

The Plight of Indian Migrants in The Inheritance of Loss

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Abstract

Kiran Desai a renowned diasporic writer of our contemporary society throws light on various aspects of globalization. The theme of alienation, cultural differences, immigrants, identity crisis, isolation, poverty, racial, differentiation, socio-political conditions of the working class, multiculturalism has been provoked in her novel - The Inheritance of Loss. The present paper aims to analyze the plight of immigrants sparked in her novel - The Inheritance of Loss. Kiran Desai has skillfully highlighted the realistic picture of plight of immigrants due to advancement in science, freedom and globalization.

Keywords: immigrants, globalization, socio-political, freedom

Kiran Desai daughter of Anita Desai born and brought up in India till the age of 14, shifted with her family to England and after a year to America. She become a permanent resident of America. Her first novel *Hullabaloo* in the *Guava Orchard*, published in 1998 won the top prize for the Betty Task Awards in 1998. Her second novel 'The Inheritance of Loss' was published on August 31, 2006 won the 2007 Booker Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award in 2007 and the 2006 Vodafone Crossword Book Award. The different socio-cultural background shaped her mind and is reflected in her works.

Kiran Desai says, "There are old themes that continue to be relevant in today's world, the past informing the present, the present revealing the past". Kiran Desai was educated in India, England and United States. These environmental backgrounds helped her in developing the characters in her novels.

She captivates the readers mind in the very first chapter through the beautiful description of nature's beauty of Kanchenjunga. The very first chapter itself is very rejuvenating. Kiran Desai penned -

All day, the colors had been those of dusk, mist moving like a water creature across the great flanks of mountains possessed of ocean shadow and depths. Briefly visible above the vapour, Kanchenjunga was a far peak whittled out of ice, gathering the last of light, a plume of snow blown high by the storms at its summit.

The *Inheritance of Loss* is a story in which the characters as humans have to face great loss due to poor conditions in their life. The characters have suffered due to transnationalism. Sai is the central character of the novel. She has lost her parents at an early age. She lacks love and affection throughout her life. Kiran Desai had interestingly narrated the love story of Sai and her Nepali Math tutor Gyan. In the early days of space exploration, Sai's father was selected by a visiting Russian team as an Indian to be sent into space. Hence when her parents left for Russia Sai was admitted to the convent where her mother had studied i.e. at Dehradun. They met with an accident crushed under the wheels of a speedy rushing bus. Now she was an orphan and everybody had sympathy for her. This empathetic conditions around her created hatred in her mind. The convent approached her maternal grandfather Jemubhai as there is no one to pay her fees. Justice Jemubhai Patel, residing at Cho Oyu in Kalimpong. He accepts Sai as a chance to repay his past 'debts' and rectifies his mistake. Jemubhai feels that Sai will not cope up in a local school so he engages a private tutor Nani, a spinster and her sister Lola. They were very friendly with her, motivated her for self-potential realization. When these sisters failed to teach Sai her math and science lessons, it compelled him to appoint an ethnic Nepali young man with the consent of the Principal of his school. Gyan was a poor twenty-year-old bright student. He had to move up and down the hills for two hours to coach Sai. The poverty-stricken conditions compelled him to toil in his life. He resides in a 'basti' at the foothills. He abominates the Judge and Sai's superficiality but has to tolerate it. The cook is asked to keep a watch on Sai and Gyan. Sai falls in love with her Math tutor. They indulge themselves in innocent fun, away from spying eyes of the cook. She is more and more attached and concern about Gyan rather than her studies both have started meeting outside Cho Oyu - the house they laugh, chit chat and exchange thoughts share about their parents. Gyan tells her about his forefather but does not disclose anything about his father.

The Judge's old, rusted guns and other iron arms are robbed by the young Nepalis at Cho Oyu. Now Gyan

joins the GNLF i.e Gorkhaland National Liberation Foundation movement to fight for justice. He refuses to accept their love as he is an ethnic Nepali and she is an upper class, Western educated Indian girl. Later when Gyan goes to apologise Sai, they quarrel and later he never visits Cho Oyu. Sai is restless, she travels down the hills to the 'basti', Gyan angrily orders her to go back. A Love story spreads that a high -class girl had fallen in love with a poor Nepali. His grandmother scolds him for joining GNLF and rude behavior with Sai. Finally, he is not sent in the mission, thus his life is saved.

At the end of the novel Kiran Desai's heroine 'Sai', in despair is hoping for Gyan to return. She waits that one day, "she might create her own tiny happiness and live safely within it."

Kiran Desai has depicted that how social variation is an obstacle in the happiness of people. Kiran Desai has directed the theme of globalization through another character of Biju. His plight symbolizes the predicament of all illegal immigrants from their native lands to U.S.A for better earning for their livelihood. Biju is an Indian, Immigrant who gets a visa to the U.S.A. He stays illegally and works in the kitchen basements of New York city on slave wages. He ultimately decides to return to his father in India.

Biju is in touch with his father informing him that he is happy and is prospering whereas the fact is he is very upset and sad. He makes no friends in New York. There he is used by his boss for all odd jobs and is always abused. We first see him changing jobs. He lives in the basement of a building in very odd and poor conditions with several similar illegal immigrants leading a pathetic below dignity life. They all have a dream to obtain green card and lead a respectable life but very few succeed.

Biju's last job is at Gandhi Café run by Harish-Harry. He is made to over work and paid less. All the co-workers stayed rent free in the basement kitchen. One day Biju slips down and is injured. He asks the employer, Harish-Harry for medication, pity and help. But he is abruptly pointed out as an illegal immigrant and informed that medicines are very costly. On the other hand, he is advised

to go back, get well in India and then return to America. In the meantime, he learns the news of Kalimpong about Gorkhaland land agitation, he decides to go back and meet his father. Mr. Khare, the travel agent warns him that he is committing a mistake but Biju pays no ears to him. After four years stay in New York with all his bitter good experiences travels through all odd situation, he reaches Kalimpong. He is robbed off with all his belonging and is given a lady's nightgown to cover his body. The last scene is very heart touching to see the re-union of father- the cook and Biju- the son in a lady's nightgown at the gates of Cho Oyu's house and poor Sai is waiting for her lover to come back as well as eye witness the hugging of father and son.

Throughout the narrative, all of the characters are caught up in political squabbles and are victims of immigration. Because of their own culture and heritage, they became merciless as a result of immigration. The people's challenge is how to bring their cultures together. The issue is that they can't accept other people's cultures without losing their own. They are attempting to make a living in an immigrant society.

There are many other characters which suffer pain and agony due to migration. Thus, in the novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, the young characters in search of better jobs, dreams lose their originality and they long for love, affection and their home. The natives not only from India but other parts of the country are ill treated and undergo same sufferings. Thus, Kiran Desai has skillfully depicted the hardships of the immigrants.

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