

Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss: A Re-Read

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Abstract: This study examines Kiran Desai's highly regarded novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), which has received numerous important accolades, including the Booker Prize, emphasizing its literary importance. *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai's second novel after *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998), delves into intricate subjects of identity, displacement, and the cultural conflicts arising from the clash between the past and the present. Desai effectively depicts the challenges faced by Indian and American expatriates, the impact of colonialism, and the emotional upheaval caused by migration through well-developed characters and a compelling narrative style. The novel's varied characters, including the resentful retired judge and the uprooted immigrant Biju, exemplify these overarching themes, offering a subtle analysis of the immigrant experience and the enduring consequences of colonialism. Desai's narrative style, marked by a combination of realism and irony, establishes *The Inheritance of Loss* as a compelling critique of worldwide cultural changes and the individual consequences of these alterations.

Index Terms – Diaspora, Colonialism, Identity, Migration.

Introduction

This critical study focuses on Kiran Desai's work *The Inheritance of Loss*, which was first published in 2006 by Atlantic Monthly Press. Three international prizes have been presented in acknowledgment of the work. It won several literary accolades, including the Vodafone Crossword Book Award in 2006, the National Books Critics Circle Fiction Award in 2007, and the Booker Prize in the same year it was released. The variety of successes in a short period of time highlights the importance of the job. Desai's response to the award is as follows: "It (the Booker Prize winning) had a significant impact. You know that winning a trophy is inherently childish. The joy you feel is infantile, which is also great. But the scariest part is that it has a genuine, significant impact." Kiran Desai inherited some literary tendencies from her mother, Anita Desai, which helped her establish a name for herself in the literary world. Her novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, launched her to popularity. One of the unique elements of her literature is her use of real-life narrators and situations. The readers get the idea that they're dealing with real individuals and situations. India and the United States provided the foundation for *Loss*' inheritance. It investigates the feelings and emotions of Indian residents and Americans returning to their native country. A novel describes the problems that immigrants face. It also addresses the dilemma that immigrant workers encounter on foreign land. The novel's protagonist has accepted a life of self-imposed exile. It also tells the story of an elderly man's broken hopes and dreams. It also discusses a young love that came to an abrupt end. It also addresses defacing terrorism in India. The antagonism between Buddhists and Muslims is mirrored in the passing of loss. It looks at conflicts between the present and historical worlds. It depicts how some Indians have become so enslaved to the Western way of life that they have forgotten their origins. The novel emphasizes the loss of identity and animosity among anglophile Indians who have adopted the English way of life. The book also includes a substantial generational travel theme. This novel takes into account the repercussions of colonialism and post colonialism. This all leads to a fundamental study of the personalities and themes. The work also explores conflicts between past and present cultures, as well as identity loss. The work is analyzed for its characterization and storytelling method. The novel has five main characters. They include retired judge Jemubhai Popatlal, Sai, Gyan, Sai's tutor and Gurkha Land campaigner Biju, as well as a cook. Sai's grandpa, Jemubhai Popatlal, is a retired judge with a Cambridge degree. The judge's growth throughout his stay in England was extraordinary. He was a man with strong values who wanted to live alone and never spoke with Sai until her parents died. His regulations are military-based. As a result, he is known as Napoleon in the book. He is concerned because of the unpredictable political climate. In Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain*, Nanda Kaul serves as his model. Nanda Kaul and Jemubhai Popatlal live a lonely life till their grandkids violate their solitude. They gradually develop a like to them. The author defines Jemubhai Popatlal as follows: "The judge is one of the novel's "stupid Indians," who "couldn't free themselves

of what they had tortured their souls to learn" and whose Anglophilia can only turn into self-hatred." (205), In another situation, the judge is described as "trying to keep on the right side of power and loyal to so many things that he couldn't tell which one of his selves was authentic, if any." (148) When Jemubhai Popatlal was in school, he became fascinated with the British people in India and desired to travel to that land of glory and promise. He ignores his wife, mother, father, and daughter in order to show his loyalty to the British people. However, he rapidly recognized that England would not welcome him. As a result, he isolates himself in personal areas of life. He chose to stay in Cho Oyu to avoid mingling with the public. His feelings for Mutt, his dog, clash with his disinterest toward humans. He holds the poor cook accountable for the death of a dog out of desperation, not conviction. It allows him to vent his frustrations. Eventually, the long-held pessimism paid off. Biju is the son of Jemubhai Popatlal's domestic worker. He enters the United States on a tourist visa, overstays it, and then works as an illegal immigrant to make matters worse. Biju's condition changes radically in the United States. He avoids the experience of cultural invasion. Indeed, he is surprised at the level of local rage and dissatisfaction in the United States of America. The author describes Biju's pain with the following words: "And he eventually becomes "a guy filled to the brim with a desire to live inside a narrow purity." For him, the city's limitless opportunities for self-creation are a source of agony." (137), Biju intends to build a new world in India with his father's blessings, despite his loss of identity in America. He planned to purchase a taxi, build a house, drink bourbon with his father, and make fun of him. After being robbed in India by a GNLf activist, all of his ambitions evaporated. He encounters his father dressed as a girl, which is poetic justice done ironically. A careful assessment of Kiran Desai's works reveals that she truly deserves to win the Booker Prize for *The Inheritance of Loss*. *The God of Small Things* focuses on the caste system that existed in India at that time. *The Inheritance of Loss*, by Kiran Desai, explores the hopelessness of human existence. In the broader scheme of things, the Indian social, economic, and emotional divide is significant. Roy had revealed that, in the long run, minor details have a substantial impact on major ones. Keep in mind that the thesis's three main novels all addressed themes that ordinary people were worried about. These novels feature real-life characters. I've emphasized power circuits entrenched in discourses, institutions, and behaviors that shape diasporic experiences. In doing so, I have developed a multi-axial performative understanding of power: power is regarded as relational, operating at several levels spanning micro and macro sectors (Brah, 193). *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* indicates that it originated in India. In this work, she makes good use of Indian beliefs in fate, magic, trickery, and miracles. Some Indians are tempted to put their concerns and anxieties on the shoulders of others. Many Indian authors who write in regional and national languages have written about superhuman powers. The theme of *The Inheritance of Loss* is more patriotic. The implications of globalization and cultural transformations are thoroughly explored. This work also elaborates on the contrast between the past and the present. She had spent her early childhood there, which was one of the reasons she chose Kalimpong as the novel's setting. She wanted to portray the beauty of life and this experience through colorful and descriptive language. Kiran Desai's purpose is to show a cultural shift as multiculturalism permeates modern living. Characters arriving on faraway shores and experiencing culture shock represent the many Indian cultures. While it is true that change is the basis of life, we must remember to preserve old customs. Some people prefer to change, while others find it difficult. They enjoy sticking to their established practices. Kiran Desai's novel focuses on and about two contrasting cultures. The author sees things clearly. Every family must cope with being alone and dealing with the past. Desai introduces all of the characters without providing much moral judgment. The novel's narrative script is of a high and rich level. Her characters aren't superhumans or saints; instead, they're ordinary folks going about their daily lives. Regular folks can easily relate to these individuals. They sometimes make sacrifices for the next generation, but they also treat the individuals they care about bluntly and ruthlessly. They may affect ways of life and traditional values. They may reject what doesn't benefit them and suffer at the hands of corrupt government officials. As time passes, characters frequently make judgments based on their current circumstances. She utilizes strong language to convey the brutality of existence. She also utilizes comedy to help the reader relax. Kiran Desai tells the story really well. This suggests that the themes are driven by a small group of characters. When language and narrative are considered, cultural emotions and feelings play an important part in communicating the information. This novel is without a doubt the author's masterpiece, and she definitely deserves to be praised for it. To summarize, an important line from the book is: "The present transforms the past. Looking back, you can't find what you've left behind." (208)

Conclusion

Overall, *The Inheritance of Loss* is a remarkable examination of the immigrant journey and the lasting effects of colonialism. Kiran Desai's adept storytelling and intricate portrayal of characters illuminate the intricate relationship between individual identity and cultural dislocation. The novel's depiction of characters wrestling with their past and present, together with its critical scrutiny of the impacts of globalization, emphasizes its significance in contemporary literary discussions. Desai's perceptive analysis of cultural discord and individual bereavement not only encapsulates the core of her characters' challenges but also mirrors wider societal concerns. The novel's success, along with the various literary honors it has received, confirms its substantial impact on modern literature. It also showcases Desai's expertise in exploring topics such as identity, belonging, and the changing cultural environments.

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