

Research Articles

**REFLECTION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY IN KIRAN DESAI'S
"THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS"**

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ABSTRACT

Cultural identity is referred as feeling of belonging to particular culture or group. It is a part of accepting traditions, heritage , generation, locality, language, nationality, ethnicity, religion, ancestry, aesthetics, thinking pattern and social structure of a culture .Man is social creature and derives lifelong inspiration from society , family and cultural background, which is also responsible for supporting and guiding him in proper direction throughout his life.

KiranDesai's second novel *The Inheritance of Loss* primarily drew attention to problems faced by her characters and how they faced the problem of identity in the society and became dejected and annoyed in the end. All characters in the novel struggled with respect to their cultural identity. *The Inheritance of Loss* shows certain multicultural concerns like identity, diversity, ethnic, and minority rights and post-colonialism issues.

It depicts how Kiran Desai expressed the feeling of humiliation experienced by the immigrants due to the dissimilarity of a system. This paper emphasizes on cultural identity in the writings of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of loss* (2006).

Keywords: *Inequality , Culture, Social class, Identity*

INTRODUCTION

Kiran Desai, an eminent writer and novelist, was born in 1971 in New Delhi, India. She spent fourteen years of her life in India before migrating to England and United States later for higher education which contributed to her multicultural persona. *Hullabaloo in Guava Orchard* was her first novel, published in 1988.

Her second Novel *Inheritance of Loss* was published after a gap of six years which won her Man Booker prize and National Book Critics Fiction award for her outstanding piece of work. This novel put Kiran Desai's name amongst most insightful novelists. In this illuminated masterpiece, she depicts feeling of exile and pain experienced in the era of post-colonialism.

The novel is not an autobiography of Kiran Desai of autobiographical novel, but it seems to provide a fictionalized version of her own journey from east to west. Kiran Desai focuses on basic human emotions like love, sex, conflict, struggle, marriage adjustment and physical abuse. She emphasize on how cultural diversity is desirable and should be celebrated as it is of value to society at large. It allows a cultural exchange between groups that live side by side with one another and fosters cross-cultural tolerance, understanding and a willingness to respect 'difference.'

The *Inheritance of Loss* covers a wide variety - different countries, the past and the social, religious, linguistic and ethnic diversity. The novel, set in India shows the master craftsmanship of Desai in portraying a wide range of characters.

THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS

The *Inheritance of Loss* (2006) is set in the town of Kalimpong which is situated at the foot of mount Kanchenjunga in the North Eastern part of post-Independence India. Though the novel is set in India mainly against the historical backdrop of insurrection in Nepal, it highlights the events that take place in India, England and New York. The novel focuses on some of the outstanding issues of contemporary Indian society such as marginalization, nationalism, subordination, globalization, immigration, economic inequality, exploitation, poverty, insurgency, hybridity, political violence and racial discrimination.

Kiran Desai who experienced multiculturalism, displacement and dislocation, cultural clash, represents situations in which novel characters find themselves rootless and

lead a life of solitude and loneliness. Jemubhai Patel, a Cambridge-educated Anglophile retired Judge from the prestigious Indian Civil Service, is central character of the novel. Patel relishes his glory days and is embittered by a painful past and of being an Indian himself, Patel has lived a wretched family life filled with broken relationships - inflicting cruelty to his wife, indirectly causing her death, and abandoning his daughter in a convent boarding school and then cutting her off when she marries a Parsi.

Patel lives with his teenage granddaughter Sai. Sai is also a victim of circumstances .She lost her parents in an accident in Soviet union of Russia where her father worked as space scientist ,while she lived in a convent in Darjeeling. So , from the outset, she has tested bitter feelings of separation and displacement Sai falls in love with her math and science tutor, whose name is Gyan. Globalization, fundamentalism and sectarian and terrorist violence unravel Sai's passion for Gyan. Her adolescent passion is intertwined with a sense of danger and tinged with both wonder and darkness. Sai and Gyan's love is doomed from the beginning because he is an ethnic Nepali and she is an upper class western educated Indian girl. As a result ,They fight to accept the natural love that they had created. Sai understood that class envy and jealousy always overpower love.

Another important character of the novel is Biju, Sai's friend and their cook's son. Biju illegally entered United States on sustained hounding by his father. Biju lives like a fugitive, fearing the INS to discover and deport him back to India, did low grade jobs in New York restaurants. Biju encounters other Indians and gets surprised at how they totally adapt to the American culture.

The book illustrates the miserable state of foreign immigrants who dreamed to have lives than what they had in their own homelands. They go through the all the sufferings and abuse of their white superiors than facing the shame of going back home. All they seek is elusive green card that can ensure their prolong stay in America. Moreover, negative portrayal of United states stresses on a version of capitalism that is responsible for destroying human connections.It's difficult for anyone to understand stressed lives of those foreign immigrants, exiled from own countries and being treated as low worthless lives.

Though they are stripped of their pride and dignity, they desperately hold on to their idealistic perception of America. They know back at home, they would have been treated more humanely, despite their poverty and sense of hopelessness, still they are enslaved by the whims and discriminatory treatment of the natives.

The Inheritance of Loss leaves sincere impression on human imagination and experience. Kiran Desai has described plight of immigrants in most authentic and convincing manner. Eventually , the novel gives ugly view of the First World in the eyes of the residents of the Third World leading to loss of identity and cultural belongingness in post-colonial era.

CONCLUSION

One of most desirable characteristic of any literary work is to bring enlightenment in lives of human beings and inspire the society .Kiran Desai brings alive novel characters like the judge,his wife, his parents,Sai,her lover Gyan, Biju etc.

Identity is the important thing in the world which decides the value of them.

In this novel, the character Biju we can see how he fights for his identity in America, but he fails in it. The crux of Inheritance Of Loss lies in its exploration of the ambivalence that rules the national discourse about globalization .Desai contributes to debates about American dreams , globalization and cultural identity in the Inheritance Of Loss.

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