her body belongs to her daughter. On the other hand, Daniel, too, is preoccupied with his newly attained stardom, and he is starting to climb the ladder of fame as an artist and has been completely immersed in the world of art. The narrator's mind, which has been completely engrossed in her daughter's care, is again moving towards unknown fear because the trauma of childhood sexual exploitation again brings her down with horror. She feels that "some childhood door is inching open" (229) again in her life. A special event like childbirth may activate the symptoms of PTSD born out of sexual abuse experienced by the survivor in childhood. The memory of the traumatic past forces her to stay locked inside the room. The narrator's behaviour can be seen as a behavioural disorder inherited from her mother. An incident she witnessed many times during her childhood was her mother closing the room for long periods or spending long periods in the bathroom. During such withdrawals, the screaming and noise of the child do not bother her. On such occasions, she feels alien to her surroundings. "It is as if I inhabit a different planet where the rules of gravity are stricter, each of my limbs pinned mercilessly to the bed" (229).

While Bodhi is growing up, the narrator again falls under the tight grip of PTSD. Unable to cope with the trauma, she often spends a long time in the shower forgetting everything and even oblivious to her daughter. She is conscious of this periodic psychic disorder. She is, in fact, anxious to protect her daughter from it as she feels Bodhi is “too fragile to hold the weight” (237). Trauma has near total control over her body and mind. The visits of trauma stop her rational thinking and even incapacitate her physically. It is as though some wild beast lying dormant in her unconscious mind suddenly wakes up and overrides her mind. She knows that only the presence of Daniel keeps the beast away from her:

Even on perfect days, there is something under my skin. Some beast that moves below the surface. I can keep it at bay, mostly. But every now and then, it awakes and unfurls in jerky movements. It is the minotaur in the maze of my body. It wakes up and howls and wants to be seen, wants to show its broken face that is also mine. It asks for sympathy or perhaps for love. It screams that it too was a child once and it was hurt. It asks why it cannot have these things: love, belonging, ease. When it emerges, it has no pity. (237-38)

Unhealed wounds triggered by traumatic experiences will continue to hurt the trauma survivor. Still, love and compassion can help heal those wounds even if they remain active. However, when love and care are not received, the scars of the mind will continue to remind the victim of the cause of that wound with more force. Here, the narrator does not get an opportunity to heal the wounds in her psyche caused by the sexual abuse in her childhood. They remain unhealed mainly because

the narrator never reveals the traumatic incident to anyone, including her mother. Narrating the traumatic experience is one of the best ways of getting relief from trauma. Telling one's traumatic experience involves re-enacting the past through recollection, in which re-working the traumatic experience in the context of the survivor's present life actively participates and allows the survivor to reconcile with the reality of trauma. This healing power of narration through recollection and recounting the traumatic memory is supported by Judith Lewis Herman, a Professor of Psychiatry at Cambridge Health Alliance, in her work, *Trauma and Recovery* when she observes that "Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims" (I).

She realises that the memories of the trauma that haunt her constantly have reached a point of terror. She also realises that the trauma that has formed inside her as a wild animal is a mirror image of herself. In the continued absence of Daniel, her inner struggle to cope with trauma grows into enormous proportions. The grip of PTSD is suffocating her being. She is subjugated to a kind of psychic chaos. She does not find any escape route from PTSD. Her inability to fight trauma's all-pervading and destructive power makes her unstable and helpless.

I want to scream and rage and fight, and there is no one to do this with. There are no adults in my world. So instead, I grasp the glasses in our kitchen one by one and throw them as hard as I can against the wall.... A crashing like sea surf against a cliff. I smash and smash until finally there is release. (243)

When she returns to normal, her kitchen becomes a remnant of the destruction left after a storm. As she cleans and restores the kitchen, her mind is also temporarily freed from trauma. Sleep becomes the most dreaded and edgy thing for her. Her dreams are alive with the stealthy arrival of Samson. She is drained as she fails to dodge Samson.

I have been running from him for so long. But I'm tired and now he's here. He has found me even in this far place. His hair is plastered in his dripping temples; my father's cast-off trousers are wrapped soaking around his legs. He smiles like something amphibious, comes closer, stands over the bed, teeth glinting. (245-46)

Her predicament explains that one cannot escape a traumatic awakening once one falls victim.

The belated awakening to the traumatic past makes her realize that her tormenter Samson is neither a distant past nor an image buried in the memory. For her, Samson is a living presence. She shouts at him in one of her nightmares, yet he utters her name repeatedly. However, very soon, she learns that it is just a hallucination. How hallucination, a disturbing symptom of PTSD, is most often associated with child abuse is the focus of John Read, Thom Rudegeair and Susie Farrelly, in their essay, 'The relationship between child abuse and psychosis', in the work, *Trauma and Psychosis: New Directions for Theory and Therapy* when they state:

The psychotic symptom most strongly and consistently related to child abuse is the experiencing of hallucinations.... Some intrusive, flashback memories of child abuse occur with awareness that the experience is indeed an internal event relating to the past, i.e., a memory of the trauma. (3)

Hallucination continues to deceive the narrator. "I go to the window, tug the curtain open a sliver. Across the street a man is waiting; he is dripping wet, a pool forming beneath his feet, shiny as knives. He raises his eyes to me; he smiles with jagged teeth" (248). On the other hand, Daniel seriously attempts to discover what troubles her. Though he is willing to help her solve the issue, something inside her stops her from telling the truth.

The change in the narrator's expression frightens and immobilises Bodhi. In utter confusion and fright, the narrator rings Daniel up and says Samson has come to claim her. The first time she has unravelled the secret buried in her heart. Daniel finds her abnormal behaviour infectious and believes that she might have inherited her mother's strange behaviour of being locked inside the bathroom when the narrator was a small child. Now it is common for the narrator to leave Bodhi alone and lock up in her bedroom. Daniel cannot bear her sudden and abnormal mood swings and decides to leave her. He also takes Bodhi with him, fearing that the narrator's eccentricity will be passed on to his daughter. When Daniel takes Bodhi to his parents, the narrator feels that an organ of her body has been removed. Taking away her daughter from her, she believes, renders her body and brain defunct.

Even though he leaves his wife alone, Daniel maintains a cordial and compassionate relationship with her. He suggests she again get the assistance of a professional counsellor. He even exactly predicts what the reason behind her unnatural behaviour is. He observes that she might have gone through some bizarre experience during her childhood, and the memory of it surfaces, causing such abnormality. However, she needs to follow his suggestion. Though Daniel has left her, his love for her never diminishes. When all his attempts to bring her into normalcy, Daniel realises that a reunion is impossible. Mentally wrecked by Daniel's decision to leave her forever, the narrator seeks help from her mother, who is now settled in their homeland of Sri Lanka. The narrator admits something is wrong with her, prompting Daniel to abandon her. The mother confesses that it was her fault that she failed to protect her child from the offender.

The narrator is shocked when the mother tells her that Samson has not abused her. If it was Samson, she could have easily saved her daughter. However, she was defenceless before the actual perpetrator. Even if she tried to expose the man behind the sexual abuse of her daughter, no one in the family circle would have believed her. They would think that she was cooking up stories. The mother's revelation evokes the memories of her traumatic experience in childhood. She feels that she is:

small again and running from someone whose footsteps thud just behind my fleeing body. But not Samson. Someone else. A hand landing huge and heavy on my shoulder, spinning me around

weightless as a top, a blast of arrack in my face. A gasping shudder from deep inside me. My body naming its perpetrator. (268)

Thus, the moment of realisation finally dawns on her. It was not Samson; it was her father who abused her. The one who had to protect her turned out to be her perpetrator. The traumatic awakening to the reality that her father molested unsettles her psyche. She inches towards insanity. She is no longer able to think coherently and rationally. Her mind is now fogged with one thought: the most profane and inhuman act of being molested by her father.

The shocking realisation that her father sexually abused her and crumbled her body and mind makes her paranoid. The scenes of Daniel caressing their daughter flash in her mind, and all those gestures of love and affection shown by Daniel to Bodhi now have a different meaning to the narrator as she finds another perpetrator in Daniel who may abuse little Bodhi as her father to her. The chaotic psyche of the narrator interprets a father's affection and physical bonding with his daughter as something atrocious; she can see a mirror image of her father in Daniel. The narrator is now led by the single motive of saving her daughter from the clutches of her so-called perpetrator, Daniel, as she is haunted by the horror of her daughter being abused by her father leads her to the verge of insanity. The only way she finds to save her daughter from the possible disaster is to finish off her daughter so that Daniel can never spoil her. Now she is led by the single motive – save her daughter from the monstrous father – what her mother failed when she was abused- the narrator will do it successfully with clinical precision.

On the pretext of taking the child for breakfast in her apartment, the narrator wakes Bodhi up from her sleep in the early morning and drives away from Daniel's house. She kills her daughter and fills the Sippy cup of Bodhi with apple juice and poison. While taking Bodhi away from Daniel's parents, she believes she saves her child from impending danger. She justifies her decision by convincing herself: "I am taking her away from people who could hurt her. Because you never know who would hurt the little girl. Sometimes it's the ones you trust most" (270). She observes that a girl is not protected even in the care of the person who is to be the most trustworthy – the father. This thinking pattern is the outcome of her own traumatic experience in childhood. This aberration of thinking is further strengthened through the traumatic awakening to the harsh reality that her father abused her. Her already distressed mind gets petrified when Bodhi asks for her father while driving towards the bridge. The word 'father' pierces the narrator and reminds her of the danger a daughter must face from her father.

It is awakening to the truth behind the childhood trauma of being sexually abused by her father that widens the wound in her psyche. Bodhi's utterance of the word 'daddy' opens the old wound "that was already haemorrhaging blood. It killed me, this word. It spoke of trust and betrayal. She was asking for her daddy. I was picturing another father and what had been done to me" (271). She fears that what her father had done to her would be committed by Daniel to Bodhi. She persuades her daughter to drink the poisoned juice in a moment of psychic disorder. A single thought drives her that the little girl is alone and no one can protect her from her possible perpetrator – her father. Though Bodhi does not want the juice, she drinks it

only to please her mother. The narrator, despite being the mother, watches the death throes of her daughter in the rear mirror of the car: “in the rear mirror I see these things: her head lolling, her body twitching and shaking, a milky froth spilling out of the corner of her mouth, her eyes rolling upward once twice thrice, and then her face settling against her shoulder. She is cradled in the car seat like a nut inside its shell” (272).

It is shocking that a mother passively witnessing the most painful and saddest sight of her daughter struggles with death. The question that looms is how a mother can poison her daughter and watch her child's final moments grappling with death. The chaotic psyche resulting from the traumatic awakening transformed the loving and caring mother into a monster killing her daughter. The narrator does not stop there. She then does something even more shocking. She lets her slip along with her daughter from the bar of the bridge towards the roaring sea beneath. To her utter dismay, she has survived with some minor injuries. However, Bodhi has been washed away by the surging water. Thus, the traumatic experience caused by sexual abuse by her father ultimately culminates in the murder of her daughter. The PTSD leads her to insanity and forces her to kill her daughter. However, a much bigger wound has been inflicted on her battered soul. The act of killing her daughter has opened a new wound bigger than the old one, as she observes: “My pain will be a secret wound blooming just under my skin, filling the whole space of my body” (282).

The narrator's mother, haunted by her failure to protect her daughter from the perpetrator, is also traumatised and starts exhibiting signs of a troubled mind

even before they arrive in America. When the narrator was ten years old, she once acted in a school play, and on that occasion, her father took several photos of her and her friends, praising her performance. The mother seems intolerant of this public show of affection and suggests going home immediately when the camera is knocked down, seemingly by accident. However, the comment made by the mother indicates that it is a deliberate act of defiance on her part: "Well, you should take pictures of the rest of us too" (32). Sometimes, suddenly, the mother wants her daughter to dance with her and in the middle of such dancing sessions, she ends it abruptly and locks herself in the room. Her father's cautious statement to the narrator that "Your mother is delicate. We need to treat her carefully" (15), indicates the unstable condition of her mind.

The accidental death of her husband has sown the seeds of guilt in the narrator's mother. She becomes almost silent after the unexpected death of her husband. When she was sixteen, her mother's behaviour changes became apparent for the first time. The mother once spent a long time in the bathroom, and the daughter must force open the bathroom only to find her mother staring indifferently at the blood flowing from her wrist. She has cut her wrist with a knife, and this misadventure is prompted by her distressed mind, overwhelmed with guilt as she firmly believes she is responsible for the unexpected death of her husband. This self-incrimination of the mother is articulated through her confessing statement: "He left us. He left us. I didn't do anything. It's my fault. I didn't do anything" (113). She knew her husband was walking to death, and she did not try to stop him from approaching danger. The mother's guilty conscience has brought sweeping changes

in her behaviour: she becomes short-tempered and tends to be furious at every single lapse on the part of her daughter. Later, the mother, who sought asylum with her daughter in America, slowly recovers from the trauma. She returns to her home country of Sri Lanka, where peace and order prevail after the bloody civil war, and the narrator's mother leads an almost peaceful life.

Traumatic memory and collective trauma are two concepts that need to be explained while exploring the representation of traumatic awakening in the narratives of diasporic expressions. All memories are not traumatic, and those memories associated with an experience which can create an unhealable wound in the psyche of the individual are called traumatic memory, which has the potential to unsettle the normal function of the victim's mind. When this memory is shared by the whole social group to which the trauma survivor belongs by association through standard cultural practices, one calls it collective trauma or cultural trauma. Events such as genocide, which traumatise a community and create incredible memories, call into question the very status quo of society. According to Jeffery C Alexander, one of the editors of the book *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, cultural trauma happens "when the members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (1). Unlike the individual victim of trauma, cultural trauma penetrates the collective psyche of the victims more slowly and unconsciously.

Roma Tearne's novel *Mosquito* represents this collective memory through the traumatic awakening of the individual trauma survivors. Theo Samarajeeva, the

novel's protagonist, must cope with the changing socio-political narratives in his homeland after ending his long expatriate life in England. He is surprised to note that the liberal Sri Lanka of his younger days is being replaced with a highly volatile one where every atrocity incident is confronted with retaliation. The social divide on the lines of ethnic affinity has claimed peace and social comradeship in Sri Lankan society. Theo observes that the soft-spoken, inclusive London society cannot be matched with Colombo: "It was a different matter in Colombo where every small injustice, every appalling act of violence seemed a personal affront. The civil unrest he had predicted in his books, the beginning of rage seemed to have been nurtured in his absence, and spread, like a newly germinated paddy field" (4). Theo's observation of Sri Lankan society in the backdrop of civil war is a prelude to the traumatic events that are to be unfolded shortly, in which he becomes a victim and a survivor.

The voice of prudence does not have a space in the ethnically divided society of Sri Lanka. Nulani Mendis's father was killed for protesting the injustice done to the Tamils. "He was a fearless man who spoke out against the injustice done to the Tamils long ago" (17). The traumatic experience of watching her husband charred to death haunts Nulani's mother. The trauma memory of watching her husband "lay blackened and burnt; clear liquid oozing out from his starry eyes, his body charred, the stench of flesh filling her open-mouthed screams" (10). Her desperation grows daily as the trauma has a bearing on the function of her mind. For Nulani, the brutal murder of her father is going to be a permanent wound in her psyche as she can remember the exact spot where her father lay lifeless: "She still knew the exact spot

where it was. There was traffic island there now. It was her father's headstone. It was her scar" (14-15). Thus, she is forced to carry a tombstone of the memory of her father's tragic death forever. The traumatic experience of Nulani's mother, though personal, it has a snowball effect on the larger Tamil population of Sri Lanka.

An individual's traumatic experience does not always become a trauma for society. Still, when the traumatic event awakens the social conscience through social intermediaries like media, it may be transformed into a social trauma. The process of individual-based trauma becoming collective trauma occurs very slowly through the reconstruction of the traumatic event. It is not necessary for the targeted society to directly face the tragedy of being traumatised. Instead, the representation of the traumatic event through media, narratives and monuments can transfer the individual traumatic experience to collective trauma. Personal trauma becomes a collective trauma through a social process; collective trauma emerges as a cultural crisis where the psychological shock of the traumatised person creates a social problem. When a social situation transforms into a determining force capable of unsettling the collective existence of a community, that crisis becomes a collective trauma. According to Jeffery C. Alexander, a collective trauma arises when "Collective actors "decide" to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go" (10). Thus, the personal pain of Nulani and her mother can penetrate the collective consciousness of the Tamil minority of Sri Lanka to which they belong. Again, this pain is so consequential and cumulative that it threatens the collective identity of the Tamil population and questions their claims of a separate nation.

This social proliferation of collective trauma is not only confined to the Tamil minority but also the Sinhala majority is equally affected by the trauma of civil war. The enormity of the destruction to the Sri Lankan economy and the subsequent fallout in the political activities after the suicide attack on Katunayake international airport in Colombo shake the foundation of Sinhala's national identity. Media reports the extent of the damage: "In Sri Lanka, a series of explosions that set fire to seven aircraft in the international airport of Katunayake had brought the country to a standstill ...Tamil separatists have claimed responsibility, and the Sri Lankan government has declared a state of emergency" (141-142). The devastating explosion has resonance in the collective consciousness of the Sinhala population. It shatters the sense of security and pride they have nurtured under Sinhalese nationalism.

Nulani's inborn artistic skills marvel at Theo, and he commissions her to draw his portrait despite the warnings of Sugi, the domestic help of Theo, who is the first person to caution him about the looming threat to his life in the growing tension between government forces and Tamil militant groups. Moreover, Theo's soft corner for Tamil children is known to many. Sugi's candid statement, "These were troubled times. Envy and poverty went hand in hand with the ravaged land" (17), reflects the turbulent social condition of Sri Lanka. According to Sugi, no one can understand the rationale behind the ethnic conflicts, "Only we care about the difference between Sinhalese and the Tamils. No one understands what this fight is about. We hardly understand ourselves anymore" (19). Illegal detentions and extra-judicial killings become the new normal, and the lives of ordinary people are in constant peril. Sugi's

warning to Theo explains the terrible situation in Sri Lanka during the civil war:

“There are thugs in the pay of the authority, and thugs are working for those who would like to be rid of the authority. Sinhalese, Tamils, what does it matter who they are, everyone spies on everyone else” (40).

Civil war has affected every aspect of people’s lives, including aesthetic consciousness and even art and other creative activities are side-lined. When Theo tries to convince Nulani’s uncle about his proposal to take her to his artist friend in Colombo to give her art training, the latter sarcastically retorts: “We are a country at war, trying to survive despite the Tamils. What do we need art for, men?” (80). Sugi must pay a heavy price for sending Nulani to a safer place in the absence of Theo. He has been gunned down by army men guided by Nulani’s uncle, and his mutilated body has been abandoned on the beach. “It was completely unrecognisable, blackened and filled with holes, in its stomach, on its legs and what more on arms and face” (152). The illegal detention by soldiers and custodial torture have traumatised Theo while the pain of physical suffering gradually penetrates his mind: “He felt weak; the wounds across his face and back ached dully. He had not eaten or drunk much. And he suspected that his whole body had been repeatedly kicked and beaten” (179).

Theo must face more brutal torture in the new detention centre, where he has been shifted after a few days. He is not provided even drinking water though his tongue is parched, despite his repeated pleadings. He has been put in a cell with many other so-called “traitors”. The cell is a virtual hell: “The air was thick with the humidity made worse by the overcrowding: it was fetid with the smell of the

overflowing hole in the ground that was the only latrine” (185). More than the physical torture, the filth and the foul smell of human excreta unnerve him. Many of his fellow captives contracted dysentery, and “with the return of the mosquitoes, there was a constant fear of fever. Most of the inmates soon had faces covered with the bites, and at night, often the worst time of all, the groaning and cursing were combined with the sound of frantic scratching” (188). The inhuman and beastly act of physical torture has a numbing effect on Theo. All his brain functions have halted, and the shock and disorientation silence him. The psychological paralysis resulting from the enormity of trauma incapacitates Theo from comprehending its impact immediately.

A traumatised person may not comprehend the extent of the damage done by the traumatic event on his psyche at the moment of its occurrence, as what happens to Theo and this suspension of mental faculties at the time of the traumatic event and belated recognition can be substantiated in the light of trauma theory. Professor Cathy Carruth, one of the pioneers of trauma theory, stresses the belatedness of traumatic awakening while elaborating on the nature of trauma in the introduction to her edited work, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*:

A response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or set of events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts, or behaviours stemming from the event. . . the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly in its repeated possession of the one who experienced it.
(Carruth 4)

Thus, Theo's inability to understand the psychological effect of the trauma emanating from the inhuman torture he has been subjected to lies in the incomprehensible nature of trauma. The comprehension of the overwhelming nature of trauma by the victim happens only after a time-lapse. Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, in their work, *The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma*, explain how Pierre Janet conceived the function of the brain now of a traumatic event. According to them, the cognitive system of the trauma victim resists the integration of the terrifying experience and prompts "the memory of these experiences to be stored differently and not be available for retrieval under ordinary conditions: it becomes dissociated from the conscious awareness and voluntary control" (Carruth-160).

Theo's life becomes a pawn in the hands of the two equally monstrous opposing forces: the Sinhala army and now the Tamil militants. On the way to a new destination, the army convoy carrying Theo has been ambushed by Tamil militants. He has been taken to an unknown place where the torture and assault continue. This time it is the turn of the LTTE. Theo has lost count of days, and time does not have meaning to him. "He did not recall being dragged by his feet to a cell where, semi-naked and bleeding, he was left for dead. Trauma locked his memory out. His hands were almost paralysed, and there were great weals across his back" (205). The physically and mentally maimed Theo is taken to a makeshift hospital. In the hospital, Gerard, the mastermind behind the attack on Katunayake airport, takes charge of Theo. Though he is iron-hearted and ruthless in his activities, Gerard is quite shocked to see the tear-jerking figure of Theo. "The writer had taken a severe

beating, far worse than he had expected. The fingernails on both his hands were ripped and blackened and he looked smaller than Gerard remembered. He lay motionless, like a broken fishing boat” (213). Half of his being is paralysed by trauma. “That one part of him had gone ahead, while the rest of his mind remained frozen” (218).

Trauma victims are not fully aware of the event at its occurrence. Since the impact of trauma does not immediately reach the conscious mind, and the psychic wound created by the trauma is suppressed to the unconscious mind, the trauma victims do not realise the weight of pain it has caused in their minds. However, when similar events are experienced, or the effects of the trauma are transferred to the conscious mind, the survivor awakens to trauma that may manifest through dreams or memory retrieval. The fact that traumatised person may not have an immediate mindful recovery of the event and such recovery may occur through recurring dreams is established in Anna Hunter’s essay titled, ‘The Holocaust as the Ultimate Trauma Narrative’, in *Trauma and Literature*, edited by J. Roger Kurtz, “the traumatic event is stored only in the subconscious memory of the sufferer and surfaces into the conscious mind in the form of unwelcome and uninvited intrusions such as flashbacks and vivid dreams” (67).

Tortured in captivity, Theo constantly slips into dreams. The author describes his journey through his dreams as

Theo uneasily between unconsciousness and sleep. At night darkness cocooned him and he hardly stirred, moving from one dream to another. He dreamt as once he had read, sifting through images as

once he had turned pages. He was neither happy nor unhappy. Mostly these dreams were nebulous things filled with people he did not know... Then one night, without warning, he saw a vaguely familiar face. He was sitting with a woman on the balcony of a funny little flat ... Somehow, he knew the flat was in London. (214)

Theo, recovering from the horrendous experience of mental and physical torture, now has the urge to renew his creative writing. Trauma victims often narrate their experiences as a means of normalising and survival. In the introduction to their edited work, *Trauma Narratives and Herstory*, Sonya Andermahr and Silvia Pellicer-Ortin observe that the representation of traumatic experience in the narrative would help the victim get relief from the burden of traumatic pain: “ Indeed, literary and cultural texts have increasingly become privileged spaces for the representation of individual and collective traumas in our contemporary age, arguably providing a means of transforming traumatic memories into narrative memories” (2). The importance of literary narratives in the representation of traumatic experience is further emphasised by Marinella Rodi -Risberg in her work, ‘Problems in Representing Trauma’, “While literature is not the only site for exploring the representation of the wound that trauma is, it remains one place where trauma can productively be represented and examined, despite the problems that arise in the course of that representation” (as in Kurtz123). As a writer by profession, Theo is conscious of the healing power of representing his traumatic experience in narratives. He starts writing again with renewed vigour under the pseudonym of Thercy, the keeper of Mr Gunadeen’s house.

On one occasion, he narrates the dreadful experience of the trauma he has gone through. "I was blindfolded ... and I was hit. Sometimes I was hit so hard that I fell forward. Then they gave me electric shocks. They put chilli inside me ... I was hit with the butt of a riffle. They broke my fingers. See, three of them are broken" (262). However, he slowly recovers from the trauma as his writing activity has a therapeutic effect on his wounded soul. Many researchers on trauma prove this healing power of narrative representation of traumatic experience. Gabriel M. Schwab, in his 'Voices of Silence: Speaking from within the Void', in *Critical Trauma Studies: Understanding Violence, Conflict and Memory in Everyday Life* edited by Monica J. Casper and Eric Wertheimer, explains how literary narratives take up a symbolic function of healing the wounds of the mind inflicted by traumatic experience:

Traumatic histories constitute an attack on memory, language, and the symbolic order. Traumatic silences can be accessed and transformed only via detours and indirections. Literature provides such detours to look into ourselves without the dangers of a direct, invasive confrontation. It also provides a space to access those unconscious modes of being in a language that recalls the dependency of early infancy and is reawakened in the vortex of trauma. It is in this vein that literature can assume a healing function in the wake of trauma (121).

The writing provides Theo with that much-awaited relief from the stressful burden of trauma as he perceives his writing as a kind of testimony to his traumatic experience, and the prospective reader is the listener of his testimony. The representation of traumatic experience in narratives is, in a sense, a person talking to

a larger audience and helping the victim of trauma reconcile with reality and move forward, as presented by Ira E. Hyman and Elizabeth F. Loftus when they quote the statement of M.R. Harvey and J.L. Herman in their ‘Some People Recover Memories of Childhood Trauma that Never Happened’ in the work, *Trauma and Memory: Clinical and Legal Controversies*, edited by Paul S. Apple Baum et al.: “Talking about memories of traumatic experiences may enable people to deal with the trauma and move on in their lives” (4). Theo’s healing process finally becomes complete when he reunites with Nulani in London.

Recovering from mental shock and physical exhaustion in solitary confinement under Gerard's care, Theo witnesses another horrific event. Not only Theo, who bears witness to the first-hand horrors of genocide but also the child militant who guards Theo and his mother under the instruction of Gerard, is entirely shaken by the brutal incident. The sight of Sri Lankan soldiers beheading Gerrard silences them. The words spoken by the child militant’s mother in her mother tongue, Tamil, convey the shock and horror that the scene evokes: “We are not normal. We cannot speak in normal voices ever again. Even if the peace comes, ...there is no peace for us” (241). The personal experience of trauma cannot be taken in isolation; rather, it represents collective suffering and cultural trauma. Any disaster, whether manufactured or natural, creates a ripple effect beyond its immediate victims. When a community has a common and shared past, claims common cultural heritage, and faces an unexpected tragedy, the traumatic experience has a bearing beyond individuals and becomes cultural trauma. The individual who has experienced the trauma of the disaster relates his personal

experience to the collective trauma of the community he is a member of. Here, the child LTTE cadre and his mother represent the class consciousness of the Tamil minority, even though both have never undergone any personal tragedy despite living constantly fearing for their lives. However, witnessing the brutal murder of Gerard reminds them of the suffering and pain of Sri Lankan society during the ethnic conflict, and the mother's statement that there is no peace for them reflects the transformed psyche of the trauma survivor.

Vikram, a rescued child militant and a victim of childhood trauma, is haunted by the traumatic memory of the brutal rape and killing of his mother and sister by Sinhala soldiers. He is not ready to forget and forgive the perpetrators of such a heinous crime. His guardian Mr Gunadeen is a mysterious character. People often wonder about his act of charity towards Vikram. The general opinion is that Mr Gunadeen's adoption of the Tamil boy is a message to "those murderous Tamil bastards. For, it was said, he was a good Sinhala man" (44). Gerard, secretly working for the LTTE in the guise of a shopkeeper, exploits Vikram's frustration and grudge resulting from his traumatic past. He starts tapping Vikram's anger and slowly indoctrinates him with arm training. As the image of his mother and sister waving their hands in helplessness haunts him on the eve of every anniversary of the massacre, Vikram is forced to relive the traumatic past.

This repeated appearance of traumatic memory in the survivor is explained in detail by Cathy Carruth in her *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* while elaborating Freud's concept of "traumatic neurosis" presented in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. According to Freud, tragic events in the past tend to

reappear in the memory of the individuals who are the victims of such a traumatic past. Freud observes that traumatic neurosis results from an unexpected tragic event of a considerable magnitude that shocks the victim and debilitates the victim's cognition for the time being "as a consequence of an extensive breach being made in the protective shield against stimuli" (Strachey 25). Carruth further elaborates on this repetitive nature of traumatic awakening that "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but instead in the way that it's very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Carruth 4). Thus, Vikram was not fully aware of the intensity of the trauma in the moments of his witnessing the brutal rape and murder of his mother and sister. However, he awakens to reality only later when traumatic memory of the past repeatedly haunts him.

Nulani's photograph often reminds Vikram of his sister; sometimes, Nulani turns out to be his sister. "Her face stares at him like the face in the photograph, caught by a lens, cactus sharp, rock solid and frozen forever" (177). The traumatic memory follows Vikram till his last moment when he is killed in a bomb explosion. He meets his death unexpectedly and surprisingly. Gerard is sending Vikram to Colombo to find Theo, but it is a plan to finish him off. The bundle he has handed over to Vikram is a powerful bomb which explodes when the train that carries Vikram reaches Colombo. Seventeen passengers, including Vikram, were killed in the explosion. Vikram's mind has been traumatised by the brutal violence he witnessed in childhood. Recurring memories drive him to revenge and acts of violence. The trauma that burdens Vikram's mind is his own and the collective

trauma of the community that the deceased represents. It was this realisation that helped Gerard bring Vikram into his plan. However, Vikram's traumatic awakening did not help to heal the wounds in his mind, and he succumbed to death even before exploring such a possibility.

The testimony of a trauma victim may create a vicarious experience of trauma in the listener. In the edited work of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Dori Laub observes how the listener to a traumatic testimony is traumatised:

The listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to experience trauma in himself partially. The relation of the victim to the event of trauma, therefore, impacts on the relation of the listener to it, and the latter comes to feel the bewilderment, injury, confusion, dread and conflicts that the trauma victim feels. (57-58)

Theo's disappearance and the visualisation of Nulani's heart-rending experience casts a shadow of trauma on the minds of Rohan and his wife, Giulia. The tragedy that befell Theo and Nulani leads them to a traumatic awakening, reminding them that it could happen to them at any moment. Nulani's battered figure gives a psychic shock to Giulia and Rohan. She dodges the Sinhala soldiers and reaches the Colombo house of Rohan and Giulia, narrowly escaping from death. Nulani's physical presence turns into a traumatic experience for Rohan and Giulia. The traumatic experience of Nulani transmits to them as well. The news about the brutal murder of Sugi shakes them up again: "They fell silent then, their minds

numbed as much by the lateness of the hour as the horror of what they were facing” (155). The traumatic experiences of Theo, Nulani and many others who fell victim to the terrible ravages of the civil war become the personal trauma of Rohan and Giulia. The psychic numbness they feel is an offshoot of the collective trauma of Sri Lankan society. Giulia is constantly haunted by how Nulani will face life’s challenges in a strange land, and this thought drives her closer to a mental breakdown. “I can’t stand anymore, thought Giulia. She was reaching breaking point, she knew, despair was closing around her, walling her in. all I want is to go home” (183).

Rohan is also not spared of the wounds inflicted on the conscience of the Sri Lankan people by the civil war. The unabated riots with the army’s tacit support, Nilani's insecure life in exile, and Theo’s supposed death or disappearance leave him mentally exhausted. Rohan is a victim of collective trauma that paralyses his creative power. “He had not painted for months. He had not stretched a single piece of linen on its frame. His dead friend’s life spilled across empty canvas” (207-08). In the context of rampant arson, looting, indiscriminate killings, the assassination of politicians and ambushes while the law executing agencies actively participate in the pogrom, living with sanity is impossible in Sri Lanka. Even though Giulia is a foreigner, she realises how much the ravages and horrors of the civil war in her husband’s motherland have taken a toll on his psyche. She also realises that trauma penetrates her psyche, bringing a traumatic awakening that overpowers their lives.

Roma Tieran's novel *Brixton Beach* tells the story of a family seeking refuge in London amid the Sri Lankan civil war. However, rather than the trauma

resulting from civil war, the plot of this novel is about the cultural conflict refugees face in their host country, the turmoil it causes in their inner lives, and the trauma of displacement. At the novel's beginning, the reader is met with the shock and fear of a bomb explosion in the London Tube. Everyone is shocked by the sight of the horrible scene of the blast. Doctor Simon Swan arrives at the location with anxiety about his lover, who was travelling on the route where the explosion happened. "Inside the blasted double-decker bus, ... he sees that trapped bodies are burning. Some of them are simply torsos without heads" (5). This shuddering scene sets the tone of the novel. The first half of the book is set in Sri Lanka. The childhood life of the main character Alice is depicted against the backdrop of the escalating ethnic riots in Sri Lanka. The second half takes place entirely in the city of London. The second half describes Alice's life in London and the cultural conflicts she faces.

Alice's parents Sita and Stanley, are victims of ethnic polarisation in Sri Lanka. The marriage of Sita, who belongs to the Sinhalese community, and Stanley, who is of Tamil origin, casts a shadow of racial hatred. Their marriage is looked upon with suspicion and fear by many. Even Sita's father, Mr Bee, finds fault with his daughter's choice even though he maintains a good relationship with many Tamil families. For him, a marriage between a Sinhalese woman and a Tamil man will not go well as "it was impossible to deny the change that was sweeping across the country. life would not be easy for Sita. Rumours of violence in the north, in Jaffna and the eastern part of the island, were rife" (24). A scenario of the looming threat of a broader conflict is further indicated in the words of Stanley, who sees only a bleak future for Tamil like him in Sri Lanka. He says, "This bloody place is no good for

children to grow up in. Everything is denied to us Tamils. Education, good jobs, decent housing-everything. The bastard Sinhalese are trying to strangle us” (25). Stanley’s bitterness and alienation intensify when he is beaten up and robbed by unidentified assailants.

A traumatic event that haunts Sita's whole life occurs in connection with the delivery of her second child. The intentional negligence of a racist Sinhalese doctor leads to the death of her unborn child. The doctor does not flinch at all when he utters words that reveal his disdain for the Tamils when the nurse briefs him about Sita’s health condition: “That’s my point. Why should we help breed more Tamils? As if the country hasn’t enough already?” (44). The second doctor who attends Sita later confirms the death of the child. Confounded by frustration and hopelessness in the state of affairs in the ethnically divided Sri Lanka, the second doctor takes a long leave “for he, more than anyone, knows that life is cheap in this Third World Paradise” (49). Since the death of her unborn child, the traumatic memory associated with it visits Sita frequently.

To relieve herself of the burden of the trauma emanating from the unexpected death of her unborn child, Sita’s unconscious mind creates a make-believe world of a mother attending to the newborn baby with tenderness and affection. It is an invention of her distraught psyche to escape from self-destruction. A traumatic experience cannot be seen as a journey to disaster and prolonged suffering. Though traumatic experience plunges the victim into disaster, it also opens the path to survival. Professor Cathy Carruth articulates this conflicting epistemology of trauma when he observes, “Trauma is not simply an effect of

destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival” (58). Repetition of the traumatic memory drives the victim to survival. Duplication of this recollection helps the victim to recognise the trauma that had been lying dormant in the unconscious until then and to realise that the extent and depth of the tragedy he had experienced were unknown to him. This cognition is the crisis that the traumatic experience brings in the survivor. Sita’s act of preserving the soft cotton clothes meant for her unborn son in a trunk indicates her future experience of the reappearance of the traumatic past.

The terror of that night, when she lost her child, is shaking the foundation of Sita’s existence. Trauma incapacitates her mental power and impedes her ability to communicate. “Her world was slowly disintegrating, and speech came only spasmodically to her” (89). Once a traumatic event occurs, it never leaves the victim. It haunts the survivor: dreams, thoughts, or actions. Though outwardly, Sita’s scars evaporated, “a thick angry scar was forming across her abdomen, just in case she might be tempted to forget what had happened. She felt as though she were growing horns inside herself” (89). She spends her nights sleepless and in great mental affliction.

The transformation in her character becomes visible in her daily chores after arriving in England. It becomes routine for Sita to explore the Sunday Street markets and buy all sundry things. She even buys boxes full of oranges and vegetables beyond their requirements. She gets changed each passing day. She starts forgetting small things like switching off lights.

For Sita, life had begun to feel like a walk across a mental desert. She travelled slowly, with a mind map that coursed its way along the dried riverbed of her old life. She would walk this route, she suspected, forever, singing her voiceless, wordless song. She would walk like a bird that had lost its wings. Mute. (279)

The sense of alienation and mental agony experienced by trauma victims drives them into silence. Often this silence can be a means of hiding indescribable mental anguish from the outside world. Andreas Hamburger explains this unusual way of protecting against trauma in the introduction to his edited work titled, *Trauma, Trust, and Memory: Social Trauma and Reconciliation in Psychoanalysis, Psychotherapy, and Cultural Memory*: “Silence is an unequalled way of preserving mental pain, and thus, denied atrocities cannot be mourned and overcome” (xxiii).

Sita's silence develops into an expression of insecurity over time. Rapid changes occur in her behaviour have occurred over the years. Forgetfulness and abnormal manifestations are constantly seen in her. Occasionally, “she left the iron on and burnt a dress. She forgot to switch the television off, she lost her purse in the street” (314). This condition can be described as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD, previously referred to as shell shock, combat stress, delayed stress syndrome and traumatic neurosis, is a pathological condition by which the human mind responds to manufactured or natural disasters that cause major psychological trauma. Genocide, war, rape, child abuse, and unexpected loss of loved ones can be added to the tragedies that cause psychological trauma.

A key feature of P.T.S.D. is that it needs to conform to regular memory patterns. Trauma survivor is constantly reminded of their bitter experience. Reliving the victim's trauma experience may be healing his psychic wounds inflicted by a traumatic event. Dan Stone, in his essay, 'Genocide and Memory', in work *Displaced: Literature of Indigeneity, Migration and Trauma* edited by Kate Rose, argues that recollection of traumatic past is necessary for the restoration of the self-esteem of the victim:

Despite the risks of perpetuating old divisions or reopening unhealed wounds, grappling with memory, especially after traumatic events like genocide, remains essential in order to remind the victims that they are not worthless or less than human beings that their tormentors have portrayed them as. (Rose 119)

Thus, Sita's absentmindedness and temporary forgetfulness, as symptoms of P.T.S.D., are the results of the psychic mechanism to instil a sense of dignity in her wounded mind.

Traumatic memory of the death of her unborn child continues to take a heavy toll on Sita. Sita, alone in her house after the marriage of Alice to Timothy West, is totally out of her mind. Her obsession with the unborn baby becomes overwhelming:

Recently she had brought a large doll from the market. The clothes, made eleven years ago, were small enough to fit the doll. Taking it out of its hiding place, she began to wash it. After that, she dried it

and dusted it with talcum powder. And began to dress the doll in her dead child's clothes. (324)

To utter shock and disbelief of Alice, Sita collects baby dolls and piles them up beneath her bed. Alice is shocked that her mother puts the doll into coffin-like boxes only to bury them all in the garden. The traumatic awakening in Sita drives her into psychic disorder and insanity as her mind awakens to the reality of her senseless act of keeping and fondling baby dolls for her dead child. Her burying the dolls is a symbolic act of suppressing the traumatic memory of the lost child and her ultimate reconciliation with reality. With this reconciliation, she is relieved of the burden of trauma that she has been carrying for all those years when she silently meets her death.

In *The Swimmer*, Tearne focuses on the portrayal of the inner struggle of her central characters to cope with the trauma arising from the unexpected loss of their dearly loved ones. The novel's first section is constructed around the memories of Ria, a forty-three-year-old poetess who leads an almost secluded life. This lonely woman had a traumatic experience of her father's untimely death when she was only a teenage girl, and the trauma of losing her father has a controlling hold on her life for an extended period. As soon as she hears the heart-rending news of her father's death, she becomes utterly silent as though a great wave of grief throws her into a vortex of pain. "A great, terrible tidal wave of grief had engulfed me. I was drowning in it and I had become mute. I wanted my father so desperately. So inarticulately, my heart was so broken, that I simply closed in on myself. I did not cry for years" (49). She is too tender-hearted to bear the trauma of her father's

sudden death, which creates a sense of irreparable loss and desolation, prompting her to withdraw into silence. What Ria felt immediately after her father's demise is a kind of psychic numbness that disallows her to think usually and carry out the daily business of life. This kind of psychic deadness is considered one of the after-effects of trauma, which is authenticated by Judith Herman, an American psychiatrist and recipient of many awards for her contributions to trauma research, attributes numbness along with insomnia, dissociation, and hyperarousal as symptoms of traumatic stress in her work, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence - From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. She observes three types of traumatic symptoms in the victims: "These are called "hyperarousal," "intrusion," and "constriction." Hyperarousal reflects the persistent expectation of danger; intrusion reflects the indelible imprint of the traumatic moment; constriction reflects the numbing response of surrender" (25).

Karen M. Seeley, a mental health expert and therapist in America, who has studied the mental health crisis that resulted from the trauma of the destruction of the World Trade Centre, describes the magnitude of the traumatic effect on millions of people in her work *Therapy after Trauma*. After the terrorist attack on World Trade Centre, thousands of Americans have been traumatised and have developed the symptoms of PTSD, including psychic numbness: "Since September 11, 2001, hundreds of thousands of Americans have experienced nightmares, intrusive memories, and emotional numbing that are characteristics of PTSD" (154). Much earlier, Kali Tal, one of the pioneers of trauma literary theory, also pointed out how trauma victims are affected by emotional numbing as a symptom of PTSD:

“Numbness and distancing are both frequently reported symptoms of PTSD.” (Kali 193).

However, her father’s death is also the moment of Ria’s sudden maturation. In her own words: “It was how I heard the news of what had happened to my beloved father; on the day that my childhood ended” (40). Her father’s death also strains her relationship with her mother and brother. She becomes disconnected from her mother and indifferent to her brother. On the other hand, the sense of loss and devastation have a positive aspect as they ignite her creative power, and soon, she becomes a poet with a reputation. Her first poem is woven around the theme of bringing a fossil to life, narrating its previous existence by which She metaphorically brings her dead father back to life. The birth of the poet in Ria and her engagement with the creative process seem to be healing the wounds in her mind.

Ria can overcome the trauma of the loss of her father through her creative engagement. However, her short but passionate love affair with Ben Chinnaih, a Sri Lankan refugee, is her most significant traumatic experience after his tragic death. Ben is shot dead by police for a mistaken identity during a combing operation to capture a suspected Pakistani terrorist who is at large. Ria had undergone such desperation and helplessness earlier but with lesser intensity when her husband abandoned her because she could not give birth to a child. Though a few sleepless nights and some lonely days have spoiled her peace of mind, she has found a compatible partner in Ben, who, unlike her separated husband, is empathetic and considerate of her emotions. Ben’s death creates a sense of permanent loss in her

mind, and she is traumatised as she is burdened with witnessing the brutal murder of Ben. She is relieved of the trauma of losing Ben when she finds she is pregnant, which has changed her worldview and attitude towards life.

All the days he spent in England before his chance encounter with Ria were traumatic for Ben. His journey from Jaffna to England via Russia is marked with unimaginable miseries and perils. On his way to England, he must travel in a tightly closed dark cavern of a lorry from Russia. After grabbing all his money, the lorry driver drops Ben off halfway to London. He walked five days half-starved, under constant fear of being caught by police, until he reached East Anglia. At the mercy of a farmer, he manages to get a bed to sleep in and food for working in the corn field. Ben carries the traumatic memory of the gruesome murder of his cousin by the Sinhala army. On the same day, when Ben's cousin, a senior medical student, was shot at point blank and killed, his younger brother was caught in the bombing of the army helicopter. Though the boy had miraculously escaped from death, the trauma of that dreadful incident has a lasting effect on his young cousin of Ben as he becomes paralysed.

As the ethnic conflict peaks, Ben's mother wants him to leave Sri Lanka. The fear of her son being killed by the government forces or abducted by militants prompts her to arrange the secret departure of Ben from Sri Lanka. As a medical student, Ben has first-hand knowledge of the government's inhuman treatment of innocent Tamil people. While narrating his horrendous flight from Sri Lanka to England, he tells Ria: "I had witnessed many things. I know how innocent civilians were treated and how medical aid was withheld from the hospital doctors. I

witnessed how children had their limbs amputated, without anaesthetics using only a kitchen knife” (59). Though he can dodge death in his homeland, he becomes helpless in his host country, where the hostility towards illegal immigrants runs high among the natives. Things become worse for Ben when the police, while in a large-scale combing operation to capture a suspected Pakistani terrorist, chase Ben and shoot him dead for his mistaken identity.

The second part of the novel portrays the trauma of Ben’s mother, Anula, who arrives in London to attend the funeral of her beloved son. Grief overshadowed her body and mind when she came to London. The trauma of losing her beloved son is visible in her physical appearance. The traumatic experience has a disorienting effect on the functioning of her mind. The intensity of her grief is manifested in her body: “I look terrible, like a circus lioness, broken, like an eagle without wings, speechless as a violin with no strings” (137). During her two weeks in England, Anula has barely slept. When she is informed of the killing of her son, horror immobilises her. She feels the words of the police officer run through her “like quicksilver, like the cyanide the boys take when they are caught by the army” (127). The shock waves that flood her mind and body are so overwhelming that she repeats her son’s name as though in a trance: “Everything would be this way, forever. I was saying his name over and over again” (127).

The memory of the morgue where Ben’s dead body was kept has a sickening effect on her heart. To safeguard herself from the burden of trauma, she discovers a defence mechanism of watching all unimportant details of the surroundings of the morgue. However, the same information becomes a constant reminder of her

irretrievable loss. A forcible remembrance of the building that rooms the morgue disturbs her. “I will never forget that building. There had been no grass, no plants growing, only earth that had been turned, like a newly dug grave” (140).

Inconsolable and traumatised by the irreparable loss of her son, Anula is searching for a channel to pour out her repressed emotions and finds an anchor in the soft-spoken, kind-hearted Eric to hold on to. Eric’s words have a therapeutic effect on her wounded heart as she is driven by a single thought of escaping from the reality of her son’s death. Eric can empathise with Anula as he, too, has a traumatic past when his only son was abducted and tortured to death during the Afghan war. The most surprising thing in their relationship is that Anula took the initiative for an intense and passionate physical connection.

Sexual arousal is a common symptom of trauma. Anula, a celibate after the mysterious disappearance of her husband Percy, might have been sexually aroused because of the excruciating experience of the trauma of losing her son. Many clinical studies have proven that sexual arousal in traumatised persons is an associative symptom of traumatic experience. For instance, Bessel A. van der Kolk, a USA-based psychotherapist and researcher in the field of traumatic stress and the co-founder of the Trauma Research Foundation, has come out with an assumption that traumatic individuals may feel sexual arousal as an associative emotion when the memory of the traumatic experience is retrieved. In his essay titled “Trauma and Memory”, included in the work, *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*, edited by himself along with others, he observes while elaborating how the memory of the traumatic past stimulates sexual

arousal: “Any affect or sensation related to a particularly traumatic experience may serve as a cue for the retrieval of associated sensations, including fear, longing, intimacy, and sexual arousal” (284).

Her audacious lovemaking with Eric brings temporary relief to her tattered heart. However, it also fills her heart with guilt. The act of lovemaking is a mechanism to discharge the brooding memory of her dead son. She believes “What we were doing was lessening the pain” (166). However, this reprieve is short-lived guilt soon follows. She confesses: “Lust entered the room with stealth and tore the celibacy off me. I must admit, it was a relief to stop the grief. The defiance that had been knocked out of me, because of who I was and how I had lived, returned. I stopped thinking, desire, anguished and fearless, overflowed in me” (166-67). In her intimate moments with Eric, she has forgotten that she has come to an alien land only to attend her son’s funeral.

Later, when the guilt starts to prick her conscience, the trauma of losing her beloved son takes a backfoot for the time being. “Grief wearies the mind in inexplicable ways. It sticks close, becomes your second skin, suffocating you slowly behind closed doors. But guilt is a different matter. Guilt burns a hole in the psyche, spilling adrenalin restlessly, always watchful in case the truth is uncovered” (173). Though wracked with pain and grief, the urge for sexual gratification is so strong in her that she passionately longs for the presence of her newfound friend. “My heart was breaking with grief, but then, suddenly, my mood would switch and I would find myself consumed with longing for Eric” (186). The trauma has arrested the normal function of her brain, making it impossible for her to reason. Though she

has already expressed her wish to draw her son's face before the burial, she acts most ridiculously when she insists that she wishes to draw the fields from the window of Eric's kitchen.

On her journey back to the airport, first time after reaching England, Anula expresses her grief openly before an Italian woman. as she is totally under the grip of trauma, she is not able to discern whether she is speaking aloud or speaking to herself silently. Her grief outpours when her conversation with the co-passenger on the train progresses. The wound on her psyche has a muting effect on her mental faculties. She wonders: "Had I been burnt all over, had I had petrol poured on me, had I been tortured, it could not have been any worse. (142-43)

Lydia, the fifteen-year-old daughter of Ria and Ben, narrates the novel's third part. Her mother's sister-in-law Miranda is her guardian, as Ria died in a car accident two years ago. Most of the events narrated by Lydia are presented during a counselling session. Though it is common for children of traumatised parents to show trauma symptoms, Lydia does not carry trauma within her, nor does she show any signs. Of course, the death of her mother has its effects on her. A kind of emptiness overtook her mind when she learned about her mother's tragic death from the police. Only when she is taken to the dead body she starts screaming. Despite the sense of loss always lingering in her, Lydia's encounter with transgenerational trauma is short-lived.

The novels under examination provide valuable insights into the trauma experience. Trauma can profoundly impact a victim, causing their defence

mechanisms to crumble and leading to psychological instability and mental breakdown. However, recounting the traumatic experience to others or turning it into a narrative can help the victim to heal. In Roma Tearne's novel *Mosquito*, Theo Samarajeeva, one of the main characters, begins writing his second novel after being saved from being held captive and tortured by the army and militants. Individuals who have survived traumatic experiences may sometimes turn to violent retaliation to heal their psychological wounds. Saraswati, a young member of the LTTE in Nayomi Munaweera's book *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, is a prime example of how causing trauma can result in fatal harm inflicted on the responsible person.

When victims share personal narratives of past trauma, they often highlight the depiction of collective trauma. Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne's novels exemplify the destructive force of traumatic experiences, which disrupt victims' cognitive processes and destabilise their consciousness. The diasporic imagination narrative emphasises that the memory of trauma can become a prolonged ordeal for survivors, resulting in a traumatic awakening, though not all trauma victims necessarily experience this.

Chapter 5

Hyphenated Identities: Negotiating Diasporic Predicament

Defining one's identity is a complex process. The historical, political, and cultural environment and psychological development all play a significant role in forming one's identity. An individual's sense of self is based on their understanding of their personality, shaped by their past experiences and current manifestations. This understanding is what they intend to carry forward into the future. Peter Weinreich, the German-origin British Social Psychologist and a significant contributor to the field of identity analysis, in his introduction to the work, *Analysing Identity: Cross-cultural, Societal, and Clinical Contexts*, defines identity: "A person's identity is defined as the totality of one's self-construal, in which how one construes oneself in the present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future" (80). So, one's identity is not static but continuously evolving concerning the self-constructed image of an individual.

The identity of immigrants is shaped by a continuous interaction between their memories of traumatic experiences that forced them to flee their homeland, their journey of crossing borders and settling in a new country, and the cultural discourses they engage in their new environment. As they strive to reconstruct their identity based on their host country's cultural, social, and political norms, diasporic individuals understand that identity is not a fixed entity but a constantly evolving

sense of subjectivity. The observation made by Meenakshi Thapan on the nature of identity in her *Living the Body: Embodiment, Womanhood, and Identity in Contemporary India* is relevant in the conceptualisation of diasporic identity: “Identities are always in the process of becoming, being made and re-made, constructed and re-defined, shaped and transformed” (4).

The diasporic individual constantly tries to find a place of his own that conforms to the cultural patterns of the immigrant country while holding on to the values of life ingrained in him by his past-based national-historic-cultural milieu. However, when the immigrant country does not fully recognise his social identity, a hybrid identity arises in him. Hybrid identity is the offshoot of diaspora’s continuous mediation between its ethnic and cultural identity formed in the homeland and the acquired identity in the host land through integration into its culture, as observed by Peter Weinreich in his essay, “Identity Structure Analysis” in work, *Analyzing Identity: Cross-cultural, Societal, and Clinical*: “One’s identity is termed ‘hybrid’ when one’s origins are construed as dimensions derived from different ethnic or racial parental constituents, and continue to be construed as future aspirations expressing multiple distinctive origins” (32). There are many layers in the identity of the diasporic individual, and religious affinity, cultural practices, and language are some of the determining factors of diasporic identity. However, all these aspects of identity are in continuous negotiation with the host land culture so that the diaspora gets a multilayered or hyphenated identity. This chapter explores how the diaspora constructs its identity in the context of trauma, displacement, memory, and

transnational cultural negotiations as represented in the novels of Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne.

The novels of Munaweera and Tearne depict the Sri Lankan diasporic individuals' continuous engagement and negotiation with the cultural ethos of their homeland and the social life of the host land and how this engagement results in cross-cultural anguish and fragmentation of their identity. Their characters are in an endless struggle to reinvent their cultural identity rooted in their homeland and its history and nationality while negotiating with the social life of the host land.

Munaweera's novel, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, opens with an image that hints at the conflict between the sense of identity rooted in ethnicity in post-independent Sri Lanka. The emblem of the Lion inscribed on the national flag of the emerging independent island nation represents the assertiveness of the Sinhala nationalist identity. The LTTE's flag, emblazoned with the image of a fierce tiger, appears on Sri Lanka's sky, which soon calls into question the infallibility of Sinhalese ethnic identity and loudly proclaims the identity of the minority Tamil population. The lives of some of the novel's central characters, including Nishan and Mala, two Sinhala children, pass through their childhood in the background of these conflicting identities leading to a civil war. The ethnically polarised Sri Lankan society significantly influences the formative stage of their identity.

Beatrice Murriel, the mother of Nishan, hailing from a family in South Sri Lanka that cherishes Sri Lanka's British colonial heritage, is very particular in keeping the family's elite status and ethnically superior Sinhala identity. This unique sense of identity is expressed in her ire against her husband, who, a Hikkaduwa

ayurvedic doctor, finds time to mingle with all classes of people, including fisherfolk and scavengers. She can only see impropriety in her husband's gregariousness and bursts out: "In my father's day, those people kept out of sight. If one of them had come into the village spreading misfortune and bad smells everywhere, he would have been beaten with his shitty broom. This is your father's fault. Talking to those people. Treating them like every other person" (15). An equal match for Beatrice is Sylvia Sunetra, the wife of an Oxford-educated man having a penchant for Western elitism. Sunetra is upset when she hears that her son Ananda falls in love with a Burgher girl while studying in England. For her, a Sinhala boy marrying a Burgher girl outright negates the Sinhala identity, despite her husband's insistence on Western cuisine. "The family eats pudding and soup, beefsteaks and mutton chops, boiled potatoes, orange, and crimson-tinted sandwiches" (19). The choice of Western food culture has little influence on Sunetra regarding keeping their ethnic identity intact. Sunetra's daughter Visakha inherits the legacy of elitism from her father, which is deeply rooted in her identity. However, her elitism crumbles when she meets Ravan, a Tamil, the youngest member of Sivalingams, who happens to be their tenant upstairs. The unexpected demise of her husband forces the financially broken Sunetra to rent out the upper portion of her house to Sivalingams, a Tamil Hindu family.

The novelist beautifully portrays the conflict between Sunetra's deep-rooted sense of Sinhalese identity and her hatred towards the Tamils. "Overnight, the upstairs becomes foreign territory, ruled by different gods and divergent histories, populated by thick braided, Kanjivaram sari'd women, earnest bespectacled young

man, a gang of kids, one walnut lined grandmother and the unsmiling patriarch” (38). Here the expression “foreign territory” conveys the concept of “other” associated with identity and the “other” Tamil ethnic identity is indicated through the words, “thick braided, Kanjivaram saried women”. This contrasting ethnic identity and “Upstairs-Downstairs, Linga-Singha wars” (38) fought by Sunetra and Sivalingas are a pointer to the more significant ethnic conflict that ravages entire Sri Lanka.

Despite the bitter battle fought by the two families over trifles, love blossoms between Visakha and Ravan as love can dismantle the wall of identity built on the edifice of ethnicity and religion. Nevertheless, the foundation of her ethnic identity is so strong that Visakha fails to decide in favour of Ravan’s proposal to marry her. They must part ways and surrender to the dictates of tradition and identity. Later, the love-hate relationship between Visakha and Ravan is repeated in the new generation, between their children Shiva and Yasodhara. Shiva and Yasodhara, born at the same time, are often found together and share a unique kind of camaraderie. Sunetra is apprehensive about their friendship as she cannot accept culturally alien Tamils into her social order, and her untimely insinuation of the ethnic background of the three-year-old Shiva: “Are you teaching my granddaughter Tamil?” (62) embarrasses Yasodhara and reminds her the first time of her different identity: “It was the first time we knew without question that we were different, separate and that this difference was as wide as the ocean” (62). The colour of the skin is often considered a marker of ethnic identity, and this is what was reflected when Sunetra cautions Yasodhara not to have a close relationship with Shiva; she emphasises the

colour of the skin that differentiates Sinhala identity from Tamil ethnicity: “But they are Tamil. Not like us. Different.... They’re darker. They smell different. They just aren’t like us” (73).

Like Sunetra, Seeni Banda, a domestic aid of the Rajasinghe family, also tries to plant the seed of the superiority of Sinhala identity in the children when he speaks about the racial distinction between the Sinhala and Tamil communities: “We Sinhala are Aryans, and the Tamils are Dravidians. The island is ours, given to us from the Buddha’s hand long, long before they came” (26), and when Mala questions the rationale behind his theory, he continues his outburst against the Tamils: “Tamil buggers, always crying that they are a minority, so small and helpless, but look! just over our heads, hovering like a huge foot waiting to trample us, south India full of Tamils. For the Sinhala, there is only this small island. If we let them, they will force us bit by bit into the sea. Swimming for our lives” (26). Both Sunetra and Seeni Banda are trying to underpin the ethnic identity of Rajasinghe children and thereby create a sense of otherness towards the Tamils. Seeni Banda is a driving force for constructing ethnic identity, creating animosity in the children’s hearts towards the Tamil minority.

Identity constructed by ethnicity, religion, and history undergoes significant changes when individuals are uprooted to another country. In the wake of the 1983 communal riots, Visakha and Nishan decide to take Yashodhara and her sister Lanka to America with the help of her brother, who has already migrated there. The new cultural environment and their attempts to negotiate with the realities in the host land strongly influence their ethnic identity. A cosmopolitan identity is best suited in

a country with a melting pot of different cultures. A cosmopolitan identity has a neutral character devoid of ethnicity, nationality, and locality, as pointed out by Youna Kim in her *Transnational Migration, Media, and Identity of Asian Women*: “mixed with the vision of a global, hybrid and rootless culture, has been celebrated as an alternative to ethnocentric nationalism” (13). A diaspora, while negotiating with the multicultural society of its host land, may construct a neutral identity. In their new home in America, Visakha and her daughters try very hard to follow a suitable lifestyle for their host land. “We negotiate these territories carefully, striving for neutrality, like the Swiss or the Norwegians” (164).

Yasodhara learns that the cultural values and ethnic identity that she carries are not in tune with the changed circumstances in her new country. Soon it dawns on her that assimilation of the new lifestyle and cultural values is necessary for survival and for which she has to reshape her identity. Whatever changes the diaspora makes in their cultural practices to assimilate themselves with the dominant culture of the host land, they cannot help but take a keen interest in the socio-political affairs of their homeland. Though very far from their homeland, Visakha and other family members are concerned with the raging civil war in Sri Lanka. The reports of suicide attacks and ambushes keep the family’s elders glued to the television, watching silently the horrible visuals of bloodshed. Yasodhara’s statement: “I remember the moment when I knew that we were all involved, that the island was not some vague and distant memory, but vivid and alive” (119), clearly establishes the predicament of the diasporic individuals regarding their indirect involvement in the happenings in their homeland.

The political and social setting of Sri Lanka played a significant role in forming her identity, and the constant tremors that happen to the political sphere remind her that she is too a part of the collective identity of her homeland. Central to this collective identity of the diaspora lies the memory of the shared experience in the homeland, as noted by Laurenn Guyot in her essay. “Locked in Memory Ghetto: A Case Study of Kurdish Community in France” in the work *Memory and Migration: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Memory Studies*:

Links to memory are specific in immigration because of a will to create a collective identity intimately related to the idea of perpetuating bonds with the region of origin. The main result of this phenomenon is the creation of a fixed memory, a memory trapped in the perceptions imported by immigrants at the time of their departure.

(142)

Like other characters of Munaweera, Yasodhara is also in a constant struggle to locate her lost home while negotiating the social life of America. The concept of home for her is a lost home or imagined destination in the context of the volatile political situation and civil war in Sri Lanka. Though she tries hard to keep her experience of the lost home and her past within the limits of her memory, her past persistently haunts her, as is the case of all diasporic individuals. This intrusion of past life and assertion of the identity associated with nationality and historical context can be understood in a better way in the light of Stuart Hall’s observation on the changing nature of identity in his essay, ‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora’, in work, *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford:

Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (225)

This interface between homeland culture and host land social reality prompts Yasodhara to reinvent her identity, which is constantly changing and ultimately turns into a fluid or hybrid identity. Yasodhara, being an immigrant placed in the setting of a self-imposed or otherwise estrangement in the country of her settlement, is to negotiate with an identity crisis caused by her double loyalty that is commonly found in the postcolonial transnational citizens as observed by Joshua Agbo in his, *Bessie Head and the Trauma of Exile: Identity and Alienation in Southern African Fiction*:

Even though post-colonial subjects might be defined by the desire or the need to oppose, to respond, and to speak to their colonial experience, they cannot entirely reject the world they have been given. They are a product of hybridity, which coincides with the idea of split personality. Combined with the experience of exile, it bears a

heavy psychological stigma, as well as constituting an identity crisis.

(25)

Hybridity is the meeting place of different cultures that immigrants try to cope with and serves as an agent of cultural transmission and interaction. An immigrant's hybrid identity is the result of their constant longing for the lost culture of homeland retained through memory and their socialisation into the host land's cultural life, as opined by Virinder Karla and others in their work, *Diaspora and Hybridity*: "In its most recent descriptive and realist usage, hybridity appears as a convenient category at 'the edge' or contact point of the diaspora, describing cultural mixture where the diasporic meets the host in the scene of migration" (70). Yasodhara's attempts to assimilate into the culture of the host land speed up when she joins the university to pursue literature. Her love escapades with an international student last for a short period, and the desertion disheartened her for the time being. Her parents are determined to find a suitable Sri Lankan boy for her, and she, too, agrees with them. Though she falls in love with her husband Siddharth, later, when she confronts the bitter truth of his extra-marital affair, Yasodhara's marital life collapses.

Despite his relationship with another girl, Siddharth's justification for marrying Yasodhara throws light into the fluid identity the diasporic individuals face while struggling to harmonise their homeland's cultural values and the host land's social ethos. Yasodhara's monologue on her marriage: "I realize that the similarity that I thought would sustain us, the shared language and culture and history and food were never enough" (167), indicates how the typical markers of identity like shared history, common culture, speaking the similar language and everyday food habits

fail to unite two diasporic individuals of the same ethnicity in the transnational cultural milieu. As the diasporic identity is always fluid, she realises that the collective identity of nationality is inadequate to sustain a marriage. Both Yasodhara and Siddharth, though conscious of the changes in their identity, cannot resist the dictates of ethnic identity rooted so deep in them that they, for the time being, decide to hold on to each other.

Yasodhara's sister Lanka also confronts shifting identity due to continuous engagement between homeland culture and host land social values. Her passionate love for her African American art history professor finally ends up in an irretrievable sense of loss and frustration. Her decision to return to her motherland and teach art to destitute children who are mostly the victims of war, leaving her bright career as a blossoming artist, suggests her reclaiming the cultural identity and past. Returning to Sri Lanka also helps her reclaim another valuable thing of her past. Her chance encounter with Shiva at Wellawatte is a new beginning for her. Thus, Lanka can overcome the identity crisis she has experienced in America and acknowledge her national identity with a broader perspective as she has no misgivings in accepting Shiva, a Tamil youth, as her partner in life. An identity crisis often occurs when the diaspora's cultural affinity with the homeland is under the threat of the cultural invasion of the settled country.

Yasodhara, disheartened with double loss, the infidel husband and the childhood crush, finally departs for her mother country. However, in Colombo airport, she is occupied with a sense of second dislocation as she appears a stranger to her fellow citizens with her foreign clothes and exotic gait. She wonders: "I am

the one who has become unrecognisable, with my foreign clothes and shoes, the sureness of my American walk” (158). In the rented house of Lanka and Shiva, Yasodhara feels suffocated while her sister and her childhood friend share an intimacy that can only be seen in lovers reminding her about her childhood with Shiva. She often sinks into loneliness and frustration as she is trapped in a predicament where she cannot decide whether to continue her stay with her sister or return to America and get a divorce from her infidel husband. The sudden turn of events devastates Yasodhara as her sister Lanka is killed in the suicide bomb attack on a bus triggered by Saraswati, a female LTTE cadre.

Yasodhara’s last journey to America is significant; this time, she will start her life afresh with Shiva, her unforgettable childhood companion and her dead sister’s lover. They find refuge in each other after the tragic death of Lanka and settle in San Francisco, far away from Los Angeles, where Yasodhara’s parents live in inconsolable grief for the loss of their younger daughter. There in San Francisco, they lead a life devoid of any ethnic concern – Sinhala or Tamil and even do not bother speaking about their homeland or past. Thus, far away from the country of their birth, they build a new life and construct a new identity that has nothing to do with their Sinhala and Tamil ethnic identity. However, their six-year-old daughter Samudhra is named after the ocean, symbolising their national identity closely associated with their childhood experience. Though they are far from the political turmoil and bloodshed of civil war in Sri Lanka and feeling safe, the reports of the war in their home country and the protests of the Tamil diaspora against war crimes intrude on their otherwise peaceful life in San Francisco. Both Yasodhara and Shiva

are shaken to watch the visuals of the dead body of Velupillai Prabhakaran, the head of the LTTE who has undertaken the task of changing the course of Sri Lanka's history by creating a separate nation – Eelam- for the Tamils.

Yasodhara finds it impossible to celebrate the end of the civil war in her home country since the price paid for the peace is enormous. Around eighty thousand civilians were killed in the civil war, most of whom were Tamils. Unlike her fellow citizens in Sri Lanka, she does not find any reason for celebration when she thinks about those eighty thousand people who have lost their lives:

... who were left behind in the lagoons and paddy fields, in the cement jail cells, in the white vans, beneath the roiling waves of the ocean. Those who were broken, dismantled, disappeared, those who were shattered in bomb blasts, those who were bludgeoned, burnt in tires, thrown from helicopters into the sea, ..., those who lost limbs to the landmines, those who lost eyes, hearts, livers, the tender, pulsing, precious flesh, those who were called to strap bombs on and detonate themselves. (224)

Yasodhara would first mourn for those eighty thousand victims of the civil war and would celebrate the peace in her homeland before she could take her daughter to Sri Lanka and show her the ocean, the paddy fields, the landscape full of flowers, and the Wellawatta House where she spent her childhood. Thus, with her changed identity as a migrant in a foreign land and no more worried about ethnicity or nationality, Yasodhara leads a peaceful and contented life along with her Tamil husband Shiva and their daughter Samudhra, and continues to negotiate with the

culture of her host land, keeping her memory associated with the history and life of her homeland live as it is the memory through which the diasporic individuals reconstruct their cultural identity. In contrast to the liberal individualism of Yasodhara, the other narrator of the novel, Saraswati's identity is firmly rooted in her religion and ethnicity, which is perceived as alien to the Sinhala majority.

Saraswati's identity has a strong mark of religion as she and her siblings are named after Hindu deities - Krishna, Balaram, Laxshmi, and so on and this cultural identity is further strengthened when she started learning Bharatanatyam, an aesthetic manifestation of Tamil culture. However, her Tamil identity seems to be disintegrated when Sinhalese soldiers gang-rape Saraswati. She realises that the wounds inflicted on her mind and body are not just hers, but the damage to the cultural identity of the Tamils and the assault on her body is an invasion by Sinhala over Tamil ethnicity and Tamil cultural existence as rationalised by the women cadres in the LTTE. She realises that the individual identity that she has formed through her cultural environment and from life experience has been transformed into a collective identity of the Tamils after the traumatic experience of being gang raped. There is always an inherent connection between individual and collective identity where the individual carries within this collective identity by associating the personal experience with the more extensive social experience, as observed by Werner Bohleber in his *Destructiveness, Intersubjectivity, and Trauma: The Identity Crisis of Modern Psychoanalysis*: "Collective and individual identity is not only metaphorically connected, but intrapsychically associated. They are experienced

concomitantly. This means that external frontiers are conceived of as a projection and protection of an interior collective identity that we all carry within us” (163).

Fearing social ostracism because of the stigma associated with their daughter being tattered by the soldiers, Saraswati’s parents urge her to join LTTE and get training to become a fighter for the more significant cause of Tamil Eelam. The transformation of Saraswati from an innocent girl with a limited ambition of becoming a village schoolteacher to a ferocious hardcore militant, who can do extreme kinds of brutality, is astonishing as the training she received in the LTTE camp changes her “slowly but surely a jungle cat” (174). She learns “to swing my machete through the flesh of babies” (177). However, the traumatic memory of the gangrape has an unfortunate effect on her wounded self and makes her find a sadistic pleasure in killing her enemies. The changed self of Saraswati is also suggested when she feels discomfort in her civilian dress during one of her short visits to her parents: “... but on the bus ride, wearing civilian clothes, I feel unarmed, unprotected. The skirt brushing against my legs feels so flimsy that I desperately miss my camouflage trousers” (183). Thus, Saraswati cannot accept any other identity than an LTTE cadre dedicated to establishing the Tamil nation – Eelam, which shapes her cultural identity.

Saraswathi is entrusted to carry out a suicide attack by her leader, targeting a Tamil politician who has supposedly betrayed the Tamil cause. Though disguised as a pregnant woman, she sets out for her target; she is compelled to detonate the bomb attached to her belly as a few soldiers stop her bus and start a search for suspected militants, and several others are killed in the explosion. Cultural identity emerges

when people with a shared history and social practices try to uphold a sense of oneness amidst deliberately embracing various other identities, as observed by Stuart Hall in his essay, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” in *Work, Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*:

There are at least two different ways of thinking about 'cultural identity'. The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. (221)

Though Yasodhara and Shiva belong to two different ethnicity and divergent culture and tradition, their cultural roots of Sinhala and Tamil ethnicity have standard and shared memories associated with landscape and geographical territories. The sea is such an intersection where the shared experience of Sinhala and Tamil ethnic culture meet, and the name Samudhra given to their daughter, meaning ocean can be considered as their efforts to blur the opposing cultural affinities. Though Yasodhara and Shiva have to live with a culturally marginal existence amid numerous other immigrants, their daughter Samudhra represents the composite culture and identity where the majority Sinhala and minority Tamil ethnicities converge together thereby creating a new identity affiliated with their homeland but with an open heart to embrace the liberal values of the host land.

How the cultural memory reiterates the ethnic identity of diasporic individuals and how this collective memory evokes collective trauma and shared experience in the past are major thematic concerns of Munaweera's second novel,

What Lies Between Us. Traumatic memory, personal or collective, can change people's identity in the context of dislocation, migration, and cross-cultural experience. The migrants and refugees often face psychic unsettlement because of the trauma of dislocation and alienation in the host land, which may lead them into a fluid existence. Madelaine Hron substantiates the fluidity of immigrants' identity by quoting the statement of Kirmayer et al. in her essay, "The Trauma of Displacement", in the work, *Trauma and Literature*, edited by J. Roger Kurtz states that, "Immigrants and refugees face numerous stressors when they leave their homelands and acculturate into a new host environment, such as the loss of familiar social networks" (289). The immigrant's assimilation into the new host land culture can trigger mental unrest and may even affect their identity leading to a double identity or a divided self.

This divided self, created by the diasporic individual in the cultural milieu in the new country, is further getting complicated when the traumatic memory associated with the past life in the homeland haunts the immigrant. In the novel, *What Lies Between Us*, Munaweera portrays this dichotomy of diasporic individuals' identities through the characters of Ganga, the story's narrator, and her mother. Through them, Munaweera depicts the fluctuating identities of the diasporic individuals while struggling to negotiate between the reality of immigrant life and haunting memories of the homeland. The narrator, whose name is kept anonymous until the novel's end, grows up in the ancient city of Kandy, in Sri Lanka, in the paternal ancestral house where she has a companion in Samson, the servant. Her father, a professor of history at the University of Peradeniya, is an alcoholic and

spends most of his time on academic work. In contrast, her mother, meek and soft, hailing from a poor background but unpredictable, has a passion for dance. In her early childhood days, the narrator finds that her mother is temperamental and strange in her ways and observes: “She does not belong to us, but to some other state, some other mood, and even if we called her, she would ignore us or stare back at the house, past us in the windows as if we did not exist” (23).

Despite all her idiosyncrasies, the mother always keeps a watch on her adolescent daughter. She cautions her about the traps waiting for her as she might have felt something wrong in her daughter’s nature after puberty and is anxious about any aberration. The mother is quite aware of the repeated attempts of sexual violence against her daughter by someone she cannot stop as she is powerless before him. Later, the sense of guilt out of her inability to safeguard her daughter from her perpetrator haunts her entire life as she has witnessed the most shocking thing in her life from the man who is morally bound to protect the chastity of her daughter, trying to abuse her. Her protests do not yield any result, and the most outrageous act of her husband dismembers her entire body and mind leading to psychic disorder. The tragic death of her husband by drowning while searching for Samson in the night during the monsoon further weakens her, and a sense of guilt and isolation rules her mind.

The narrator’s mother has no other way but to agree with the suggestion of her America-settled sister Mallini that they, too, move to America where they will be safe from the accusing fingers of her husband’s relatives and they will be able to start life anew. The sense of dislocation and alienation on the first day in California

makes the mother stupefied, and she sleeps all day and night as she cannot accept the reality of being in a strange country. The narrator's concern about the change in her mother in the changed circumstance is evident in her words: "When we first came to this country, she slept on the couch all day and all night. She looked shell-shocked and barely talked to anyone" (98). The narrator, on the other hand, faces a predicament of conflicting identities: one that of her Sri Lankan identity with all its external attributes like complexion, bodily features, and internalised identity markers like memory, and the second is that of a diasporic identity with its visible "otherness": "I had been fair before; at home, the girls had called me Sudhi, white girl. That name is now ridiculous compared to these actual white girls. Now I am clearly, irretrievably dark, and beyond that, hairy" (96). The narrator is compelled to reconstruct her identity constantly, as her physical appearance is an explicit marker of her Asian identity.

The change that happens to the mother cannot be considered the result of jetlag from a long journey on the flight since the expression "shell-shocked" used by the narrator indicates the trauma that silenced the mother. The term shell shock was widely used to indicate a psychological condition of trauma confronted by soldiers after World War II and the Vietnam War as the soldiers underwent a kind of nervousness and disorderliness due to the explosions of shells during the war. This numbness is not because of any physical injury since the symptom was prevalent in the soldiers who returned from the battle unhurt. Therefore it can be attributed to a mental condition, as stated by Judith Herman in her work, *Trauma and Recovery*, "... it soon became clear that the syndrome (shell shock) could be found in soldiers

who had not been exposed to any physical trauma. Gradually military psychiatrists were forced to acknowledge that the symptoms of shell shock were due to psychological trauma” (14). The mother is traumatised after witnessing the most heinous act of her husband trying to molest her daughter. Further, the sense of guilt that overpowers her after the tragic death of her husband also strengthens her trauma.

Her traumatic memory associated with her husband’s sinful deed and her inability to correct him has unsettled her psyche and impaired her identity as a morally sensitive Sri Lankan woman brought up in the tradition of Buddhist beliefs. When guilt and helplessness become beyond her control, she attempts her life by cutting her wrist with a knife and shutting it inside the bathroom. The timely intervention of her daughter saved her life though the trauma and guilty consciousness continue to haunt her as she mutters: “He left us. He left us. I didn’t do anything. It’s my fault. I didn’t do anything” (113). At times, she displays aggressive behaviour, disregarding her child and causing damage to kitchen utensils by smashing plates and cups. Subsequently, she experiences regret for her actions. The narrator closely observes the changes in her mother’s nature and her shifting identity from a traditional Sinhala housewife to an immigrant trying to assimilate the cultural order of her host land:

There was the before mother, and here now is the after mother. Another way of saying it: the Sri Lankan mother and the American mother. Whereas the earlier has been delicate and controlled (except when she was not), kept like a hothouse flower amid the beautiful carved furniture, the American mother

is broader, a part of the world, out there among people in a way that would have been unthinkable in the world she grew up in. (117)

Her upbringing in Sri Lanka within the largely patriarchal family system with a cultural code drawn from Sinhala ethnicity and nationality strongly influences her identity formation, which carved out the restricted role she must play. Further, the class distinction that differentiates the mother – “a girl of unknown pedigree” (19) from her husband – “a Peradeniya boy” (19) and “from a good old Kandyan family” (21) who is a professor at university has already created a kind of identity crisis in her. However, in America, she can expand her identity in tune with the new cultural setting that allows immense freedom and being an immigrant. Far away from the ethnoreligious location of her home country, she can assimilate some of the core values of American culture, like individuality and cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism as an aspect of identity emerges when there is a continuous process of interaction between different cultures in a multicultural setting as conceived by various theorists cited by Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen in their introduction to *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice*:

...cosmopolitanism refers to a vision of global democracy and world citizenship; for others it points to the possibilities for shaping new transnational frameworks for making links between social movements, ... to advocate a non-communitarian post-identity politics of overlapping interests and heterogeneous or hybrid publics in order to challenge conventional notions of belonging, identity and citizenship. ... to address certain socio-cultural process or individual

behaviours, values or dispositions manifesting a capacity to engage cultural multiplicity. (1)

With this observation, it can be assumed that a multicultural context and transnational cultural discourse plays a significant role in the formation of cosmopolitanism, and that cosmopolitanism acts as a conduit for hybrid identities that challenge traditional views of identity.

However, this changing identity and newly acquired freedom do not match her intense yearning for the lost culture and desire to return to Sri Lanka as she still feels alien to the culture of her host land as her daughter notices: “And yet she longs to return, often speaks of going back, of reclaiming our house. Her true life is not here. The food is still strange; the people are cold. The only thing still holding her here: me” (117). Finally, when the mother decides to return to Sri Lanka a few months after her daughter’s marriage to Daniel, the narrator is sure that her mother “wants to reclaim what was lost” (187). The narrator’s mother’s longing to reclaim the lost culture of her homeland is also her desire to retain her cultural identity, which is impossible in the host country.

The immigrants’ strong desire to uphold their identity rooted in ethnicity and nationality finds expression in how they plan marriages for their younger generation. Marriage, a social institution, is considered one of the markers of identity ingrained in ethnicity and religion through which immigrants often express unwavering loyalty to their ethnic and national identity. It is prevalent for immigrants to emphasise the ethnicity and religious practices of the prospective partners of their young generation, and the sub-identities such as caste, tribe, and class are also considered.

According to her mother's choice, the narrator's cousin Darshi is compelled to enter a traditional marriage as she lost her father while he was in Sri Lanka when he fell victim to the monsoon rage. The matrimonial advertisement prepared by Darshi's mother articulates the diaspora's unquestionable loyalty to its ethnic identity:

“Parents of Sinhala Buddhist girl, Govigama caste. Wheatish complexion, well educated, looking for similar boy. Must be well educated with potential for financial growth and strong family background. Dowry and astrological details to follow” (120-21).

The emphasis on the Govigama caste, a section that is top of the hierarchy in the Sinhala-Buddhist religion, and other pointers of the upper class, like education and family background, convey the immigrants' unflinching loyalty to their ethnic identity and their desire to assert their national identity in the foreign land. Though the younger members of the diaspora, like the narrator, have a broader outlook on the matters of marriage, the elders often stick to their traditional values and worldview, as Darshi's mother asserts: “... marriage needs to be based on something much stronger, you know, wise parents who can pick properly for you without being confused by hormones and whatnot” (121). The immigrants from Asia and diasporic groups who have a firm root in the cultural heritage of their homeland usually insist on arranged marriages in line with their traditions.

The narrator and her cousin Darshi believe that this emphasis on ethnic identity by their parents is common to almost all newly arrived immigrants and exposes their racist mindset. In the hierarchy of prospective grooms, even the Christian Sinhalese and Burghers are preferred to African and Latin, though they are

not at the top: “They weren’t “our people”, but they were as close as possible to the zenith” (122), and the first choice is always a groom of one’s ethnic group as: “and there, poised teetering on a glorious throne at the very top of this pyramid, is the prize. That almost mythic being: a Buddhist Sinhala boy of a “good family” with “excellent earning potential” (122). The fact that the immigrants also have racist concerns is very clear from their dislike for a dark complexed husband.

The narrator, in her attempts to integrate with the social order of the host land, does not have any pre-conditioned culturally dictated views on marriage and family. While working as a nurse, she has almost led an ascetic life for years before she meets Daniel, a budding painter. Her passionate love for Daniel culminates in their wedding, though she is conscious of his identity as an American and her own identity shaped by the history and culture of Sri Lanka’s Sinhala Buddhist tradition: “Daniel is white. Creamy skin that tans in botchy spots if he has too much sun, blue eyes, blond hair, a little more than six feet of white man. Here in America, for someone like me, to love someone like him, what ignoring of history do I have to do?” (163). As the difference in cultural identities is often marked by physical features and complexion, the narrator’s comments about the physical characteristics of Daniel indicate that the inherent contradictions lie between two different cultures with different histories and ethnicity. Later. This consciousness of ethnic identity is further emphasised after the birth of their daughter Bodhi Ann as the little Bodhi’s milk-white complexion inherited from her American father often reminds the narrator about her ethnic identity when the onlookers and passersby contrast her

dark complexion with the creamy white of her daughter and on some occasions, she is mistaken as Bodhi's nanny.

As the narrator's life with Daniel goes happily with all kinds of adventures and excitement of lovers, she is surprised to find the depth of her love for him, and she feels that such kind of mad love will invite troubles. Her exposure to a larger society of Americans who are primarily white, consisting of his classmates from high school and art school, often reminds her of her foreign identity as there is a marked difference in the way they share their common experience in a familiar accent with a strong sense of belongingness which she cannot claim as: "they have a kind of perfect belonging, a knowing of where their earth is, where their roots sink. Next to them I feel like a hydroponic plant, roots exposed and adrift" (180). Her divided self and hyphenated identity create a sense of rootlessness, unlike the friends and well-wishers of Daniel, who share a common cultural identity with him. Her strong sense of otherness forces her to imitate the ways of white women though she is constantly afraid that she will be exposed and others will consider her an impostor.

The cultural dichotomy of the narrator and Daniel again surfaces during their wedding ceremony. Her wedding dress -a pure long white dress with silver straps without any shades of other colours or embroidery -gifted by Daniel is suggestive of death and mourning in Sri Lanka. The white colour of the wedding dress strikes a paradoxical symbol of death to her and reminds her of her father's funeral: "White was the color I should have worn to my father's burning. Instead, I had worn the slightest shade of pink. Now when I should be as adorned as a goddess, I am

wearing the perfect white of mourning” (189). During the first three years of their married life, she has learned all the conventions of marriage, reshaping one’s personality and identity to accommodate the partner, generating a sense of oneness in the partners.

Her unexpected pregnancy puts the narrator in a predicament as the traumatic memory of her childhood sexual abuse visits her, and the thought that by giving birth to a child, she will be transferring her disgraceful inheritance to a child disheartens her. However, she tries to dispel her fear by thinking that a child born of love in a far land from her homeland that holds her painful experience may not be affected by her shameful inheritance, and she can be a mother in a different way. Naming their newborn was a matter of debate even before the child’s birth, as both preferred a name that explicitly marks their respective cultural identity. Finally, they choose the name Bodhi Ann – a name that synthesises two different cultures rooted in different religions – Bodhi represents the ancient sacred tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment and the name Ann indicates the family lineage of Daniel. Thus, the name Bodhi Ann represents the transnational identity of the narrator, who is ready to accommodate the cultural distinctiveness of her husband. The narrator, who has been negotiating multinational cultural experience in a multicultural foreign land, can form a global identity that enables her to synthesise her ethnic and host land identities represented by her American husband through her daughter’s name.

A transnational identity is formed when an individual, especially an immigrant, tries to integrate their cultural identity acquired from the cultural and

religious environment of the homeland with the cultural practices of the country of their settlement. The diasporic individuals continuously redefine or reconstruct their identity to assimilate the cultural ethos of their host land while keeping the cultural and religious practices closer to their hearts. Immigrants cultivate a sense of belonging to the host land and its culture in this cross-cultural negotiation process. However, they reaffirm their loyalty to their cultural roots, thereby incorporating the national and transnational cultural space as stated by Avtar Brah in her *Cartographies* “Diasporic identities are at once local and global. They are networks of transnational identifications encompassing ‘imagined’ and ‘encountered’ communities” (192). In this context, what Linda Basch and Nina Glick Schiller, in their work, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*, observe while describing the process of transnational identity formation of immigrants is very relevant: “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.... An essential element of transnationalism is the multiplicity of involvements that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies” (8). The diasporic individuals tend to show a double loyalty and divided affiliation to their homeland and host land in matters of culture, social values, and political issues.

Motherhood brings remarkable changes in her identity as she feels a strong sense of oneness with her daughter; she believes both her daughter and herself have completed a journey together, and her daughter’s birth is just the blooming of life in the outside world as she has kept it within her body till its blossoming. She sees no

different identity for her daughter apart from hers and falls in love with her the first time she sees her. The first year of the birth of her daughter also marked another birth – the birth of Daniel as a famous artist as he is busy with his life among art dealers, curators, and wealthy patrons. Daniel's busy life often compels him to stay away from the narrator, and his constant absence creates an unknown fear in her as the memories of her childhood trauma haunt her. Soon the traumatic awakening starts to affect her chaotic psyche as she frequently shuts herself in the bathroom, stands under the shower, and forgets about the baby. Daniels sees this unnatural behaviour of his wife as a repetition of her mother's abnormality and fears that his daughter will also be affected by this.

Daniel's decision to leave her alone and take Bodhi with him devastates the narrator as she feels that her body is dismembered and that what constitutes her person as an immigrant – the transnational identity – is shattered with the single act of desertion of Daniel. As an immigrant, she built her identity around family life with an American husband. She is downhearted by the thought: "Now I am that desolate thing, an abandoned woman left by her man, without her child" (252). The idea that her daughter will be brought up in a different cultural ambience where there is no space for her identity shocks her as Bodhi will vanish into Daniel's world and "she will fit in a way I never had. I will be erased", and their "marriage would mean nothing. My motherhood would mean nothing" (253). Her fear that her daughter will be estranged from her and everything about her will be removed from her daughter's mind creates a sense of loss that is suggestive of the disintegration of the narrator's identity. How this sense of loss and vulnerability felt by the narrator is

associated with the muddled identity can be explained in the light of the statement made by Pauline Boss in her essay, "Building Resilience: The Example of Ambiguous Loss" in *Work, Approaches to Psychic Trauma: Theory and Practice*: "For individual family members, ambiguous loss creates symptoms of depression and anxiety as well as feelings of hopelessness and helplessness; confused identity" (96).

When the immigrant confronts the reality of the disintegration of their identity, as seen in the case of the narrator, one way of compensating for this loss is to reclaim the cultural identity associated with the homeland. The narrator dreams of a happy family of her husband and daughter, sharing the lighter moments with her mother in her home country. At the same time, she speaks her mother tongue and tastes typically Sri Lankan food: "Maybe one day she and Daniel will be there, in the land of my birth. Sitting at a table with Amma, eating and laughing while the ceiling fan far above stirs the thick air. I think about being surrounded by my first language, about dipping my fingers into food made by old women" (256). This longing for her roots at a moment when she struggles to cope with her husband's abandonment, in a way, is an attempt to retrieve her cultural identity that has lost its significance in her host land during acculturation and assimilation.

As the narrator is now placed in a gruelling situation forced into her by various traumas: childhood sexual abuse and its memories, the trauma of unexpected abandoning by her husband, forced separation from her daughter, and victimisation, her identity undergoes drastic changes, and often she develops a sense of divided identity. Her tangled identity caused by multiple trauma and sense of victimhood

can be explained in a better way in the light of the observation made by Arnon Bentovim in his essay, “Undoing the effects of complex trauma: Creating a lifespan trauma narrative with children and young people”, in the work, *Attachment, Trauma, and Multiplicity: Working with Dissociative Identity Disorder*. Arnon Bentovim, a psychiatrist and family therapist associated with the Institute of Child Health, University College, London, and one of the founding members of the first comprehensive treatment service for sexually abused children and their families, while summarising his findings of the clinical study conducted on a victim of early childhood abuse states: “ Multiple experiences of abuse, poly victimisation, and polytraumatisation evoke multiple identities and come to organise the lives of young people and adults developing unstable and antisocial personality functioning and Dissociative Identity Disorders” (50).

Dissociative identity disorder (DID) is a mental state by which a person exhibits diverse personality traits as a reaction to past traumatic experiences. The narrator’s strong desire to regain all the lost love and companionship of her husband and irresistible longing for her little daughter's presence prompts her to reconcile with Daniel, and she arranges a meeting with him. However, her attempts to broker peace with him end up in complete chaos as Daniel's abrupt leaving unsettles her psyche in the middle of their intimate moments. Later, when he categorically states that he cannot carry on their relationship further, she moves into a kind of psychic disorder: “I wrench away from him and run into the bathroom, lock up the door, turn on the scalding water. I plug up the tub, get in, lay against the curved bottom shivering, my arms clutched around my knees” (265). The final shock comes when

she learns from her mother that her father was the perpetrator of her childhood trauma. The shocking revelation by her mother has a disastrous effect on her as the memory of the traumatic childhood sexual abuse unsettles her mental faculties, creating fissures in her identity as she can no longer hold her identity as a mother or a wife having a history of victimised past. The dissociative identity disorder prompts her to kill her daughter as she believes it is the only way to save the little girl from any possible abuse by her father.

An individual's identity is formed by continuous discourse with their immediate social system. Therefore, there is always a collective or cultural component in an individual's identity through which the individual project their innately constructed personality, as noted by Jan Assmann in *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*:

Individual identity is the coherent self-image that builds itself up in the consciousness of the individual through features that (a) distinguish them significantly from everyone else and (b) remain constant across the various phases of their development. It is the awareness, beginning with the constant motif of one's own body, of an irreducible self that is unmistakable and irreplaceable. (113)

A person's identity is never a fixed entity, as it is prone to change in the context of historical, cultural, and social forces that play a vital role in determining the identity as the individual is to act within the frame of these powers. This everyday life experience of the individual in terms of their interaction with cultural discourse and social order of the time helps him formulate his cultural identity or

collective identity as they share certain common traits of the cultural practices along with other members of the group to which he belongs. The collective identity surfaces when the individual is conscious of his shared past and shared cultural practices in the context of a sudden occurrence of a tragedy that has the potential to shatter the sense of security created by social cohesion. This concept of collective identity, associated with social bonding and shared experience, is elaborated by James M. Jasper and Aidan McGarry in their introduction to the work *The Identity Dilemma: Social Movements and Collective Identity* as:

A collective identity is an act of the imagination, a trope that stirs people to action by arousing feelings of solidarity with their fellows and by defining moral boundaries against other categories. It involves both cognition and emotions and can ultimately be traced to the universal human need for attachments to others. It may be based on shared structural positions, especially class, nation, age, race-ethnicity, gender... (1)

The identity of the immigrants is to be analysed in the light of their continuous negotiation with two cultures-homeland and host land- and the traumatic memories of the past that continue to haunt the immigrant in their settled country. The cross-cultural distress and the recurring memory of the trauma experienced in the homeland often create a confused identity in the immigrants, as in the case of the central characters in the novels of Roma Tearne. Her novel *Mosquito* presents how ethnicity and religious affinity significantly influence the identity formation of individuals and how their identity changes when confronted with sudden and

cataclysmic incidents that also pose a severe threat to the collective identity of immigrants. The novel also explores cultural identity in the context of the trauma of civil war and consequent displacement and migration.

Theo Samarajeeva, the middle-aged novelist, returns to his native place ending his long diasporic life in London when the ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka escalate into a full-fledged civil war. Though he is Sinhala by birth, he has already abandoned his Buddhist religious beliefs, and his years of experience in the multicultural society of London have helped him cast off his identity associated with ethnicity and culture. A Dictionary of Media and Communication defines ethnic identity as “A distinctive identity felt, shared, or claimed by individuals or a group, or ascribed to them, based on shared characteristics associated with a definition in terms of ethnicity and forming the basis for their subcultural and/or political differentiation from other groups in a society” (90). One’s ethnic identity is inherently connected to one’s shared experience of the cultural practices of a group in which one is a member in a socio-political setting that distinguishes the group from other social formations.

However, with his cosmopolitan upbringing, acculturation to a transnational culture, and unbiased worldview, Theo believes that he is immune to such parochial concepts as ethnicity and identity politics, though the ravages of the civil war are looming large at him. His chance encounter with a teenage schoolgirl Nulani Mendis and his subsequent relationship with her change his life course beyond his control. Sugi continues to enlighten Theo about the changing nature of the identity of Sinhalese, who had earlier proudly upheld the Buddhist principle of non-violence

but act just the opposite now: “We are quite capable of killing. It isn’t like before. When you were last here. Things are complicated now. These days we don’t know who we are” (20). The transformed, aggressive, and violent Sinhala society is an example of the hardened collective identity based on ethnicity in the context of the civil war to assert the supremacy of ethnic identity. Sugi’s use of the plural pronoun “we” is symbolic as it denotes the collective identity of himself and Theo, who belong to the Sinhala Buddhist clan, and how their cultural foundation, once known for universal brotherhood and non-violence, altered during political extremism.

Theo’s response to Sugi’s observation indicates the role of colonial rule over Sri Lanka in creating a rift between different ethnic groups and polarising them on ethnic and identity politics. Theo thinks that the ethnic conflict in his country does not surprise anyone because it is a common phenomenon in almost all former colonies of Britain: “Why are we surprised by this war, Sugi? Has there ever been a country that, once colonized, avoided civil war?” (21).

Theo’s objective views on the ethnic conflict expressed in his first book *Tiger Lily* will be a liability for him later as his views are generally taken as sympathetic to Tamil’s cause. Sugi, the servant of Theo, while narrating how Sinhalese radicals targeted Nulani’s father, who had a soft corner for the Tamils, cautions Theo about the constraints of social life in Sri Lanka as fear reigns the people: “Fear and suspicion were the things they lived off, it was the only diet they had had for years” (18). Despite his extended stay in London and his popularity as a writer of some merit among British readers, he has never felt a sense of belongingness to his host land. Sugi’s words, “And I never really felt I belonged

there” (20), suggest his estrangement and confused identity during his life in England. It is natural for diasporic individuals to experience rootless existence in the settled country as they may not be entirely successful in assimilating the ethos of the host land. At the same time, their emotional connection with their homeland diminishes, as rightly pointed out by Iveta Jurkane Holbein, the Swedish researcher in the field of migration and Evija Kļave, the Latvian researcher in the areas of ethnic studies and migration issues, in their essay, “Manoeuvring in Between: Mapping Out the Transnational Identity of Russian Speaking Latvians in Sweden and Great Britain” in work, *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia: National Identity, Transnational Belonging, and Diaspora Politics* while discussing the ways of identity formation in migrants belong to an ethnic minority: “The feeling that your home country does not accept you creates rootlessness where emotional connections with the home country start to wane, but an emotional attachment to the host country has not yet developed” (179).

Theo’s relationship with Nulani is gradually changing into a wholehearted love affair as the two of them are involved in each other’s life closely, and Theo is determined to give some training for her in art. He has arranged a forged passport and some money for Nulani and kept them hidden with the help of Sugi so that she can use them to flee from Sri Lanka if any untoward incident occurs in the absence of Theo as he is planning to visit his agent in London. Sugi is entrusted to take Nulani safely to Rohan if any eventuality appears that may cause harm to her. Theo’s neutral identity is threatened when he becomes a captive of the Sinhala soldiers in an unidentified location, as he has to undergo indescribable torture and

trauma from the soldiers. The physical and mental torture faced by Theo has an indelible mark on his identity as a Sri Lankan writer with liberal views on ethnicity, as the traumatic memory of the imprisonment and ineffable experience of agony splinters his personality. The traumatic experience has the potential to disintegrate one's identity as one is forced to reconstruct oneself in the backdrop of uncertainty caused upon his life by the traumatic event.

The trauma of physical torture seriously affects the function of his brain as he can no longer reason, and when the thoughts flow from him, they are illogical and incoherent. The trauma torments him and weakens his mind as he often cries silently in distress in the darkness of the night, thinking nobody notices his inner struggle. The Tamil captives in the detention centre, especially the two Tamil brothers who are medical students, empathise with Theo and start speaking to him in Sinhala. The trauma and suffering bring them together, and their ethnic identity seems to be blurring as the comment: "We are all the same, in this wretched place. Why are you so proud? Everyone understands, there's no shame in what you feel, you know?" Here, the cultural identity of the Medico brothers as Tamils is also changing in the context of their witnessing the trauma of Theo. However, he is a Sinhalese man, as cultural identity is not a fixed entity; instead, it is fluid when the victims experience the trauma of other victims. However, they have a different cultural identity. Stuart Hall explains the evolving nature of cultural identity and its fluidity in his work, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*:

Cultural identity, ... is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which

already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. (225)

This transcending nature of identity can be further noticed when the other inmates of the prison, all Tamils, feel that Theo “both was and was not, one of them, ..., giving him comfort in the only way left to them” (192). The Tamil coprisoners can identify Theo as one among them, though he is a Sinhalese, and when Theo starts speaking in response to their consolation, he talks about Italy and then about England, not about Sri Lanka as the memory of his past life as an immigrant has shaped his identity as a cosmopolitan. His return to his homeland Sri Lanka is prompted by the unexpected death of his Italian wife. This enables his latent cultural identity to surface as “he felt it was better to put his energy into his own country than waste it on foreign soil” (193). In the cell, he begins to create stories in his mind and, later in the night, narrates them aloud to the inmates and then recites poems that remind him of his childhood and the Buddhist tradition of telling stories loudly. However, his relief is short-lived as torture and assault continue by the new oppressors- the Tamil militants- who have ambushed the military vehicle carrying Theo to an unknown destination and kept him hostage.

The unabated torture by the Tamil militants has drained Theo physically and mentally, and a sense of utter desperation reigns in him as death seems to be the only way out to escape from the appalling condition in which he is forced. Later, he regains consciousness in a temporarily built hospital where his oppressors have taken him when they realise their mistake.

Vikram, the rescued child militant, has a broken identity suggested through the weird-looking Sumaner House owned by his guardian Gunadeen and where he lives with the servant woman Theracy. The house, with its all oddities, gives an uncanny appearance that reflects the inscrutable self of Vikram: “Moths and antique dust that piled up in small hills behind the coloured glass doors. The beetles had drilled holes in the fretwork of the frames and sawdust had gathered in small mounds on the ground. It was a useless home really, everything was covered in fine sea sand, caked in old sweat and unhappiness” (43). Once a symbol of splendour and luxury owned by wealthy Dutch colonisers, the house now is only a distant memory of the past glory as all its wonderful delicacies have vanished.

Vikram, haunted by the trauma of witnessing the massacre of his family and being rescued by government forces from an LTTE camp, lives by the charity of a Sinhalese man. He is directionless and wayward in his behaviour till he meets Gerard, the undercover LTTE agent. Like the Sumaner House where he lives, his mind is clouded, and a sense of purposelessness lingers. However, an invisible hardness and ferocity lie in his mind as he still carries the psychic wound of a child militant. Though he has been provided with the comforts of shelter, food, and education, Vikram does not care about these blessings, as the traumatic memory of the brutal carnage of his family unsettles his identity as a Tamil and makes him restless always. His restlessness and destructive attitude soften when he enters adolescence. The political turmoil and relentless ethnic clashes leading to large-scale killings and bloodshed make him almost silent.

Both Sugi and Thercy generally believe that Vikram, once a militant, will always be a militant, as both see a kind of abstruseness in his character. When Vikram arrives in the Sumaner House, Thercy finds that “there was a kind of emptiness to the boy. He seemed such a strange, mysterious creature, silent and friendless” (48). For Vikram, the world outside and the people’s perception of him are immaterial as he lives in a world where nobody else exists. Since he was rescued and began to live in Waterlily House, the government-sponsored rescue shelter, he has been unresponsive to the happenings in the world. After meeting with Gerard, the undercover LTTE agent, his life starts moving in a different direction. The latter deftly exploits the wounded psyche of Vikram by stirring his dormant hatred towards the Sinhalese people. His friendship with Gerard soon turns into an enigmatic relationship, where Gerard, the habitual schemer, is the master, and Vikram is the servant who executes his master’s plans with dedication for a supposedly noble cause of establishing a separate state for the Tamils.

This newly acquired status of an undercover LTTE militant has a significant bearing on Vikram’s identity as a rescued child militant living comfortably under the patronage of a Sinhalese man. This rescued child militant's confused identity has undergone dramatic change, and Vikram is increasingly conscious of his Tamil ethnic identity as Gerard starts educating him about the Sinhala ethnic domination that caused his family’s brutal massacre. Vikram’s repressed fury and vengeful heart are searching for an opportunity to unleash the destructive power on the perpetrators of violence against his family. Gerard is very cautious in keeping Vikram’s fury under control so that he can use it at an appropriate time. Gerard has

successfully transformed Vikram's trauma into a collective trauma of the Tamil population, thereby connecting his identity to the collective ethnic identity of the Tamils.

Trauma arising out of such painful happening as witnessing the murder of a Tamil family by the Sinhala soldiers is transformed into the collective trauma of the entire Tamil population. It shatters the Tamil ethnic identity into pieces. How Gerard can transform Vikram's tragedy into collective distress of Sri Lanka's Tamil minority can be understood in the light of the observation made by Douglass and Vogler in their introduction to *Witness and Memory: The Discourse of Trauma* while talking about the effects of trauma on the individual identity and its power to evoke group sense: "While individual trauma confers individual identity, the function of trauma as a "social glue" holds groups together based on ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation, disease or handicap" (12). Trauma acts as a medium for the members of a social or ethnic group to connect them in the aftermath of a disastrous event that has the potential to create insecurity and fear in the group. In the context of a traumatic event, identification with one's group consciousness and shared ethnic ancestry may lead to the adoration of agony, as pointed out by Douglass and Vogler: "Trauma has been so successful in this function, as both individual and group identities are increasingly based on historical instances of victimization" (12).

Vikram accurately executes his first mission by massacring seven Sinhala soldiers in an ambush. His way of handling the situation with the presence of mind and cold determination surprises Gerard. A chain of ambushes and murders

followed his first mission, and Vikram can carry out all such tasks without leaving any trace of his involvement, as in the case of gunning down two Cabinet ministers and their families. Gerard ensures that others see Vikram in his familiar spots mingle with locals, and behave normally so that nobody will suspect him in the brutal murders. By this time, he has learned the Sinhalese language with the perfection that he speaks it spontaneously as the Sinhala people do. Vikram can easily masquerade his Tamil ethnic identity by speaking Sinhala effortlessly, as language is rooted in one's culture and ethnicity. The mother tongue of an individual always carries an indelible mark of their identity as noted by Karmela Leibkind in "Social Psychology" in *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity*:

People generally have a so-called integrative attitude toward their mother tongue—that is, they identify with the speakers of that language and want to maintain that identification. Much social psychological research has suggested that language and identity appear to be reciprocally related: Language use influences the formation of group identity, and group identity influences patterns of language attitudes and usage. (144)

Though the very goal of the LTTE is to establish a separate Tamil state, Vikram deliberately put on a different identity- a Sinhala identity- to execute his leader's orders, keeping his ethnic Tamil identity inexpressive.

Vikram sets out for Batticaloa, where he will undergo rigorous training, which will harden him further as his next assignment is one of the most dangerous tasks the tigers have carried out yet. The training is designed in such a way that the

trainees will be frequently reminded of their ethnic identity by presenting the agonies of Tamils and describing how the tigers massacred some two hundred seventy Muslims for their loyalty to Sinhala nationalism and exactly where this carnage was carried out, there they are conducting the camp. The way LTTE recruits young Tamil boys and how they are educated about the discrimination experienced in the Sinhala majoritarian rule suffice to evoke the cultural identity of the cadets as the memory of the shared cultural practices associated with the history and ethnicity of a group is essential for forming a cultural identity or a collective identity.

The identity of the individual members of a social group may transform into collective or social identity through a process of association of their personal experience with the more extensive social experience through the interpretation of the events, as pointed out by P. Weinreich in his essay “Psychodynamics of Personal and Social Identity” in the work *Identity: Personal and Socio-Cultural*:

may form common identifications and experience common, significant events during socialization, which they interpret, using common constructs given by agents representing a specific cultural orientation. Insofar as their developmental experiences of historical events within a cultural framework have substantial elements of commonality, their identity structures will tend to show common features of organization at a societal level (for example, Catholics contrasted with Protestants in Belfast. (167)

The social identity formation of Vikram can be explained in the light of Weinreich’s observation as Vikram identifies his personal experience of the brutal killings of his

family with the more extensive violence against the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. As Vikram and other newly baptised militants like Gopal have been brought up in the orphanage homes for victims of ethnic war since their early childhood, they can be easily lured to militant force that is working for the assertion of their ethnic identity by interpreting the narratives of the civil war through specific ethnic perception. Juxtaposing the Sinhala-Tamil duality through historical experience will help the militant groups create a sense of oneness among the newly recruited cadres like Vikram and thereby rouse their collective identity.

For militants like Vikram and Gopal, the concept of home is different as their memory of home is associated with the trauma of massacre and violence, and the orphanage where they had spent their childhood days after they lost their family does not connect them emotionally with the sense of home since no member of Vikram's family survives now. Gopal's parents do not want him back, as he has joined the LTTE. For them, the training camp of the militants and the sense of belonging to a community that fights for the establishment of a separate homeland of their own is the home, as remarked by Gopal: "It's not bad here, ... It isn't as bad as people think. This is my home now. I wouldn't want to go back to my village" (131). Vikram has been trained for a particular task, and the chief of the LTTE himself briefs him on the eve of his departure to his destination. Vikram and Gopal are entrusted to destroy the Katunayake airport, causing an irreversible loss to the country's economy. While examining his preparedness for the mission, the chief once again reminds Vikram of the carnage of his family and the need to avenge their tragic death: "Don't forget that, Vikram, not even for one single moment. It is your

duty to avenge their memory” (138). The chief knows that the reminder about Vikram’s traumatic experience will strengthen his desire for retribution and unleash all his anger capable of immeasurable destruction.

Though Vikram has managed to escape uncaught after successfully carrying out the devastating explosion at Katunayake airport, his companion Gopal is forced to swallow cyanide to avoid possible torture by Sinhala soldiers. Gerard, knowing well about Vikram’s soft feelings for Nulani, decides to use him to locate the whereabouts of Theo as he is planning to use the latter’s sympathy for Tamils and reputation as a writer abroad to counter the negative image created by the LTTE’s aggressive stance and inhuman killings. Gerard has other plans when he decides to send Vikram to Colombo in search of Theo. Gerard finds that after the bombardment of the airport, Vikram has been under stress, and cracks start appearing in his well-fortified heart. Gerard is looking for a way to discard Vikram forever as “Vikram had come to the end of his usefulness and that his battle fatigue and his nervous exhaustion had made him a liability even to the Tigers. Added to which it would be difficult to use Vikram in any further high-profile activities” (176). Vikram is confused about the familiarity that he feels for Nulani. Only when he looks closely at a photograph of her is he shocked to find that she closely resembles his elder sister, who was killed by soldiers long back. Nulani’s photo brings back the memory of his sister.

Vikram quickly agrees to go to Colombo in search of Theo as he thinks that his investigation will finally lead him to Nulani, and he boards the train to Colombo carrying the bundle handed given by Gerard to be handed over to someone in

Colombo without any clue about Gerard's plot. During his journey to Colombo, Vikram looks back at his life, and the memories of his dead sister flash into his mind, and he finds that his life so far has been directionless. He knows now that neither Gerard nor the LTTE wants his service, and avenging his family tragedy is impossible. Exhausted with a brooding heart, Vikram tries to open the compartment door holding the suitcase carefully, when the train stops at Colombo station. The bomb planted by Gerard inside the bag explodes, killing seventeen people, including Vikram. Vikram's last moments bring into light the transformation of his identity from a hard-hearted militant to a sensible young man capable of understanding the futility of waging war in the name of ethnicity and identity politics.

Rohan, a painter of some substance, lives with his Italian wife Giulia in Colombo; like his friend Theo, he is coping with the harsh reality of the maddening ethnic violence and bloodshed in Sri Lanka when Nulani is introduced to him by Theo. Rohan readily agrees to set up a studio for Nulani's artworks as he believes the only hopeful thing is art in the testing time of civil war: "Perhaps it's our only hope. Living has always been a desperate business" (92). As art can aesthetically express the woes and sufferings of human beings, Nulani's paintings are representations of the maimed beauty of life. Though Sinhalese by birth, Rohan does not associate his identity with his ethnicity as an artist; he wants to be neutral to the ongoing war along the lines of political ideology. He chooses his art as a medium to communicate his neutrality by deliberately painting with grey colour as grey, according to Rohan, is generally perceived as neutral. Rohan's selection of grey colour gets added strength to communication as it indicates a lack of language and

shows a stark contrast with the linguistic supremacy that the rival groups of Sinhala and Tamil- try to establish over which the seeds of polarisation were sown. Thus, Rohan rejects his ethnic identity by deliberately contrasting the absence of language in his paintings with the linguistic chauvinism practised by the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka.

Rohan's Italian wife Giulia is sensitive about her identity as a foreigner in Sri Lanka as she is upset with the daily reports of carnage and maddening ethnic polarisation in her host country. The disappearance of Theo, the brutal murder of Sugi, and the distraught condition of Nulani make her rethink her continuation in her Husband's country. Frightened with the imminent disaster looming over their life, Giulia wants to leave Sri Lanka at the earliest as she is no longer able to carry the trauma of Nulani's tragedy of being left alone amid the war-ravaged country and apprehensive about the security of her husband. After Nulani's departure to London, Giulia broods over the girl's fate in a foreign as she is forced to move from one cultural setting to another social milieu. Being an immigrant herself, Giulia can easily connect with the emotional state of Nulani in England as she is very much aware of the predicament of an immigrant negotiating the reality in a foreign land and unintentionally expresses her discomfort in a foreign land: "All I want to go home" (183).

Giulia's discomfort grows intense as the riots and bloodshed soar high, and fear grips her when she thinks about the disappearance of Theo. She becomes happy after reaching Venice, her home country, as she is "back in an ordered world again" (225), contrasted with the chaotic and strife-torn Sri Lanka. However, Giulia and

Rohan become nervous as all their attempts to contact Nulani have failed as they have not received any reply to their letters to Nulani, and even they cannot locate her though they have visited the apartment in London where she is supposed to be staying. Meanwhile, leaving his homeland has a disastrous effect on Rohan as Giulia notices that he is shattered and detached. It seems that the forced displacement from his land to a foreign country has wrecked him, and his identity is fragmented as a sense of alienation overshadows him. He might have saved his life by leaving Sri Lanka, but he has lost many other things dearer to him, like his language, familiar locality, sea, and landscape. One's language is a powerful marker of one's identity, as observed by John E. Joseph in the preface to his work, *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious*: "Manifesting identity, and even more importantly, interpreting identity, come to be seen as central to the very existence and functioning of language" (xi). When Giulia notices that "Every time she delighted in her native tongue, she felt his loss keenly" (228), Rohan's distraught identity is revealed as he is placed in a different linguistic ambience.

On the other hand, Giulia cooks some Sri Lankan indigenous food for Rohan, hoping to bring him back to normalcy as she is conscious of the link between identity and food habits while someone is in a foreign land due to forced migration. Food as an identity marker associated with a person's nationality is explored by many researchers, as noted by Atsuko Ichijo and Ronald Ranta in their work, *Food, National Identity and Nationalism: From Everyday to Global Politics*: "Food is a medium through which on the one hand, national identity is practised and experienced, while on the other hand, it is imagined, constructed, and reproduced"

(4). Rohan, who carries the burden of the horrors of civil war and forced dislocation, cannot cope with the situation in his wife's homeland Italy and confronts an identity crisis. Giulia's act of serving ethnic-specific Sri Lankan dishes to Rohan is, thus, a sincere effort on her part to create an ambience of his Nation in their dining room, helping him reclaim his national identity. The significance of following the food habits connected to ethnicity and culture and how these habits influence the identity formation of an individual are explained by Steffan Igor Ayora-Diaz in his essay, "Introduction: The cultural politics of Taste in Global Perspective:

Although identities are dynamic and fluid, the common understanding of "identity" is that of an imagined selfsameness and permanence. Hence, safeguarding the identity of a people, its food, and its taste preferences conveys the image of unchanging food habits, as well as of historical continuity in taste preferences and cooking practices. (3)

Unable to cope with the changed situation in which he has been placed, Rohan drifts into monotony and despondency, and his detachment hurts Giulia as she fears that his estrangement may lead to the collapse of their marriage. What happens to Rohan is the identity crisis that immigrants usually face in their host country. Though he is far from the maddening violence of his motherland, his national identity as a Sri Lankan is in peril as he cannot dissociate from the disastrous political fallout in Sri Lanka during the fiercely fought civil war. Though Giulia has been desperate about Rohan's indifference towards her, she is relieved when Rohan starts to paint again. However, unlike in Sri Lanka, he cannot use grey.

Instead, he uses dark colours on smaller canvases as “what he wanted to say was more intimate, more secretive. He had the strangest feeling of living in a closed box, from which no light could escape” (243). The sense of loss and the vacuum he feels expressed through his paintings that feature skyscrapers and amorphous human figures suggest his confused identity. The desolation and destruction caused by the war in his homeland are engraved on his psyche, and the haunting sense of unbelonging finds expression in his paintings as “his palette changed. Ignoring the soft tones of the Adriatic, the blues, and the greens, he began to use crimson and pink. He refused to look at other colours. Giulia thought the surfaces of his paintings were like bruised flesh, visceral and close to death” (243).

Although Giulia, an Italian by birth, is securely far away from the scenes of the ongoing civil war in her husband’s country, she is not immune to the horrors of the war as it is pulling Rohan away from her and hurting her. Her husband’s confusion and fatigue infect her also, and she feels that the war in her husband’s homeland is striking her hard and enervating her: “... her husband’s country had wormed its way under her skin, invading her life, incapacitating her” (244). Within six years of the strained life of Giulia and Rohan in Italy, Rohan has created a space of his own in the spectrum of painting, and the reviews of his illustrations published in magazines have made him famous. During his visit to a gallery in London, Rohan sees two paintings that puzzle him because of their familiarity. The gallery owner informs him that those paintings are the work of Nulani Mendis, a woman artist from Sri Lanka, and she also expresses her plan to conduct an exhibition of their pieces together.

The meeting arranged by the gallery owner turns out to be a blessing for Rohan and Nulani as it enables them to reclaim their identity as Sri Lankan nationals. The autumn rain and cold air do not affect them while wandering along the streets of London as their unexpected meeting rouses the memories of their homeland: “The air was edged with a sharp chill, but they had not cared, for home cried out to them” (275). Rohan’s meeting with Nulani has a positive turn in his relationship with his wife for the first time after years; his indifference and detachment towards Giulia vanishes into thin air. It also allows Rohan to introspect about his failure to realise his wife’s role in keeping him sane in the wake of his tragedies like Theo’s disappearance and his forcible displacement. Their only concern about the possibility of Nulani’s passion for Theo drained with time disappears when Nulani finally meets Theo in London.

In *Brixton Beach*, Roma Tearne presents the representation of the fluid identity of immigrants and the role of memory, especially traumatic memory, in constructing immigrant identity. The immigrant’s memory associated with life in the homeland and the sense of loss created by forced displacement and the burden of trauma along with an intense longing for the lost culture and locality while negotiating with the cultural life of the host land affects the construction of identity of the diaspora and the negation of its identity. The migration of Alice Fonseka, a Sri Lankan girl born of a Tamil father and a Sinhala mother, to England, compelled by her mother’s traumatic experience caused by the death of her unborn child and the sense of insecurity created by the civil war in Sri Lanka, has tremendous sway in her identity formation as an immigrant. Much before her arrival in England, Alice

has been often reminded of her hybrid identity, though many of her classmates in the local school perceive her as Tamil. The apparent contradiction and growing tension in her parents owing to her double identity formed out of the opposing ethnic cultures are explicit when Stanley insists that his daughter speak only English which is perceived as a neutral language in Sri Lanka where language occupies the centre stage of the ethnic polarisation.

Language, a cultural or ethnic indicator exploited for establishing political hegemony, is one of the contentious issues over which the three-decade-long civil war fought by the Sinhala majority and Tamil minority in Sri Lanka is further presented through the reactions of Alice's Tamil classmates when she attends the class after a short period of absence: "The Tamil girls in the class looked at her curiously. She was supposed to be a Tamil, but she didn't look like one or speak proper Tamil. Even the food in her tiffin box was different from theirs" (91). The manipulation of linguistic differences to consolidate ethnic identity and use it for crafting political supremacy has even corrupted the innocent hearts of children as they are taught to hate others who speak a different language. When Alice's Sinhala teacher humiliates and canes her for not bringing the homework notebook for the Sinhala language class, her mother, Sita, retorts by forcing Alice to talk only in English and thereby rejects both the Tamil and Sinhala languages that are used to divide the people in the line of identity.

How language differences are widely used in political movements driven by cultural identities and create division and animosity among the population is noted by Christine Berberich, Neil Campbell & Robert Hudson while discussing the

concept of national identity in the context of ethnic politics in their “Introduction: Framing and Reframing Land and Identity” in work, *Land & Identity: Theory, Memory, and Practice*:

..., within the realm of cultural politics, it is the fine-tuning of perceived language differences that can play a major role in the deliberate process of forging ethnic identity through competing processes of inclusion and exclusion; based on ‘us’ and ‘them’, the ‘in group’ and the ‘out group’, or the ‘endogenous’ and ‘exogenous’ cultures that seek salvation by emphasising differences from their rivals. (30)

The difference in identity becomes a matter of contention in a country like Sri Lanka where political formations take an uncompromising stance on cultural domination, and because of the same reason Mr Bee opposes his daughter Sita’s decision to marry Stanley, a Tamil, as he is conscious of the perils of inter-religious marriage in the wake of rising ethnic tension.

Identity is always a perplexing idea for Stanley and Sita as their union in marriage exposes how the individuals are enmeshed in the cultural and ethnic canons that construct their identity. Identity also creates discord in their family life as Stanley is always critical of his wife’s Sinhala lineage and expresses bitterness whenever he gets an opportunity. On the other hand, Sita deliberately suffixes the family name Fonseka to her daughter Alice. Sita’s identity as a Sinhala Buddhist woman suffers a big blow when trauma and a sense of loss strike her after the death of her second child during the delivery. The sense of security that she had felt as a

member of the majority population had been shattered even before the tragedy of the unborn child's death, which is evident when she was forced to adopt a pseudonym under which she works as a columnist in a newspaper. This insecurity turns into intense fear as she undergoes the painful experience of trauma arising out of the death of her unborn child.

A shocking example of how pernicious Sri Lanka's identity politics, built on ethnicity, is the derogatory remarks by the Sinhalese doctor assigned to take Sita's delivery and the hostility he shows to Sita only because of her husband's Tamil identity. The heavily drunk doctor ignores the nurse's warning to Sita about her serious condition, as his racist mindset does not allow him to perform his duty as a doctor. He even scornfully rebukes the nurse for bothering him to attend to a Tamil woman though he knows Sita is Sinhala: "Why should we help breed more Tamils? As if this country hasn't enough already?" (44). The cruel way he examines Sita and his chauvinistic rant on Sita's labour pain reveal how identity politics has deeply ingrained in Sri Lankan society and how the dominant Sinhala narrative pictures the Tamils as other: "Nothing to worry about. It's a perfectly normal process. You Tamil women have been doing this for centuries" (45). Alice's outburst: "I hate Sinhalese people" (53), in response to her grandpa's comment about the racist doctor, reflects the depth of ethnic polarisation in Sri Lanka. Though her grandfather tries to be sensible by correcting Alice that one must not attribute the hatred of one person to his whole community, he is very much conscious of the biggest tragedy in childbirth in Sri Lanka is that even a new-born baby's right to live is determined by

the ethnic identity of the child rather than any medical ethics or humanitarian concerns.

Alice's grandfather Bee believes that one's identity formed on the foundation of nationality is so solid that nobody can resist its power, and his granddaughter is not an exception. When the proposed journey of his daughter and granddaughter to England nears, he convinces himself: "For although she would leave Ceylon, Ceylon would never leave her" (83). The identity associated with nationality formed in the developmental period, as in Alice, can pull people back to their original home country even if they are far away from the cultural landscape of their homeland and settled in a foreign land.

The death of her unborn child becomes a traumatic experience for Sita as the memory of the loss of her child repeatedly haunts her, which has a tremendous impact on her identity as a mother and as a wife of a Tamil man. Though she does her daily chores as usual, nobody notices her inner turbulence and changes in her personality as "her world was slowly disintegrating, and speech came only spasmodically to her" (89). The inability to cope with trauma and psychic shock that springs from traumatic experiences may unsettle the identity of the victims, as observed by Roger Lukhurst in the introduction to his *The Trauma Question*: "Individuals who experience wars, disasters, accidents, or other extreme 'stressor' events seem to produce certain identifiable somatic and psycho-somatic disturbances. Aside from myriad physical symptoms, trauma disrupts memory, and therefore identity, in peculiar ways" (1). While the external wounds of surgery get

healed, the scars on Sita's psyche become deeper and incurable and disintegrate her identity affecting her relationship with her husband as she moves away from him.

Sita's preparations for their migration to England after Stanley's departure evoke varied responses in their circle of acquaintances and friends, and some of them find it an opportunity to remind Alice of her Sinhala identity as reflected in the words of Mrs Pereira: "Remember you're still a Singhalese child" (116). On the other hand, Kunal, a Tamil activist whom Bee has given shelter after he suffered a bullet injury and escaped from the police, points out the inseparable link that an individual carries with their country wherever one goes and everyone possesses a part of their country in their self: "Your country is such a part of you. It's in your skin, your eyes, your hair, all of you. You are Ceylon, you know. And whenever someone from this place leaves, a little bit of it leaves with them and it's lost forever" (131). Kunal's words reinstate the unbreakable relationship between an individual and their mother country through identity formation in the cultural milieu of their motherland. While talking about his plan, Kunal speaks about his intention to join the Tamil liberation movement in Jaffna as his journey of life as a Tamil finds its gratification only there: "After all, it's my spiritual home. And home is always where we want to be in the end" (139).

Kunal's longing for spiritual comfort at Jaffna, the epicentre of the Tamil nationalist movement, emphasises his ethnic identity. His cultural identity is further evoked through his passion for the Tamil language, through which only he can express his true self:

Only in Tamil was he able to express those things dear to him. A lifetime of learning what was expected of him, English, Sinhalese, could not do for him what his mother tongue did. Love, he thought, sorrow, every emotion learnt at this mother's knees could only be expressed in Tamil. It was the language of his heart. (142)

Language, a manifestation of culture, is always associated with people's cultural identity. It is used as a powerful agency for uniting the people and dividing them in the run-up to establishing political supremacy, as seen in Sri Lanka. The role of language in the formation and reconstruction of identity and creating the sense of otherness is explained by the Irish linguist Diarmait Mac Giolla Chríost in his essay, "Globalisation and Transformation: Language Planning in New Contexts" in the work *Language, Power and Identity Politics*: "Language is an ever-changing artefact that is both shaped by and helps shape social life, sometimes contributing to, sometimes undercutting, constructions of identity and Otherness" (36).

Language as a manifestation of cultural identity and its power to unite or divide people is a decisive force in life of Stanley. During his short stay in Athens en route to London, for the first time, he has been happy among the people who speak an unfamiliar language other than Tamil, Sinhala, and English. Listening to the strange tongue, he is relieved of the burden of linguistic chauvinism he has been carrying for a long time: "All the years of struggling against prejudice, the desperate ways in which he had first to hide his Tamilness and later, to flaunt in defiantly, were falling away from him" (150). He is shedding away his ethnic identity and

liberating himself of the linguistic bias deeply rooted in his identity amid the people of Athens.

Next to language, food is another marker of identity, and culinary practices and preferences for food are inherently connected with people's culture and ethnicity. Alice, on her voyage to England with her mother, is perturbed to see the food served to her in the dining hall of the ship on their first night of the twenty-one-day-long journey. Alice's blunt remarks that the food served to her is like worms make a Swiss girl vomit and evoke a sharp response from the ship's steward. Alice's revulsion to the unfamiliar food tests her sense of adaptability required in a foreign country and her acceptance of a different identity that she must construct to survive in the host land.

The fiercely fought civil war has its reverberations in the far-off lands where the Sri Lankan diaspora holds regular meetings of immigrants on the line of ethnic identity, and in England, like elsewhere, the Tamil diaspora is more expressive and active owing to their loyalty to the cause of Tamil Eelam and conspicuous by their sheer numerical strength. His brother introduces Stanley to a group of immigrant Tamils in London who support a separate Tamil state in Sri Lanka and actively participate in homeland politics by financing the Tamil militants. The social gatherings and religious ceremonies also give the immigrants an occasion to express their solidarity with the political and social movements in their homeland. Stanley's association with Manika, a Tamil woman who keeps a small shrine of lord Shiva in her apartment, helps him get a close look at how the Tamil diaspora in England contributes to the Tamil successionist movement in Sri Lanka and how religious

sentiments are induced to unite the Tamil immigrants. The food served to the Tamil immigrants gathered in her flat as a part of the puja conducted is purely ethnic, and the religiosity with which Manika smears ash on everybody's forehead is sufficient to arouse the memory of their homeland and evoke their collective identity.

Social gatherings and religious practices have an essential role in evoking the collective identity of the diaspora, as noted by Michel Bruneau in his essay, "Diasporas, transnational spaces, and Communities" in the work *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*: "For a diaspora to be able to live on by transmitting its identity from one generation to the next, it must as much as possible have places for periodic gatherings of a religious, cultural or political nature, in which it can concentrate on the main elements of its 'iconography' " (37). The term iconography suggests signs like the image of lord Shiva fixed in Manika's flat, where she conducts puja and offerings that create a sense of oneness among the assembled Tamil immigrants. Michel Bruneau further supports this sense of oneness created by visual symbols of religion and culture: "Such symbols contribute to consolidating social networks and to preserving them during the hard times of exile" (38).

Stanley's liaison with Manika gets more complicated with the arrival of Sita and Alice in London, as he is constantly reminded of his Tamil identity and the futility of moving forward with his Sinhala wife. More than once, Stanley's brother exhorts him to think about the pathetic condition of Tamils in their homeland rather than taking the grief of his wife for the loss of a child since his wife's cultural milieu has taught her to make even sorrow memorable for them: "you can recognize that a

Sinhalese will always be different, think differently even. And there's the problem in nutshell. The bastards even do their grieving differently. If they could have their way, they would convince us that grief is something peculiar to them alone" (233-34). What his brother means by this accusation about the duplicity of the Sinhalese nature is to reiterate the mutually exclusive identities of Sinhala and Tamil and arouse the feeling of otherness to his wife. The contradictory nature of their identities becomes a driving force in the discordant family life of Stanley. The inherent contradictions in their cultural identity have the potential to disintegrate their marital life as Stanley is caught between the identity politics promoted by other Tamil immigrants and the excitement of carnal passions offered by Manika.

Sita's life in England is marked with monotony and a sense of emptiness as the trauma of child loss haunts her constantly, and the indifference and apathy of Stanley create a sense of alienation in her. The trauma has disrupted her ability for logical thinking, and her identity undergoes many twists and turns while balancing her original self and the evolving self of an immigrant. She becomes incommunicable to her father and younger sister though they regularly write to her, braving all sorts of controls imposed by the government of Sri Lanka. The belatedly arrived news about the tragic death of Kunal, with whom she had built an unconditional but brief love relationship. At the same time, he has been under the care of her father in their house in Colombo, which has crushed her hope for reviving the relationship. With each passing day, Sita's behaviour changes as an impenetrable silence enters her mind creating a massive vacuum in her as "life had begun to feel like a walk across a mental desert" (279). Sita's silence can be seen as

a manifestation of her sense of alienation and an attempt to hide her inner turmoil, thereby creating a sense of security in the settled country, found in many immigrants as observed by Christopher Bondy in his *Voice, Silence, and Self: Negotiations of Buraku Identity in Contemporary Japan*:

Silence can be considered a process by which people are aware and knowing, but are caught in a social environment that discourages open discussion. Silence has a dual power: it can serve to perpetuate the marginalization of certain groups and social problems by replicating the suppression of thoughts and ideas, and it can provide security, or a respite from one's stigmatized status— even if that security is temporary and comes at a cost. (5)

Sita's silence gets deeper when she is left alone after the marriage of Alice to Timothy West, an Englishman, as they decide to move to another apartment. Sita embraces silence to suppress her traumatic memory connected with the death of her unborn child during her delivery months before she arrived in England, which disintegrates her identity.

The traumatic event of the loss of a child during the time of delivery due to the intentional negligence of the attending doctor experienced by Sita has a significant impact on her construction of identity as a mother, as well as an immigrant woman, as a traumatic experience can form the foundation of a victim's identity as pointed out by Dominick LA Capra in his *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*:

With respect to identity formation, one should make special mention of the founding trauma in the life of individuals and groups. The founding trauma is the actual or imagined event (or series of extreme or limit events) that poses in accentuated fashion the very question of identity yet may paradoxically itself become the basis of an individual or collective identity. (56)

When trauma becomes a disrupter to her identity, Sita starts collecting baby dolls for her dead child and fondles them, and later buries them in a coffin-like box as though she has come to terms with the reality of the loss of her child as she is moving closer to her death.

Forced migration and separation from her grandfather cause unending conflicts in Alice's life in London and affect her identity as an immigrant. The discordant married life of her parents and her mother's psychic disorder resulting from trauma and the memories of her blissful childhood life in the Sea House of Colombo significantly impact her identity. Though the memories of the Rain, Sun, and landscape of Colombo, the sound of the sea, friends, and school, and the scent of memories of her grandfather who initiated her into the colourful and fascinating world of painting, still haunt her, the grey autumn and the chilling cold of winter in England help her shaping her identity as an artist. Her memory of the days spent with her grandfather is the most critical factor determining her identity in England. The memory associated with the landscape, domestic pleasures, and cultural practices in the homeland and forced displacement and migration plays a vital role in shaping the identity of immigrants.

To the immigrants, the memory of their lived experience in their homeland is a crucial factor in moulding their identity as immigrants, as memory enables them to overcome the sense of alienation in the new cultural milieu and connect them with others who are carrying the same memories of shared past thereby evoke a sense of collective identity as explained by Zofia Rosinska in her essay, “Emigratory Experience: The Melancholy of No Return” in the work *Memory and Migration: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Memory Studies*: “Memory plays a triple role: it is identity-forming by maintaining the original identifications; it is therapeutic because it helps bear the hardships of transplantation into a foreign culture; and it is also community-forming, by creating a bond among those recollecting together” (39). Alice constructs her identity as an immigrant on the network of memories of her childhood days in Colombo and uses them as a protective shield against the miseries she encounters in England.

Alice’s memories associated with her grandfather Bee and his comforting words determine her identity as an artist in London. Though she has had a passion for her art history teacher Mr David Eliot for some time, her life takes a different turn when her friendship with Timothy West turns into a deep love culminating in their marriage. Though she marries Timothy, a man with a diverse cultural background and identity, she still carries her identity rooted in the homeland culture and locality that prompts her to name their new house in Brixton, where they moved after their marriage, as Brixton Beach in memory of her ancestral Sea House at Colombo. As she emerged as an acclaimed painter, her paintings became remarkable for depicting the sea in her homeland Sri Lanka with colourful and abstract imagery.

The urge to express the homeland landscape through her paintings strengthens after her son Ravi's birth, though the beaches in England inspire this fresh passion. There is a sense of urgency in her to show all that constitutes her identity- the sea, the landscape of Colombo, the monsoon and seasons in Sri Lanka, and the Sea House where her grandparents lived and where she got the early lessons of art from her grandfather Bee-to her son Ravi who is named after the name to be of the dead child of her mother: "She felt an urgent desire to replicate those things that once had been hers for the sake of the sleeping infant: she was glad that at least she had won the right to name him, Ravi, the name of her mother's forgotten dream child" (331)

However, cracks appear in the marital life of Alice and Timothy as the contradictions in their identities ruin the peace of their life as Timothy, being a British national, often fails to reciprocate to the concerns of Alice, and Alice, in return, gives up her efforts to integrate to the culture of her husband. Thus, the difference in identity plays a significant role in the collapse of their married life as Timothy confesses to his mother that "he had married her without understanding this whole Asian thing" (333). As the relationship becomes more strenuous daily because of the inherent incongruity in their cultural upbringing, he decides to move away from her. One of the ways by which Alice retains the memory of her life in her homeland is listening to the voice of her grandfather, which resonates in her ear in all crucial moments of her life in England, and this encounter with her grandfather's voice becomes frequent after she is informed about the brutal murder of her grandparents. Her anxiety about the political upheavals in Sri Lanka grows intense after receiving the news about the tragic death of her grandparents and her mother's

inability to communicate her sorrow with her bereaving sister in their home country. On the other hand, Timothy cannot understand the intricacies of ethnic division and the civil war fought to establish the supremacy of identity and culture as he shouts at her: “I am tired of hearing about all your dead relatives, the endless war in your savage country, your talk of politics, your spicy food, your foreign ways” (344).

Alice and Timothy fail to comprehend the subtleness of their identity in association with their different cultures. Timothy cannot and will not understand the immigrants’ identity formation through constant interaction with their homeland and its cultural life as he never experiences any uprooting and perils of border crossings as experienced by Alice and her mother. Finally, he leaves her without any warning. The identity of Alice and Sita, as immigrants constructed on the structure of their experience of forced displacement and continuous negotiation with the culture of their homeland, can be well expressed in the light of the remarks of Ralph J. Crane and Radhika Mohanram in their essay “Constructing the Diasporic Body” in work, *Shifting Continents/Colliding Cultures: Diaspora Writing of Indian Subcontinent*:

The notion of the home and the experience of the body are central to the understanding of identity, because so often the term 'identity' really suggests bodily identity. One's sense of physical identity is mediated not just by the loss of the maternal body and the individuation of the self but also by a complex set of interactions with the nation and culture. Thus questions of identity oscillate between the essentialized notion of the body and constructivist discourses on nation, class, and gender. Personal identity is a constant negotiation

between culture and individual consciousness – both in the way you see yourself and in the way others perceive you. (xi)

The cultural dichotomy between Alice and Timothy gets transferred to their son Ravi who cannot emotionally connect with his mother's cultural identity as a Sri Lankan immigrant since he is unfamiliar with the traumatic memories of his mother and her cultural identification with her homeland.

Ravi's identity is formed on the foundation of British culture and social life as he has never been to his mother's home country, and his father's influence on him is vital that he never feels to sympathise with his mother's predicament of having a hybrid identity. Ravi's outburst to Alice: "You and your bloody memories are nothing to do with me! I belong here" (363), and "Your country is nothing to do with me. Don't you understand? I'm English" (363) can be considered both an assertion of his individuality and rejection of his mother's cultural identity. However, Ravi's numbing silence after the burial of his mother, who has been killed in a bomb explosion at the end of the novel, and his waiting for Simon Swann, the doctor whom Alice has found an anchor to hold on the rest of her life, is suggestive of his willingness to accept his mother's cultural identity.

In the novel, *The Swimmer*, the notion of identity is often conceptualised in the individuals' association with shifting locality and identification of the landscape of the material present with that of the imagined homeland evoked in memory. Memory operates on the levels of space and time, connecting the past with the present and helping us contextualise our experience of life. The remembrance of the landscape of the original home and locating its physicality in the landscape of the

host country is an integral part of the identity formation of immigrants as migration involves “Displacement, placelessness, relocation, and resettlement all are terms associated with migration that highlight the inherent tension between stability, mobility and a relationship with the place” (328) as explained by Shelley Egoz in her essay “Landscape and Identity in the Century of the Migrant” in *The Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies*. Some of the scholars in the field of landscape studies present a duality regarding the connection between landscape and identity, as noted by Aivar Jürgenson in his essay “Between Landscapes: Migration as Rupture and Its Expression in the Landscape” in his work, *Ruptured Landscapes: Landscape, Identity and Social Change*:

Globalising tendencies in the modern world allow us, among other things, to discuss people’s “natural” connections to their homeland or home. The older essentialist conception of place suggests that every person has a natural place and that the loss of this place leads to loss of culture and identity. An alternative (new) point of view separates identity from place: by migrating to another place people need not lose their identity. (113)

Whether the dislocation from the original land causes a loss of identity for the migrants or does not affect their identity, the landscape and its memory have a permanent sway over them.

The shifting identity of Anula, the Sri Lankan woman who goes to England to attend the funeral of her son Ben Chinniah, can be analysed in light of the observation of Aivar Jürgenson on the link between landscape and identity. Anula’s

traumatic experience of her son's murder owing to mistaken identity in England and her memories of their past life in Sri Lanka is mainly expressed through her monologues in the journeys she undertakes during her short visit. The landscapes through which she travels often remind her of the locality and the inseparable connection between her home country and her identity. The sense of loss and alienation that Anula feels in the Suffolk countryside of Oxford, with its thickets and marshy land, evokes the memories of the landscape of her home country that she carries in her mindscape as an inseparable component of her identity.

The notion of the landscape can be connected to the physicality of space as well as the abstract form in the imagination, as there is always a synthesis of physical and metaphysical in the concept of landscape, as noted by Tim Cresswell in his *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*:

Places are neither totally material nor completely mental; they are combinations of the material and the mental and cannot be reduced to either. [...] Places are duplicitous in that they cannot be reduced to the concrete or the 'merely ideological'; rather they display an uneasy and fluid tension between them.

(13)

Her journey back to the airport through the countryside and the short journeys she undertakes to the locations bearing the invisible presence of Ben remind her of the magnitude of the loss she has suffered and the memory of her roots in the landscape of her native country disintegrates her identity as a Sri Lankan Tamil woman. The unexpected tragedy of the death of her son Ben who has illegally entered a foreign

land to safeguard himself from possible persecution, and the memory of her beloved son reminds her of the horror of the civil war experienced by the Tamils as an ethnic group forcing her to reconstruct her cultural identity. Hayley Saul analyses the determining force of collective memory in the formation of collective identity in his essay, “The Temporality of Post-disaster Landscapes”, in work, *The Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies*:

The role of memory and memorialisation becomes important in negotiating new identities, intimately bound to the collective endorsement of what and how to remember, and the selection of what to forget in order to weave a narrative of origins and belonging. Disasters present a very powerful and often unpredictable context for the formation and maintenance of collective memories and identities because they are often forged in an atmosphere of existential threat. (445)

Thus, Anula revisiting her memory of Sri Lanka’s landscape in the context of her arrival in London to attend her son’s funeral redefines her identity as a Sri Lankan Tamil woman deprived of justice both in her home country and England. In this process of redefining identity, the memory of the landscape in the mindscape of the individual is placed along with the present experience of the landscape of the country where the individual undertakes the journey.

Anula’s lethargy ensuing from a sense of loss and dislocation is expressed through the portrayal of the Suffolk countryside lying in winter slumber: “The trees flanked the road for miles, close growing, forming a wall with no room to breathe,

seeing me off, indifferent” (123), and she immediately notices this indifferent suffocating scene of the landscape is a contrast to the trees at her home country: The trees at home don’t suffocate each other in this way” (123). The sense of estrangement Anula feels is further emphasised when she finds her reflection on the window glass of the bus unrecognisable, and she finds that indifference is the visible nature of England as “the sky was yellow with cold, very wide and empty” (124-25). Her shock and anger over the brutal murder of her son transform into a kind of indifference when she reaches the eel house where Ria, her dead son’s friend, lives. After that, she passes through different moods: from indifference to helplessness and a sudden outburst of love when she is comforted by Eric, the old friend of Ria’s father, who speaks very tenderly and appears empathetic to her woes.

Anula and Eric get closer as both are haunted by the memory and an overwhelming pain connected with the irreparable loss of their sons: Ben was shot dead by Scotland Yard police for mistaken identity, and Eric’s son had been abducted and killed in Afghanistan. The flow of description of the British countryside is often interrupted with the interludes of Anula’s memories of Sri Lanka’s landscape with its sea and woods, thereby locating her identity in the landscape as all the descriptions of locality, both British and Sri Lankan are presented through the stream of Anula’s memory turning her mindscape as a meeting point where her Sri Lankan identity formed in the landscape and her shifting identity in the wake of her friendship with Eric in the Suffolk countryside setting. This intersection of the Sri Lankan landscape and British countryside represents the duality of Anula’s identity is reflected in her comments while sitting

at the dinner table in Eric's kitchen: "I suspended all thoughts for the moment. Like a pilgrim on the way to Adam's Peak, in the centre of Sri Lanka. I rested in the oasis of calm" (164). Her blissful state after pouring out all her distress in front of Eric in the countryside of England is compared to the form of a pilgrim on the way to Adam's Peak, the holiest place in Sri Lanka for people of all faiths, is suggestive of a union of British and Sri Lankan landscape symbolising the newly acquired composite identity of Anula. Anula's attempt to fuse the landscape of her home country stored in her mindscape with the landscape of the British countryside is a common act of immigrants who try to create space of their own in their host land, as stated by Aivar Jürgenson in his essay, "Between Landscapes: Migration as Rupture and Its Expression in the Landscape" in the work *Ruptured Landscapes: Landscape, Identity and Social Change*: "... immigrants try to create an environment in a foreign country that resembles their former homeland, i.e. they try to transport their homeland into their new environment" (122).

The landscape as the confluence of diverse cultures is further presented in the novel when Anula wholeheartedly gives herself to Eric, freeing herself from all that constitutes her identity: "Grief had unhinged me. There was no shame; not at that moment, anyway. When he touched me, I felt a rush of excitement in my throat. I stood at the edge of an oasis, my heart quivering with its grief, desperate for some relief" (166). At that moment, her grief for her dead son and her traumatic experience of the horrors of the meaningless civil war in her homeland disappeared, disintegrating her identity rooted in ethnicity, nationality, and culture. The temporality of locality and the concept of home in the context of transnational

experience and shifting identities are reflected in the words of Eric when Anula expresses her frustration over the civil war that has a devastating effect on Sri Lanka's landscape: "The land is still there. Hurt – that's what it is. Damaged by bloodshed. But still there. The twenty-first century is full of non-places. There is no fixed place called home anymore, To find home wherever we travel is a gift" (171).

Anula's sense of loss that disrupts her identity becomes more intense when she is taken to the spot where Ben first met Ria and met his tragic end and where Ria preserves her memories of Ben, as she notices "The light was beginning to go. The sky, which had seemed pale and insipid, had suddenly become stained with blood red. The sea changed" (150). The changes in the sky and sea remind her of the violence against her son and the shock and gloominess that envelops her. The drowsy landscape of Suffolk in the winter reminds Alice of the futility of the ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka as the grief that made her speechless is gradually thinning, and she realises that it will naturally meet a finality like the changing seasonal cycles. Thus, the identity constructed on the edifice of nationality and culture is to be deconstructed in the context of postcolonial mobility and transnational experience.

Identity, being a self-conceived projection of one's personality, is constructed about the immediate environment of history, culture, and ethnicity that operate through the socio-political structures of the country or community of which the individual is a member. Central to constructing one's identity is the subjective experience of the body and the individual's constant negotiation with their immediate cultural manifestations of political and social institutions and cultural

constructs like gender and class, as pointed out by Ralph]. Crane and Radhika Mohanram, in their essay, "Constructing the Diasporic Body", in work, *Shifting Continents/Colliding Cultures: Diaspora Writing of the Indian Subcontinent*:

The notion of the home and the experience of the body are central to the understanding of identity, because so often the term 'identity' really suggests bodily identity. One's sense of physical identity is mediated not just by the loss of the maternal body and the individuation of the self but also by a complex set of interactions with the nation and culture. Thus questions of identity oscillate between the essentialized notion of the body and constructivist discourses on nation, class and gender. (xi)

An individual's continuous interaction with the cultural structure of their spatial setting creates a sense of collective or cultural identity. In the identity formation of diasporic individuals, this interaction with the immediate cultural environment is accompanied by the immigrants' negotiation with the culture and social orders of the host land that may result in a hybrid identity or fluid identity of the immigrants as stated in the essay "Who ... amI?: Displacement and identity in Leena Dhingra's *Amritvela*", written by Ralph. Crane: "Diasporic identity, then, can be seen as a recognition that the self is multiple, fluid and dynamic" (7).

In *The Swimmer*, Ben Chinniah, a twenty-five-year-old Sri Lankan Tamil illegal immigrant in England, struggles to negotiate with a hostile socio-political system that looks down on refugees as a security threat. At the same time, he carries the memories of his past embedded in the culture of war-torn Sri Lanka. The first

time Ria meets him as he swims across the part of the river reaching the garden of her house, his ethnic identity is indicated through his dark body: “I could see he was young and as he turned and picked up the shirt that lay on the grass, I saw he was very dark, and somehow I felt, even from this distance, foreign” (13). The rivulet from the river that extends to the garden of Ria’s house is desolate primarily and swampy, where the chance encounter between the young refugee and the lonely writer in her mid-forties occurs, becomes significant as it stands for the hope and frustration of the refugee. It is in this spot where Ben first meets Ria and lights her heart with hope and love; it is in the same place where Ben meets his tragic end when the police hunt him down. Ben’s swimming across the river in East Anglia is, in a way, a revival of his experience of the sea in Sri Lanka. By bringing the memory of his homeland to the landscape of the British countryside and falling in love with Ria, a British woman, Ben is reconstructing his identity, as the concept of identity is fluid in a global setting.

The killing of Ben by the British police for mistaking him as a Pakistani terrorist reflects the hostility with which the power structures of immigrants’ host countries look upon the refugees who have a different national or ethnic identity and reminds the fiercely fought civil war in Sri Lanka to establish the supremacy of a particular ethnic identity. This mistaken identity of Ben reflects the cultural prejudice that creates the notion of “other” in the construction of identity. The biased mindset of the British people is exemplified in the attitude of Jack, a right-wing politician and brother of Ria who openly opposes the British government’s sympathy for refugees and demands a stringent law to deal with the influx of refugees. Later, when Ben’s

mother is taken to the British Solicitor, she is shocked to hear him downplaying the brutal killing of her son and justifying the killing in the pretext that the police force was safeguarding the interest of their citizens from the potential threats. The apathy on the part of the police is to be seen in the context of Western attitudes to the Asians in exile, as their colonial mindset creates the notion of the stranger about the identity of immigrants. Through the brutal killing of Ben, a young Tamil refugee, by an insensitive power structure represented by Scotland Yard police, the writer exposes how the identity of the “other” is constructed in the context of the xenophobic society in the backdrop of the rising threat of terrorism and fear psychosis unleashed across the globe.

In *Lydia*, the daughter of Ben and Ria, who was born after the killing of her father, the writer fuses the ethnic identity of a Sri Lankan Tamil and the national identity of a British woman. Lydia unites two diametrically opposing cultural worlds of Sri Lanka, the colonised and Britain, the coloniser, thereby deconstructing the notion of national identity in the context of postcolonial transnational mobility. This fusion of cultures and identities is again illustrated at the end of the novel when Lydia waits for her grandmother at Heathrow airport and watches a crowd of different nationalities eagerly waiting for the arrival of flights from other countries and her grandmother, “a lone woman comes out. Stopping she searches the crowd in front of her. I see the future is in her beautiful face” (272).

Nayomi Munawera and Roma Tearne explore how immigrants construct and deconstruct their contested identities in their novels. The forces that determine the diasporic sense of identity redefine the status of immigrants in the context of cross-

cultural anguish resulting from trauma, memory, and migration. Their novels further present how memories of the landscape become a critical factor in their identity formation in the context of postcolonial transborder mobility and settlement in foreign territory. Disintegration and fluidity, as the striking features of diasporic identity represented by the characters in these novels, are also contextualised by the authors.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This section of the study summarises the analysis of the principal issues illustrated in the previous chapters and the conclusive statements of each chapter. The objective of this research study has been to demonstrate how Sri Lankan immigrants in America and England respond to their traumatic memory while addressing the cross-cultural anguish confronted in the countries of their settlement, leading to their fluid existence as represented in the select novels of Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne, two postcolonial Sri Lankan diasporic woman writers. Though the scope of this research work is vast, an exhaustive study has been done on the inexplicable nature of trauma and its impact on the psyche and identity of the victims based on the novels of Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne, which echoed the universal aspect of traumatic experience which took centre stage of the discourses in the field of psychology, sociology, politics, literature, and language. As stated in the introduction, this research study explores how the recurrent appearance of traumatic memory unsettles the victims' psyche, thereby drawing them to psychic disorder and fragmentation of identity, as shown in the novels selected here for study. The postulations of trauma literary theory have been used to explore how trauma inflicts long-lasting scars on the victims' psyche and how the characters of Munaweera and Tearne respond to the traumatic memory that repeatedly flashes into their minds and prompts them to reinvent their identities.

The introduction began with a general statement on the significance of trauma, memory, and identity in Holocaust literature and how these concepts occupied a significant place in the political and cultural discourses of newly independent Sri Lanka in the context of a three-decade-long civil war. The common thread found in Sri Lankan diasporic writing that they represented the transnational cultural experience of the diaspora in the backdrop of the historical, political, and cultural milieu of their homeland was also stated in the introduction. Here, the relevance of interpreting Sri Lankan diasporic writings that used ethnic strife and civil war as a setting for depicting the trauma of war, forced displacement, and transnational cultural experience, taking trauma literary studies as a theoretical framework, was emphasised.

After the initial note on the theoretical framework adopted for the research, the topic of this research, *Memory, Trauma and Fluidity: Cross-cultural Angst in the Select Novels of Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne*, was stated. The relevance of the topic about the novels taken for the study was noted as the novels *Island of Thousand Mirrors* and *What Lies Between Us* by Munaweera, and Tearne's novels, *Mosquito*, *Brixton Beach*, and *The Swimmer* narrativise the traumatic experience of the immigrants and explore the impact of traumatic memory on the shifting identities of immigrants which contextualised the contemporary discourse of trauma in literature.

As the fundamental research has been designed to explore the impact of the traumatic experiences of diasporic individuals on the construction of their identities and how they react to the psychic trauma and its memory, a comprehensive account

of trauma literary theory is given in the introductory chapter with its roots in the view of Sigmund Freud on the concepts of “traumatic neurosis” and “hysteria” and how Freud’s ideas are expanded later by theorists like Professor Cathy Carruth and Kali Tal. Further, the meaning of the term trauma is elaborated based on the definitions given by different scholars in trauma studies presenting its psychological, sociological, and cultural implications. The observation of Carruth that there is always a voice of witness in all traumatic events becomes fundamental to the representation of trauma in narratives, as argued earlier by critics like Dory Laub and Shoshana Felman. The cultural aspect of trauma enables the victim to connect with the larger community and social groups through testimonies of traumatic experiences, thereby evoking collective consciousness and collective memory. Scholars like Judith Herman, Dominic La Capra, and many others illustrate this cultural connotation of trauma.

While detailing the process of restoration of the mental stability of the trauma victims, Judith Herman, in her *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence-From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, emphasises the need for connecting the victim to larger society and culture:

The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections. Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation. In her renewed connections with other

people, the survivor re-creates the psychological faculties that were damaged or deformed by the traumatic experience. (93)

When DSM III, a medical journal of the American Psychiatric Association, termed the pathological symptoms exhibited by American soldiers who had returned from the Vietnam War as PTSD, the discourses in trauma studies and narratives of partition and genocide too began to explore the nature of trauma in terms of this mental condition. The findings of a connection between PTSD and psychosis prompted theorists in other disciplines to expand their studies in their respective fields by accommodating the term PTSD.

A significant turn in the approaches to trauma literary studies that this research explored is the shift in the focus from individual trauma to collective trauma and its impact on the collective identity of social groups. As stated in the introductory chapter, this study has also noted the importance of a pluralistic approach to trauma studies, as conventional methods were Euro-centric and ignored non-western trauma narratives. Contemporary approaches to trauma literary studies are more inclusive and interdisciplinary as they incorporate multiple disciplines to explore trauma and its narrative representations. This research has explored another essential nature of trauma: the transcultural and transgenerational aspects of trauma and the role of narrative memory in transporting trauma from generation to generation.

This research further examined the nature of collective trauma and how the diaspora would respond to it by analysing the novels of Munaweera and Tearne as both represented the shared experience of the trauma of war, displacement, and

migration of the Sri Lankan diaspora and how these experiences led them into a fluid existence. Trapped between a split loyalty between homeland and host land in their struggle to address their cross-cultural anguish, the diaspora must negotiate with their hyphenated identities. In the exploration of the shifting identities of the characters in the novels taken for study and the way the diaspora constructs their multi-layered identities in the context of their transnational experience and their imagination of home, this work has used the theoretical concepts of some of the leading scholars in the field of diaspora studies.

The second chapter of this research work, “Traversing History, Conflict and Landscape,” attempted to document the history and cultural components of Sri Lanka in which ethnic polarisation spread its roots firmly by the time British colonial rule ended in 1948. The controversies over Sri Lankan history could be traced to the historical perspectives constructed on two ancient Buddhist literature, the *Mahavamsa* and the *Deepavamsa*. Though Sri Lanka had its ancient inhabitants called Veddas, who had primarily concentrated in the forest lands, the general view of the historians is that the organised political activities in Sri Lanka began with the establishment of a Sinhala kingdom by Vijaya who was supposed to be migrated from North India. The history of Tamil settlement in Sri Lanka has always been a matter of contention. However, the general view of historians is that right from the second century A.D.; there were some Tamil settlements in Sri Lanka. Sinhala population, supposed to be the descendants of Vijaya, had embraced Buddhism when Devanam Piya Tissa, the ruler of Sri Lanka, embraced Buddhism after a meeting with Mahinda, the son of Asoka the Great.

The myth constructed around the origin of the Sinhala kingdom became the rallying point for the formation of Sinhala nationalism, drawing inspiration from Sri Lanka's Buddhist tradition. The early Tamil settlers who had never broken their roots in South India primarily practised Hinduism, significantly impacting their concept of nationalism rooted in their ethnic identity. The cultural divide between Sinhala and Tamil became institutionalised when colonial forces like Britain ruled Sri Lanka, as their policies were essentially discriminatory, and the welfare measures were based on ethnicity. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Buddhist tradition of the country was on the path of revivalism. In northern Sri Lanka, the Tamils were consolidating their Hindu belief system to resist the onslaught of Christianity. There was also a strong resentment in the people against the liquor policy of the British government, which the Sinhala nationalist movement had tapped successfully. The founding of political parties on the lines of ethnic identity, like the Ceylon National Congress (CNC) and Ceylon Reform League in the twentieth century, the entry of radical outfits like Sinhala Mahajana Sabha and the introduction of communal representation in the Legislative Assembly had estranged the Tamils.

The circulation of newspapers in vernacular languages, the spread of education, and the publication of Buddhist literature contributed to the rise of a solid Sinhala-Buddhist national movement. The second chapter examined the evolution of ethnic identities and Sinhala and Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka and how these identity politics have been strengthened because of the policies of three-century-long colonial rule. In forming the Sinhala national identity, the Kandyan culture and

tradition played a vital role as Kandyan customs and dress became a representative cultural code for most Sinhala people. The demand for a Sinhala national state based on the principles of Buddhism with Sinhala as the National language gained momentum after Sri Lanka became an independent country. The post-independent governments' decision to declare Sinhala the lone official language led to massive civil unrest followed by riots and loss of lives. The education policies and recruitment to government jobs were highly discriminatory, and Tamils were deprived of opportunities in education and government jobs.

Tamil national movement also gained substantial clout among the Tamil population as the post-independent governments followed Buddhist Sinhala ideology in their policies, and reforms in the education sector were directed to the marginalisation of Tamils. Tamils were further estranged from the mainstream when Sinhala was made the official language, and Buddhist ideology was adopted as the guiding principle of the government by the new constitution of Sri Lanka in 1972. The founding of LTTE in 1975 by Velupillai Prabhakaran and the formation of a new political party, TULF, in 1976 marked the beginning of a long struggle to establish Tamil Eelam. The massacre of eighteen soldiers by LTTE on July 23, 1983, and the retaliatory attack on the Jaffna Public Library, the burning of 90000 manuscripts of Tamil literature and learning had moved the collective consciousness of the Tamils. The large-scale violence and killings had temporarily halted when Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) started its mission to restore peace and harmony in Sri Lanka. However, within no time, conflicts erupted between IPKF and LTTE forcing Government of India to withdraw its force from Sri Lanka as it suffered

heavy losses. The ethnic strife then became a full-fledged civil war, and it ended only in 2009 when the government forces finally crushed the LTTE and killed its leader Prabhakaran.

The second chapter also examined how Sri Lankan writers responded to ethnic strife and civil war in their creative works. D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke's *Sri Lankan English Literature & The Sri Lankan People 1917 – 2003* provided a comprehensive idea of the literary expressions during the civil war by Sinhala and Tamil writers. Since the 1980s, the ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka have occupied the centre stage of its Anglophone literature, as in the case of Sri Lankan diasporic literature. In the context of Sri Lankan diasporic literature, the second chapter has explained the concept of diaspora, focusing on the Sri Lankan diaspora and how the concepts of trauma, memory, transborder experience, and identity could be explored concerning diasporic imagination. This chapter has also presented a brief account of Sri Lankan diasporic writers and the thematic concerns of their literary expressions, as it would help delineate the narrative concerns of Munaweera and Tearne.

The third chapter, "Memory Mapping: Unveiling Cross-cultural Anguish," analyses how Munaweera uses memory mapping as a narrative technique in her novels *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and *What Lies Between Us* and Tearne in her books *Mosquito*, *Brixton Beach*, and *The Swimmer* to represent the cross-cultural anguish of immigrants while engaging with the cultural settings of their host land and how traumatic memory disrupted the normal function of their minds. Here, it has been categorically shown that Munaweera's and Tearne's texts problematised the diasporic imagination of belonging and home by contextualising the immigrants'

memories of the lived experience with their transnational cultural negotiations. The immigrants' life journey is always a quest for their cultural roots as the sense of rootlessness would shadow their lives in the host land, as vividly portrayed by both novelists. The longing for this root could be materialised only through the representation of memories associated with their past as the characters like Yasodhara in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and Ganga of *What Lies Between Us* have constantly tried to do as did by Theo Samarajeeva in *Mosquito* Alice Fonseka in *Brixton Beach*, and Ben in *The Swimmer*.

This chapter delves into the effects of one's memories of their homeland and culture on the development of diasporic identity. The challenges of integrating into the social life of the host country can arise due to factors like culinary practices, religious beliefs, language, and views on marriage. The memory of the lived experience in the homeland also dramatically impacts the creative expressions of the diaspora, as portrayed in the paintings of Lanka in *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and Alice in *Brixton Beach*. Lanka's paintings are conspicuous for their visualisation of the geographical beauty of Sri Lanka, and the paintings of Alice are noticeable for the presence of Colombo Express and the wardrobe of her grandfather's garden. The communal aspect of memory is also explored in this chapter, and it has been conclusively shown that when memories of individuals found representations in narratives, it would help the individuals connect with the collective consciousness of larger social groups with a shared experience. Thus, narrating traumatic memory of the past could provide a meeting point for individual and collective memory.

The fourth chapter, “Traumatic Awakening: Decoding Psychic Chaos,” has analysed the impact of traumatic awakening on the psyche of the victim and how the recurrent occurrence of traumatic memory could unsettle the emotional and intellectual stability of the victim by exploring the responses of the central characters in the novels of Munaweera and Tearne. The literary representation of trauma can be comprehended better by connecting a collective reaction to traumatic experience and dissecting the nature of cultural trauma. This section has explored how the inexplicable nature of trauma could be transformed into a comprehensible experience through narrative representation for which trauma literary theory put forward by a slew of critics like Professor Cathy Carruth, Kali Tal, LaCapra, J.Alexander, Kai Erickson, KM Feirke, Allen Meek, Bessel A. Van Der Kolk, Judith Lewis Herman, Anna Hunter, Gabriel M. Schwab, Dori Laub, and others has been taken as a methodology of analysis of the texts taken for this study. This chapter has attempted to show how traumatic memory could disrupt the normal functions of a victim’s brain and could even put the victim into a state of psychic disorder and alter their identities, as illustrated through the analysis of the symptomatic responses of the characters like Saraswati of *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, Ganga of *What Lies Between Us*, Theo Samarajeeva and Vikram in *Mosquito*, Alice and her mother Sita in *Brixton Beach*, and Anula in *The Swimmer*.

This chapter has also explored the belatedness of traumatic awakening in the victims as portrayed in the novels under study and the impact of this delayed comprehension of the true nature of trauma on the victims’ psyche. Munaweera’s character Mala gave birth to a lifeless child as the trauma of being witness to the

brutal murder of her husband by a violent mob in front of the public eye had a devastating impact on her physical and mental state. In *What Lies Between Us*, Ganga's psychic numbness and mental illness are caused by sexual abuse in her childhood by her father, and the repeated return of its memory significantly impacts her motherhood later. She is constantly under PTSD, and her mother's shocking revelation that her father was her perpetrator opened new wounds in her psyche. Thus, in this section, Ganga's act of killing her daughter is analysed, considering the theoretical ground that childhood sexual abuse could trigger mental illness like psychosis in a later period of life.

This section has highlighted the reality that even those who have not directly encountered trauma can still be impacted if they have a cultural tie to the affected individuals. Exposure to traumatic incidents through means such as stories or digital media can result in feelings of vulnerability and trigger a shared reaction. The media reports that the destruction of religious and cultural centres could create a sense of insecurity in communities and evoke collective trauma. Thus, the fourth chapter has examined in detail the significance of a proper medium for trauma victims to communicate their agony and psychic shock inflicted by trauma to society through which they could reconcile with the reality of traumatic awakening and bring a healing touch to their wounded selves.

In continuation of the exploration of traumatic experience and its impact on the psychic function of the victim, the fourth chapter has further analysed the concepts of dissociative memory, insomnia, PTSD, and hyperarousal regarding Tearne's novel *The Swimmer*. Ria, one of the three narrators of *The Swimmer*, has

been traumatised by witnessing the killing of Ben Chinnaih, a young Tamil refugee and her sweetheart creating an undying sense of loss in her. This sense of loss and uncertainty is so acute in Ben's mother, Anula, who has come to London to attend her beloved son's last rites that she is immobilised, and she can hold back her overwhelming grief only through a passionate relationship with Eric, who is a stranger to her till that moment. Her longing for carnal pleasures is only an escape from the burden of trauma that has shaken her whole being. In short, the fourth chapter has established the hypothesis that all kinds of traumatic experiences disrupt the normal functioning of the victims' brains and lead to the complete breakdown of their defence mechanisms.

The fifth chapter, titled "Hyphenated Identities: Negotiating Diasporic Predicament," has attempted to theorise the immigrants' negotiations with traumatic memory and fluid identities represented in the novels of Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne based on the theoretical postulations developed by scholars like Peter Weinreich, Meenakshi Thapan, Youna Kim, Stuart Hall, Joshua Agbo, Werner Bohleber, Kirmayer, Avtar Brah, Pauline Boss, Arnon Bentovim, and other scholars. The construction of diasporic identity is a continuous process of evolution as their traumatic memory associated with forced displacement could significantly affect their integration with the social settings of the host land that may place them into a fluid existence. In this section, an attempt to theorise the complex process of identity formation of diaspora and the forces that make their identity fluid concerning the central characters of Munaweera and Tearne has been carried out. This chapter has also evaluated the theoretical assumption that identity is not a fixed entity; instead, it

is a continuous process of evolution, and the concept of a homogenous identity rooted in ethnicity, nationality, and culture is contested in the context of transnational mobility and cross-cultural negotiations in the contemporary world. The immigrants' experiences of acculturation, integration, longing for their homeland and its cultural roots, linguistic affinity, and many other factors play a crucial role in constructing an immigrant's identity, as illustrated in the characters of these novels.

It has been established that ethnicity, religion, and cultural practices contribute significantly to an individual's identity formation in the formative years, as found in Mala and Nishan, the children of a Sinhala family in the *Island of Thousand Mirrors*. Mala and Nishan grew up listening to their elders talking about the superiority of Sinhala ethnic identity. At the same time, Visakha has been constantly reminded by her mother, Sunetra, of her elite upbringing. This chapter has investigated in detail how identities formed on cultural and ethnic roots are subjected to deconstruction when individuals are forced to relocate to culturally alien lands. Yasodhara and her sister Lanka are forced to reinvent their identity as immigrants in America as they must negotiate with the multicultural social settings of the new country. In the process of assimilation, they acquire a hybrid identity marked with a double loyalty to the host land and their homeland. The idea of cosmopolitan identity in the context of multiple cultural affiliations has also been explored in the wake of the diasporic experience of identity crisis.

Another contentious topic that this chapter has analysed is the concept of home in diasporic imagination as the original home from where the forced

displacement and migration happened becomes an imaginary home for the diaspora because the history and culture of the original home cannot be retained physically and a return to the original home usually remains a distant dream. This uncertainty in locating the home also influences the reconstruction of immigrants' identities. Lanka has successfully resolved this uncertainty about the conceptualisation of home by returning to her homeland permanently. However, for the diaspora, the home concept need not necessarily be connected to the physical experience of the locality as Yasodhara and Siva when they are finally united, have decided to settle in America. However, it meant a culturally marginalised life far from their homeland and its cultural settings.

The fifth chapter has then explored the interrelatedness of collective memory of trauma and the diaspora's collective sense of identity concerning the experience of Ganga, the narrator, and her mother in Munaweera's novel *What Lies Between Us*. The burden of trauma that they have carried with them in their new country and the stressful life they must lead in the process of acculturation in the new social milieu could alter their identities beyond the frame of their distinct ethnicity despite their constant efforts to uphold their ethnic identity and cultural values. Setting aside differences in identity and social values, Ganga could marry an American and lead a happy life, which justifies her concerted efforts to integrate with the social life of her host land. However, the inherent contradictions in their cultural identities and Ganga's psychic disorder caused by her traumatic memory of childhood abuse have failed the marriage. Even the name Bodhi Anne they gave to their daughter could not offload the weight of their distinct identities, though motherhood has a

significant mark on her identity. Ganga's identity as a mother has finally disintegrated when in a moment of insanity, she kills her daughter. A detailed analysis of the mental state of Ganga, which could be termed dissociative identity disorder, a reactive condition of mind to trauma, has been given in this section.

This chapter has also closely examined the transcending nature of the identity of the trauma victims, as seen when the Tamil prisoners in the detention centre could easily accept Theo as one among them despite his Sinhala background. On the other hand, Vikram has a fragmented identity as a rescued child militant who has been under the care of a generous Sinhalese man. His identity is marked with indifference to the happenings around him as he is more conscious about his Tamil identity. The transcendental character of diasporic identity is a questionable concept in the case of Giulia, the Italian wife of Rohan. Giulia is conscious about her foreign identity as the distressing experience of war, abduction, bloodshed, and ethnic polarisation in her husband's country seriously threatens her cultural identity.

The concept of hybrid identity rooted in mixed ethnicity and diverse culture has been another focus of this chapter, as represented through the characters of Alice and Lydia in *Brixton Beach* and *The Swimmer*, respectively. Alice, the daughter of a Sinhala mother and a Tamil father, is conscious of her dual identity, isolating her from her local school classmates. In this context, this section has also investigated how language, a marker of culture and identity, could evoke communal tension and collective identity, as happened in Sri Lanka.

Finally, this chapter has explored how the concept of identity can be interpreted in association with an immigrant's experience of locality and landscape

stored in memory overlap with the material presence of the landscape in the host country. This inseparable connection between landscape and identity is further expanded considering the theoretically analysed experiences of Anula in *The Swimmer*. Anula's identity has been subjected to change as her memories of the landscape in Sri Lanka intersect with the locality and landscapes of England through which she has been forced to undertake several journeys. The memories of the landscape to which she has closely connected her son's life in her homeland constitute an essential component of her identity. Anula's identity further expanded and changed to a composite identity when she willingly accepted the physical comfort offered by Eric. This section has also explored how the individual's subjective experience of history, social institutions, and cultural constructs like gender and class influence identity formation, as represented in the novel *The Swimmer*.

This research work on the select novels of Nayomi Munaweera and Roma Tearne, two Sri Lankan diasporic writers, has conclusively established that the concepts of home and belongingness for diaspora are not a fixed entity but constantly contested ideas involving specific unsettled questions. This argument is supported by a close analysis of the cross-cultural angst of the immigrants and their constant struggle to create a space of their own in the host land while wholeheartedly trying to integrate themselves with the social settings of their new home as characterised in these novels. The diasporic imagination concerning home and belongingness has been problematised in this research work in the wake of the reconstruction of nations and national identity and new perspectives on culture and

history prompted by the rise of identity politics, ethnic conflicts, and civil unrest, as happened in Sri Lanka that constituted the narrative settings of Munaweera and Tearne. This study shows that these writers have been able to negotiate with their homeland politics, culture, and ethnic polarisation in the backdrop of postcolonial mobility and transnational settlement bringing out the inherent contradictions and dilemmas of diasporic existence.

This research also illustrated how the personalised memories of individuals associated with their traumatic past draw a collective response and collective memory of a community or a nation, thereby determining the construction of a collective identity rooted in its shared experience of history and culture as represented in these diasporic texts. By exploring the impact of the unspeakable experience of the trauma of war on the Sri Lankan immigrants as narrativised by these authors, this research work has shown the contemporaneity of trauma narratives portraying the cross-cultural angst and identity crisis of diaspora.

This study has shown that the family bonding of immigrants within their homeland and their host land is constantly under transformation and deconstructs the stereotypical representations in conventional narratives and comes out with a unique illustration of family bonding as depicted in the mother-daughter relationship between Ganga and Bodhi in *What Lies Between Us* and in between Bee and his granddaughter Alice in *Brixton Beach*. Ganga's agony of leaving her daughter's innocent childhood in the hands of her father is symbolically portrayed at the novel's beginning through the legend of Moon Bear that strangulates its cub to end its

sufferings. Ganga's act of poisoning her much-loved daughter and watching her death struggle is shocking.

Most importantly, this research work has given a detailed analysis of how these diasporic novels represented the shifting identities of immigrants focusing on the fluidity and relativity of cultural identities due to their constant negotiations with multicultural milieu and complex interpersonal relationships in their host land. Moreover, this study has brought the Sri Lankan immigrants' testimonies of excruciating experience of war to the forefront, highlighting the psychic disorder and disintegration of identities triggered by trauma, thereby emphasising the need for a profound analysis of a historical event like the civil war in Sri Lanka and its impact on the collective consciousness of its people. This study has shown how Sri Lankan immigrants communicate their traumatic experiences and hyphenated identities in the medium of narratives and how their encounters with the horrors of war and ethnic conflicts are evoked in individual and collective memory.

All the relevant concepts and issues related to the area of this research study raised in the introductory chapter, such as how the survivors communicate their inexplicable traumatic experience and the purpose of sharing their psychological trauma and how this mediation affects the target audience, are explored in detail. Conclusive responses are given in this thesis's Third, Fourth, and Fifth chapters with the aid of the theoretical framework of trauma literary studies. Trauma literary theory has facilitated the analysis of trauma's impenetrable attributes as represented in the novels of Munaweera and Tearne. Trauma survivors can communicate their inexplicable experience and untransferable agony through narrative representations,

which would relieve them of their pain and suffering and may even heal their psychic wounds. The paradoxical nature of trauma is that it is inherently incomprehensible; still, the survivor longs to communicate the experience for which narratives act as a channel is central to the texts under study.

This study has evaluated the theoretical postulation that traumatic experience cannot be represented adequately because of the intricate nature of trauma and the inadequacy of language. However, narrative representation of traumatic experiences, as in the novels of Munaweera and Tearne, could effectively communicate trauma's inexplicable and distressing nature by allowing the victims to sequence their experiences into a heart-rending story and construct meaning out of seemingly unintelligible happenings. Narrativising the traumatic experiences caused by war and ethnic conflicts could also provide an alternative history against the history built by dominant power structures, such as the parallel history constructed in the novels under this study, as, except *What Lies Between Us*, the primary source of trauma and displacement is the civil war and ethnic strife in Sri Lanka.

In all these novels, the trauma victims are placed in such a situation that they often fail to comprehend the meaning and absolute magnitude of the recurrent appearance of traumatic memories entirely. These repeated visits to traumatic pasts provide them with a means of confrontation with their traumatic past by which they can hear the voice of witness to trauma within them, thereby constructing a meaningful narrative of their experience. Most often, this confrontation with traumatic memory happens through the victims' unconscious efforts to suppress the memories associated with their traumatic past. In all these novels, the central

characters, irrespective of their source of trauma or its magnitude, unconsciously suppress the memory of their traumatic past, which in turn repeatedly appears through flashbacks, dreams and hallucinations, which enable them to work through their trauma and narrativise it and all their narratives help them heal their psychic wounds inflicted by trauma.

One of the striking features of the narrative style employed by Munaweera and Tearne is its connection to the genre of trauma narratives. Their writing captures the complexity and emotional weight of traumatic experiences in a way that is both poignant and thought-provoking. In Nayomi Munaweera's novel, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, the reader journeys through the devastating impact of the Sri Lankan civil war on its people. With multiple narrators, the book thoroughly analyses the emotional and psychological trauma different characters and communities experienced due to the ethnic conflict. Munaweera deftly captures the complexities of a war-torn country and its lasting impact on its inhabitants. The way Munaweera structures the narrative in *What Lies Between Us* effectively communicates the main character's trauma through a first-person perspective. Thus, the first-person perspective allows the author to establish a direct connection between readers and the character, allowing for a deeper understanding of her struggles. The use of non-linear timelines and sensory details creates a sense of suspense. It copiously engages readers in the protagonist's emotional journey, highlighting the trauma narrative's psychological complexity and emotional impact.

Mosquito by Roma Tearne explores war, displacement, and trauma through a multi-perspective narrative that captures the complexity of these experiences.

Sensory details intensify the emotional impact, while introspective storytelling connects readers to the characters' struggles. The disorganised narrative structure mirrors the fragmented nature of trauma memories, leaving a lasting impression on the reader and adding depth and complexity to the characters' journey towards healing and hope. Roma Tearne's *Brixton Beach* blends past and present events, exploring the characters' traumas through flashbacks and capturing the essence of each setting. Tearne's poetic language and deep self-reflection offer readers an intimate understanding of the emotional paths of the characters. *Brixton Beach* uses an introspective narrative to create a deeper connection with characters and allow for an empathetic understanding of displacement, identity, and cultural conflict.

Recently, trauma narratives evoked strong emotional responses to personalised and collective trauma represented in diasporic literature as they artistically recreate the traumatic experience of war, domestic violence, and sexual abuse in an intelligible language. The in-depth analysis conducted in this research work on the trauma inflicted by the civil war in Sri Lanka and its impact on the collective consciousness of its people articulated in the novels of Munaweera and Tearne is significant in the context of terrorist attacks on churches on Easter Sunday in 2019 killing around three hundred people that evoked collective trauma across the country. Recently, Sri Lanka has witnessed an unprecedented economic crisis that led the country into political instability and uncertainty.

The study of traumatic experience and hyphenated identity of Sri Lankan immigrants in the context of ethnic divide and civil war represented in narratives necessitates extensive research on a whole range of diasporic literature that cannot

be taken under this study. However, this study has explored almost all forces like identity politics, ethnic polarization, colonial hangover, and linguistic chauvinism that operated behind the dispersal of a section of the Sri Lankan population to foreign countries, considering some of the essential critical perspectives of the contemporary discourse such as trauma literary theory and memory studies. This study has emphasised the marginalised section, i.e., immigrants whose struggle to create a space of their own in the cultural settings of the country of their settlement usually does not find expressions in the dominant discourses. As women constitute a significant section of this marginalised population, the central concern of this study is the traumatic memory, cross-cultural angst, and shifting identities of women immigrants, as illustrated in the third, fourth and fifth chapters.

This study has shown that Sri Lankan immigrants must negotiate with the ideas of identity, nationality, home, and multiculturalism to create a space of their own and come out of the emotional and spatial boundaries that have limited their presence. The authors Munaweera and Tearne present the predicament of Sri Lankan American immigrants and Sri Lankan British immigrants before and during the civil war focusing on trauma, dislocation, transborder experience, memory, shifting identities and many other complex issues like acculturation and assimilation that define their fluid existence. All these issues are discussed in detail concerning the novels *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, *What Lies Between Us*, *Mosquito*, *Brixton Beach*, and *The Swimmer*.

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