

Post - Colonialism and Globalization in Kiran Desai's Novel "The Inheritance of Loss": A Mirror of Society

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ABSTRACT

Literature and society go hand in hand. The literature of a country is greatly influenced and affected by how the people of that country live and behave. We are social animals having several emotions like love, hatred, joy, aspirations, etc., so as the literature in which we can find all such emotions. Both are inseparable from each other, for literature cannot sustain without society, and likewise the society remains unnoticed without literary works.

From time immemorial till today it has been seen that how various authors have been reflecting a mirror image of the society through their writings. Sometimes that image may be a real story or evils prevailing in the society, or a pleasing fact or may be a bitter truth. If literature gives us the wings of imagination it can also confront us with the realities of life.

The paper will explore Kiran Desai's second novel **The Inheritance of Loss**, which is an epic tale taken on the themes of post-colonialism and globalization, relating to the modern India. Here the colonial legacy and the modernizing and homogenizing forces of globalization are inextricably linked.

Key Words: Literature, Modern society, colonialism, Globalization, Homogenization.

Kiran Desai, Indian- born American author is the daughter of the famed author Anita Desai and Ashvin Desai and has adopted her mother's literary talents. She has been hailed as one of the most brilliant creative writers of modern India. As a writer she is more

interested in the inner landscape of human mind than in political or social realities. Writing for Kiran is an effort to discover and then to underline and finally to deliver the true significance of things. David Rubin says: She is unique among British and Indian Novelists in her serene and just contemplation of Indo-British relations and her ability to create convincing characters from both cultures. In *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) the major theme running throughout is one closely to colonialism and the effects of post colonialism: the loss of identity and the way it travels through generations as a sense of loss.

Today the world has become a global village due to communication revolution. In the age of globalization, liberalization and privatization the entire socio-cultural life has been totally changed. As literature represents the life as it is or some time in better ways this theme too didn't remain unnoticed by the literary personalities of the contemporary society. The Indian women writers have touched the core of these issues-cross cultural conflicts between the two cultures. In the changed situation feeling of anguish, loneliness and ruthlessness or homelessness can be observed to examine these facts.

The world is globalized now and has made the rural man away from each other. When he goes far away from his family and society, he feels isolated and lonely. It is observed that this isolation and loneliness has been creating many problems in the new social system. In the new age, social relationship is changing due to cultural alienation and desperation. All these aspects have complexed the situation, which is dealt in this paper. After reading the novel very passionately we may say that any human being does not change his ethics or human values, won't like to keep them aside to live a better life. Even though they have been transforming themselves from endurable to unendurable despite knowing that their new lives will never be liked by any one. They change themselves, perhaps because of the circumstances created by their own fellows. Such transformed people might be or may be forced by someone directly or indirectly to be insolent with others to take revenge of the situation dealt with them by others. Jemu too was not of that kind person by birth but the wrong treatment of Englishmen turned a table against his personal morals and ethics and converted him as a savage. His physical torture to his wife after coming back from UK is a justifiable example of it.

Kiran Desai's novel 'The Inheritance of Loss' is a story of losses and predicaments of immigrants in an alien place with the conflicting Indian identities in colonial India and in

post-colonial period of globalizations. The novelist has impressed the world with her realistic and sensitive writing about an illusionary dream of globalization. Although, Kiran Desai's upbringings in American ethics and culture is embedded with traditional Indian culture and inheritance. She successfully tries to present the suppression and exploitation of immigrants by the people of America. The novel presents the life of a young orphan child named Sai who is from a convent school and comes to live with Anglophile grandfather Jemubhai Patelin Kolimpong, a town in West Bengal. Jamubhai is a retired Judge who used to serve in the colonial empire. He used to live in a house built by a Scotsman. Now the house is diminished but he lives in the style of British. A boy named Biju is a son of an old cook Pannalal who went to America for better life and good fortune. He was blinded with the materialistic life. He explored America to earn more to live lavish, comfortable and healthy life. Most of the Eastern people think same as Biju that the western land is a magic place full of happiness. Overwhelmed and brightened by the outer glittering life of America, Biju left East for the West and entered into illegally. The saddened life of illegal immigrant is depicted through the life of Biju. He starts to work in an Indian restaurant for money. He is not paid as per his work as he is an illegal immigrant, the owner has been exploiting him. Here, we could feel that in modern life brotherhood concept is mere imagination. If it does real work, instead of rendering his help, an Indian businessman might not have exploited his own brother, I mean an Indian who is alone, in need of someone's help. Here the novelist has displayed the pain of exile, the endless struggle for better life. The confusion of characters and the impact of colonialism on Indians are huge and everlasting. The western people are highly dominant by nature. Due to which the migrated people to America have to suffer a lot. Indians become victims of it. They suffer due to inferiority complex. In 'The Inheritance of Loss' we could see that the judge from India who went to England has to suffer greatly. He is treated there in such a way that his attitude towards others becomes very aggressive. He went there to earn the degree in Law which he could, but he could not accept others of his status when he returned back. He starts neglecting his family members including his wife. His inner bitterness leads him to end his marital relationship with his wife. When he was in U.K. he was given inferior treatment which resulted in bitterness soaked in his mind and heart. To have degree in law he paid huge amount, quite uncountable in the form of self respect and all joy of life. His feelings of love, affection and happiness vanished due to that treatment. His social life ended. His outer look presents his Indian-ness but his inner personality, it is totally

changed due to westernized treatment to him. There he became hesitant and became nervous and uncomfortable in talking and dealing with people. He was made conscious of his brown colour, Indian culture, pronunciations and above all their racial attitude. He was hiding himself in the library to be away from the class girls' teasing at her and coating his face with talcum powder to be whitened. Biju met with unhappy encounter in USA. He was often cheated by his employees there. He experienced humiliation in such a way that he decided to leave the place, and ready to live as a poor Indian. In India, still most of the people like western countries. They are blinded by the outer glittering of the worldliness of the western countries and due to this they hate their native or feel uncomfortable with it.

Jemubhai too was the same. Jemubhai has seen and appreciated sovereignty of British as his father sent him to the convent school. He was impressed by the statue of the queen. Even though he is an Indian and it's in Indian culture to worship all the Ladies, he never feels proud of his mother or his wife. Perhaps as they have been doing all household works, their power might not have been felt by him. Such ladies traditional look with inner beauty could not impress him while that queen's outer appearance captivated him at very first sight. Our women's modesty was proved of no value to him. Perhaps due to such attitude, people will have to suffer a lot on the other land. People's increasing greediness to gain more comfortable life and earning better status have made them aliens even in mass. Despite they know the danger of the uprootedness; they try to be settled in the dark countries where modesty with immigrants is an illusion or a dream. Jemubhai becomes the slave of the western superiority and power as he took his education in convent school and learnt an English culture. "He found her froggy expression compelling and felt deeply impressed that a woman so plain could also have been so powerful, the more his respect for and the English grew". Jemubhai's father has not been having a good and acceptable status in the society as used to produce false witness in the court to earn livelihood. As his father could not make his present status so remarkable, he thought to send his son abroad so that his family would earn a noticeable position in the Indian society. His father thinks that higher education in Britain is a unique opportunity for social status," His son might, might could occupy the seat faced by the father, proud disrupter of the system, lowest in the hierarchy of the court. He might be a district commissioner. Or a high court judge." Jemubhai worked hard to be successful in fulfilling his father's dream true. From England he returns with the success of civil service. He has achieved a higher rank in the judiciary system and thus given proud to his father to

recompense for his father's marginal status. Reading this mentality we come to know that all of us are interested to make our appearance in the world remarkable. At the same time always ready to shorten someone's successful high graph to our by cutting their graph line instead of doing work of their level with total commitment, sincerity and dedication. We never like to give up such mean work to make our position higher and acceptable. Still we do have high respect to the foreign return. We hardly concern of their type of job or duty over there. We get impressed by their living style and changed status after their return to own country. The present globalization is to brought different cultures together encouraging ideas and traditions from one culture to bond and blend with others. But I think this multi-culturanism has left the people totally deprived of a healthy culture, particularly Indians.

Directly or indirectly our Indians are exploited on the other land. Racial superiority of English mentality and sublevel treatment has broken his identity. We can understand this by one more example of Jemu from the novel. Jemu became strange to himself, thinks himself a wild animal who is away from culture and good manners of life. His inferiority complex has reached at the level of psychological imbalance." He forgot how to laugh. He held his hand over his mouth, because he couldn't bear anyone to see his gums his teeth. To the end of his life he would never be seen without his socks and shoes and would prefer shadow to light, faded days to sunny, for he was suspicious that sunlight might reveal him in his hideousness, all too clearly." Not only this has, but also his humiliation isolated him from others. Instead of the blended advantageous culture, the European culture was proved hell to him. Nobody had accepted him as his/her friend so he started to be distorted. To save from such pathetic condition he kept himself hidden in the library. "For entire days nobody spoke to him at all his throat Jammed with words unuttered, his heart and mind turned in to blunt aching." He finds the lower ethnic status and becomes unable to cope with western culture. Thus the Britain has shown its hypocritical culture. He went there for a new incredible identity and getting higher degree in laws. But instead of it, it gave him the great loss of his own identity rooted in Indian culture too. Those people were so rude with not only him but also with others."

Jemu has paid large amount of fees in the form of his happiness of life and even the human aspirations so it was a great loss for him, "Those ridiculous Indians who couldn't rid themselves of what they had broken their souls to learn." He hated his wife for his illiteracy. He feels ashamed for his illiterate wife so as he was not with him, he never took her

anywhere. As she has stolen his powder puff it was not simple thing for an embittered judge to leave her unpunished. It was violation of his privacy. So, it has risen hatred in such a way that he called her 'You Filth.' He used to apply the powder on his face and body to cover up his brown skin to save from the mockery at him by white men as they were so racial to such people. He became out of control. His suppression by English people and sue to which wrath comes out suddenly. He tried to be calm down using his hands on his own wife which normally happens in many families. He chased her down and raped her brutally, a physical violence. He repeated it again and again. He made his own wife like living corpse. His hatred, cruelty and difference of attitude for her turned into barely human being. "He wanted to teach her the same lessons of loneliness and shame he has learned himself in public, he never spoke to or looked in her direction." Gradually, her life became bitter and meaningless. She seemed almost distorted. It's a good example of man's brutality and dominance over women in India. It's rightly said that man likes to share his happy and unhappy moments with women, directly or indirectly happily or unhappily using her body without considering her mood or giving respect. Here we can see that he didn't stop all these just after all these. When he was posted in the district of Boda, he went there with his wife Nimi. There he hired a lady to teach English language and etiquette to his wife. We can see that due to which he has completely felt distorted, still wanted to repeat with his wife. Still his impression as an English culture is superior one has been flowing in his mind so forcefully that he starts his all efforts to improve his wife as an English wife. When his wife becomes rebellious and denied to learn it, he becomes furious. He makes her feel lonely and neglected due to the suffocation given to him by the Britain and his wife's rejection to learn the language and Manner. His self respect gets hurt. To punish her, his servants too were asked to insult her. His irritation was beyond tolerance. Physical violence became the routine of their life. The novelist says, "....with an undercurrent of moral and humanitarian vision tries to explore the insecurity born out of colonialism. Focus on the oppressive privacy of judge and his disgusting behaviour with his wife and his subsequent obsessive indifference to his granddaughter Sai, are the external manifestations of the psychic impact of oppressive colonial forces." Bitterness, hatred, loneliness and distrust spoiled their life. When judge was away from Boda on a tour, his wife joined a rally organized by the contemporary Congress Party to welcome Nehru at railway station. He thought this act would harm his professional reputation as he was engaged in Colonial Govt. service, he hated her saying, "You are following the script of a village idiot.

You are unsuitable to be my wife.” Again this is a good example of a wife’s suppression by her own husband in this patriarchal society. Her husband is free to go to UK to satisfy his hunger, to stay over there in spite of insulting and humiliating treatment to him and force his wife to live a life as he wishes. We can notice here that a human has completely become inhuman. His heart is transformed with animal instincts due to subjugation to him by English people. This phenomena is proved a root cause of his transformation as an animal. He could not forget the rough behavior of the Great Britain with him. So to take revenge of his saddened past he deals with his wife in such a way as if she enforced him to visit UK to have better future and social reputation to conceal his father’s false works. He has tortured her mentally and physically. Once she told him, “You are the one who is stupid.” Which was later resulted in a physical violence? Jemubhai, “emptied his glass on her head, sent a jug of water swinging into the face he no longer found beautiful, filled her ears with leaping soda water. Then when this wasn’t enough to assure his rage, he hammered down with his fists, raising his arms to bring them down on her again and again rhythmically.... Stupid bitch dirty bitch! The mere he swore the harder he found he could hit.” Then he sends her to his maternal family home which was indirectly a great loss to his life.

After six months, he is informed about a baby girl birth by his wife but he avoids to visit his wife and daughter. He is trying to keep himself alienated but in doing this he lost his own identity both as native Indian as well as human being too. He is transformed from human being too inhuman. He has lost all the ethics and moral values as a human being. It is said that higher education explores and expands a deep understanding capability in a human being but here we find it quite reverse. He becomes a foreigner in his own country. He has purposefully left his family. Even his father requested to take his family with him but he already became beast and inhuman. He lost his human identity. For the sake of false life and status, he devoted everything to acquire glitter of money and decisive identity and status that is completely fragile and temporary. Basically human life longs for culture, home land and family life but Jemu becomes as embittered as his sense of humanity has been lost in the gutter of western education and manners. Physically he seems alive but from inside he is dead. In society human being is considered as a social animal but as he has lost his prime features of human lives, he remains as animal only. He feels ashamed of his own identity as an Indian. He is blinded by the European culture, so even though he had been humiliated there while his stay over there, he digested the culture in his blood. The retired judge adores

the British imperialist culture so much that he readily abandons his native Gujarati rituals and customs that eventually resulted in mental discord . Thus, we can say that he lost each and everything, even his identity as a human being. The novelist rightly says that it is the bitter reality that, “In the room it was a fact accepted by all that, Indians were willing to undergo any kind of humiliation to get into States. You could heap rubbish on their heads and yet they would be begging to come crawling in.”

Conclusion:

As ‘The Inheritance of Loss’ spans a large amount of time and two different continents, it successfully shows the effects of colonization firsthand and the ensuing harm due to globalization. Whether it reveals subconscious prejudices, leads to a rejection of one’s own culture, or engenders feelings of self-hatred, globalization visibly perpetuates the oppressive legacy of colonialism.

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