



# **EFFECTS OF DISPERSION IN KIRAN DESAI'S THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS**

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## **Abstract**

People's perspectives vary when they have to travel away from their homeland. It is natural to develop a spectrum of feelings, some with deep longing for their homeland and others who might forget their homeland and embrace the hospitality of the host land. Kiran Desai through the novel *The Inheritance of Loss* reveals to us the effect of the diasporic movement and how it frames one's outlook on life. Every character in this novel is unique and in some ways representative of entire humankind.

Jemubai Patel converts himself to an epitome of western culture and belittles India. Biju who is the polar opposite of Jemubai Patel, longs for India when being away from his country. Sai who is brought up in western culture, understands the worth of India when the novel ends. Gyan an Indian Gorkha tries to make a space for him in his own country, where he is treated as an alien. Father Booty and Uncle Pooty foreign nationals understand that no matter how much they embrace and love India, they cannot make it their homeland. This novel doesn't just end in an Indian context, but is linked with the entire world, which is a framework of relations formed by people from different countries.

*The Inheritance of Loss* ( 2006 ) is Booker Prize winning novel by Kiran Desai . Even though the novel is fictional, the novel's characters have undergone repeated dispersions through out their lives, which one way can be linked to identity of Kiran Desai as a diasporic writer. The novel reveals to us how the dispersal from one's homeland helps in framing one's perspectives towards one's own country. Kiran Desai spend her time in and away from India, similarly this novel doesn't restrict in India but also make you experience a life away from India. The main feature of this novel is dispersal away from one's homeland. It helps people in framing up certain emotions which cherish the memory of their homeland and on the other it also leads to certain emotions which assert that, it is one way good to be away from homeland and admire the culture of the hostland.

While in the homeland, a third world country like India people face a lot of trauma ( kalra, kalhon and Hutyuk 2005, 12 ) . People are jobless , they are poverty stricken , like the character Biju they think that going to America is one way to escape from poverty and get lot of earning and live a luxurious life. Biju's father remark reveal this “ My son works in New York, in that country there is enough food for everybody” (84). Way to America is not easy , the communication and transportation technologies facilitate international movement ( Butler 2001 , 190 ). Biju along with many others try to get their visa to America by trying to present themselves as well mannered and finally, Biju becomes successful in getting his visa and others say that “ you are the luckiest boy in the whole world” ( 187 ) . “Not being able to return may act as a powerful source of nostalgia for home ” ( Kalra, Kalhon and Hutyuk 2005, 11 ). Here you can see that Biju even though wants to return back home is forbidden from doing so. Homeland doesn't really want to end the diasporic condition because they are depended upon the hostland , which are more advanced than the homeland( Safran 1991, 93 ). The words of the Biju's father Cook reveals it “ Stay there as long as you can make money , don't come back “( 189 ) Members of diasporic communities are by turns mistreated by the host country as strangers within the gates or welcomed or exploited for the sake of domestic and diplomatic interests of the host country ( Safran 1991, 92 ). Biju who works in restaurant as illegal immigrant lives a very miserable life , with no much saving , lack of hospital services when he is sick . Biju says to his owner in restaurant “ Without us living like pigs. What business you have? This is how you make your money, paying us nothing , making us work day and night because we are illegal ” ( 188 ).

Diasporic people retain a collective memory , vision or myth about original homeland, its physical location, history and achievements ( Safran 1991, 83 ).Biju even though stays in America , he doesn't learn anything American , his mind is full in his homeland India ,its beauty and its heritage. Diaspora promotes the return movement to homeland ( Kalra, Kalhon and Hutyuk 2005 , 11). Biju is proud of himself for his decision to make his way back home . Biju returns back to India but has to suffer a lot due to the Indo Nepalese riot . All the belongings he bought from America including the cloths he wore are taken away from him by rioters. Through character Biju we understand emotions of people who develop an attachment for their homeland while being away.

This novel is set during Indo- Nepalese movement ( 1986). Here we view the plight of Indian Gorkhas a minority section, who are citizens of India according to government of India , but still recognised as alien section in their own country. The character Gyan, in turn symbolises the alienation these group face. They and their ancestors have been dispersed from a specific original center to two or more peripheral or foreign regions ( Safran 1991 ,83). You can see

that Gyan's ancestors they left their village in Nepal during 1800's and came to Darjeeling . They are offered jobs in tea plantations. Members of diasporic community is mistreated by the hostland as strangers within their land (Safran1991, 92). Indian Gorkhas are Indian by citizenship , but not treated so. They have fought in army for the country and many lost their life. They didn't get any compensation for it nor respect. Gyan says " In our country, the country we fight for, we are treated like slaves"( 159).A minority interest in its homeland is stimulated for the sake of promotion of a foreign policy goal and ignored later when the direction of foreign policy has altered ( Safran 1991, 92). India and Nepal signed Indo Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship ( 1950 ) that gave a lot of privileges to citizens of both countries in matter of trade and commerce, free movement, defence and foreign policy, but the Nepal speaking Indian citizens faced a lot of identity crisis and they were treated Nepali people instead of Indian citizens .

As a result in 1980's the Indian Gorkhas demanded the creation of state called Gorkhaland. The movement was very violent led to the death of 1,200 people. In 1986 , a new violent movement for the state of Gorkhaland was started by Gorkha National Liberation Front ( GNLF). The novel mentions about involvement of GNLF. They continue to relate, personally or vicariously to the homeland in one way or another and their ethno communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such relationship ( Safran 1991, 84).Every Nepali youth are part of GNLF , it clearly shows their unity ,they take oath to fight till death for the formation of homeland , Gorkhaland. They boycott all the national day celebrations such as Independence day , Republic day and Gandhi jayanthi. They disapprove the Indo Nepal treaty. They burns down government institutions. They give slogans " Gorkhaland for Gorkhas "( 120). They lament over their resources being taken away and they wants to be part of GNLF and favour their people. GNLF wants to offer job opportunities to Indian Gorkhas and they wants to open up universities and hospitals. Diasporic groups have troubled relationship with majority( Kalra, Kalhon and Hutyndulk 2005,11). The majority group blame the government , for its state making policy and consider it as the biggest mistake the Nehru government made. They say that " Under his rules [ Nehru] any group of idiots stand up demanding a new state and get it too"( 128). The minority section reflects their plight of being stateless, being constitutionally tortured. They demand their land out of West Bengal. Gyan says that even though there are large number of Nepali Indians , not even one tea garden is owned by them. They believe that they should, collectively be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity ( Safran 1991, 84). Ultimately the aim of these Indian Gorkhas is to get back their Indian identity and form their state Gorkhaland.

Gyan who was least bothered about this struggle , who was in love with Sai, later own ends the relationship and join others in the struggle for Gorkhaland.

Father Booty , a Swiss national staying in India for forty five years started considering India as his homeland. He consider himself to be an Indian citizen due to his long stay and attachment with India. He is caught by the police while he was taking photos of butterflies. While police was going through these photos, they could find that it focussed less on butterflies more on bridge. They asked him permit papers , but he didn't have them .It was found that he was staying in India illegally. The police filed a case against him and he was deported back to his place. It justifies that diasporic people believe that they are not perhaps cannot be fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated from it ( Safran 1991,83). No matter how much Father Booty considers his host land, India as homeland , host land will always be host land. Father Booty now feels alienated and doesn't know what he will do when he goes back to Switzerland.

Through Jemubai Patel you will see that dispersion away from homeland, India to Europe made him to develop admiration for everything Europe . Most diasporans will show loyalty to their host countries and comply with the laws and norms and principles prevailing in those countries ( Sheffer 2003,226). He started developing a dislike for Indian ways. He dresses up in western dress, starts disliking his Indian brown colour, washes his body extensively with soap, putting powder to look fair like European. He starts shifting his Indian style of eating and starts using spoons and knifes instead , to look like European is his dream. After being appointed as judge , he shifted to a mansion build in western style.Diasporans “ They will try to minimize evidence of their identification with homelands and conceal their commitment to people there ” ( Sheffer 2003,228).While Jemubai Patel was on his way to Europe. He throw away all the food given by his mother , he felt ashamed of his parents for their lower origin. After getting appointed as judge, he shows an aversion for his Indian relatives. He dislikes his wife Nimi, to him “An Indian girl would never be as beautiful as European one” (168). He never gave any consideration to her, even didn't looked at her, treated her very badly and send her back home. He ended up all relationship with his relatives.

*The Inheritance of Loss* reveals to us that dispersion has different effect on different people. In some it developed a liking for their homeland [ India ]. Biju who goes to America and works their as illegal immigrant worker misses everything Indian while being away and wants to return back to India. Gyan who is an Indian Gorkha goes through identity crisis and tries to win back his identity as Indian by demanding Gorkhaland. Father Booty who is a foreigner , even though stays in India for long time learns that mere staying in the land doesn't make him Indian and Jemubai

Patel shows the negative effect of dispersion in which one develops an admiration for hostland [Europe] forgetting homeland [India]. *The Inheritance of Loss* doesn't end in Indian context but it its portrays world situation, which is formed by dispersions of people from different countries.

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