

Aspects Of Diaspora And Cultural Displacement In Kiran Desai's Novel The Inheritance Of Loss

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ABSTRACT

Diaspora literature revolves around the idea of a home land or a place where displacement happens and deals with the narration of harsh exile seen in the characters of many diasporic novels due to their expulsion. where the Indian diaspora has contributed a lot to world literature. Exile plays a very significant role in shaping Indian English diasporic sensibilities. Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss* situates underprivileged diasporic subjects in India and the United States of America in the contexts of colonialization and current globalization. "The Inheritance of Loss," which mainly deals with migration, nationalism, colonialism, diaspora, and globalization, has done more than represent or recover the lives of people who are living under the forces of these historical aspects and socio-cultural formations. Many Indian novelists like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Raja Rao, Anurag Mathur, and Kiran Desai deal with the major themes of diaspora, poverty, injustice, hypocrisy, east-west encounters, and superstitions. This article explores "The Inheritance of Loss" as a diasporic aspect that undergoes identity crisis among immigrants by way of its formal aesthetics. The novel mainly focuses on the material experiences of various ethnic diasporas and on the phenomenon of diasporic dispersal in the context of late twentieth-century capitalism. Kiran Desai departs to conceptualise the early diaspora.

KEYWORDS: Diaspora, Displacement, Globalization, Inheritance, Conceptualizations, Marginalization

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I. INTRODUCTION

Diaspora is the term often used today to describe practically any population which is considered 'de-territorialised' or 'transnational' that is, which has originated in a land other than which it currently resides, and whose social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe. The word "Diaspora" derives from the Greek diaspeir "to distribute"; it is a compound of speir, "to sow to scatter" like seeds and dia- "from one end to the other". The term of course became associated with the Jewish historical experience, and hence was associated with being a dispersed community sharing a common religious and cultural heritage. Such populations are growing in prevalence, number, and self-awareness because of the "shrinking" boundaries. Several are emerging as (or have historically long been) significant players in the construction of national narratives, regional alliances or global political economies. (Tiwari 2011:1)

Dr. Sandhya Tiwari's book titled *Displacements and Alienation of Indian Diaspora*, in the selected works of Chitra Divakaruni, Bharati Mukherji and Jhumpa Lahiri has not only struck an emotional chord, but has actually pulled at the heart strings of any writer who is an expatriate or claims to be one. The poignancy and tenderness with which she discusses the acculturation of writers and the subsequent void in emotional and physical relationships of these chosen few, is soul searching and brings on great moments of reckoning of a reality that has come to stay. Whether it is by choice or otherwise, the diaspora expatriate has committed atrophy on himself, and the healing, if there is one, is in the empathy and mute admiration of their efforts. (Tiwari 2011: xii)

Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* signifies a three-way narrative split relating to the stories of the central characters Sai, who is sixteen years old, her grandfather, and Biju, their cook's son, who tries his way as an illegal immigrant in New York. This narrative split provides us with an interesting point of view from which to see very different sides of the same issue, as Biju's negations of his identity as an illegal immigrant in a foreign city are contrasted with the more complex situation of Sai and her grandfather, who find themselves as

strangers in their homeland due to their education, language, and wealth. These characters are in opposition to their surroundings and effectively in similar positions of strangeness and marginality.

The self is not only a psychological phenomenon consisting in itself how an individual perceives oneself but also how the person is perceived by others and hence identity is a multi-faceted phenomenon. It is not only a personal perception but shared or collective perception by others that are also assimilated. (Tiwari 2017: 428)

The Inheritance of Loss is the second novel by Indian author Kiran Desai, which has been widely praised by people all over the world and won the Man Booker Prize in 2006 and the "National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award" in 2007. However, the book seems to be impacted by her own life journey as well as her grandparents' journey from east to west. Kiran Desai was born in Chandigarh and spent most of her early childhood in Pune and Mumbai. Her family moved to England when she was fourteen, and then to the United States of America. These all-encompassing journeys left her feeling deeply disconnected from her homeland. Questions raised by the author of the book *Inheritance of Loss*: What are the problems faced by immigrants? What does it mean to be a newcomer? What happens when western culture is introduced to eastern countries? What happens when people migrate from poor countries to rich countries? Do these immigrants face an identity crisis?

II. METHODOLOGY

The approach adopted for the research study is close reading. The practice of close reading, which is also known as close textual analysis, is an investigation into the relationship between the internal workings of discourse in order to discover what it is that makes a particular text function persuasively. A text is an artefact that encourages meaning to be derived from it. One must engage in careful reading in order to deduce the possible meanings of such phrases. The rhetor, also known as the author of the text, the audience(s), and the message itself are all aspects of a text that are scrutinized in close reading. Through this process of conducting a close reading analysis, hidden themes and prominent diaspora elements that have been missed or undervalued will be explored.

III. DIASPORIC ASPECTS IN THE BOOK THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS

The book deals with diasporic aspects along with international issues like globalization, multiculturalism, cultural displacement, economic inequality, and fundamentalism. Among these issues, the book also focuses on colonialism and racism, ethnicity, and the Gorkha separatist movement. Depending on the struggles of the diaspora, the diasporic experience has different concerns and theories. The diasporic imaginary, according to Kiran Desai, an Indian-born novelist, is derived from Indian context and can be found in Vijay Mishra's book *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary*. In the introductory sections of the book Mishra defines diaspora as,

"All diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way. Diaspora refer to people who do not feel comfortable with their non- hyphenated identities as indicated on their passport. Diasporas are people who would want to explore the meaning of the hyphen, but perhaps not press the hyphen too far for fear that this would lead to massive communal schizophrenia. They are precariously lodged within an episteme of real or imagined displacements, self- imposed sense of exile; they are haunted by specters, by ghosts arising from within that encourage irredentist or separatist movements." (Mishra 2007: 1)

This article explores *The Inheritance of Loss* as a diasporic text that spells out the tragic ramifications of inequalities, class-based exploitation, and broken values in the characters of the novel. Therefore, the novel explores the interplay between different categories and mainly focuses on identity crisis in the context of diaspora, globalization, and migration. This particular set of circumstances shows the deep roots and modern trends of globalization. and shows the urgency of the matter should be discussed. Many scholars and writers, however, emphasize a specific issue, most notably Salman Rushdie's collection of essays *Imaginary Homelands*, which focuses on migration in literature:

"Let me suggest that Indian writers in England have access to a second tradition, quite apart from their own racial history. It is the cultural and politics of phenomenon of migration, displacement, life in a minority group. America, a nation of immigrants, has created great literature out of this phenomenon of cultural transplantations, out of examining the ways in which people cope up with a new world." (Rushdie1992:20).

IV. DISCUSSION: MIGRATION AND CULTURAL DISPLACEMENT

A elderly judge lives with his teenage granddaughter Sai in a crumbling mansion in the Mountains with his unnamed chef. In New York's dungeon-kitchens, the cook's son Biju works in cheap restaurants and sleeps in cellars with other illegal immigrants. India and America alternate chapters, the novel divides continents,

nations, and regions and also the typographic divisions that matter the most. Centre-justified lines split the novel's 53 small chapters into sections. The typographic device is common but its frequency here is rare. Her tale had hundreds of holes. She divides text into little sentences sometimes. The breaks and leaps between them characterize *The Inheritance of Loss*.

The novel has shifts from character to character and emotion to emotion, expressing its topic of dislocation. These self-contained parts portray the unusual mix of stasis and episode that characterizes life at Cho Oyu, the unique house "constructed long ago by a Scotsman" whose spirit told him it was "wild and daring" to dwell in this unreachable region. The three residents' intimate but distinct perspectives divide house life. In America, Biju's efforts have no narrative (despite the tall stories his father talks back home about his progress). We receive snippets of his life, sometimes sad, sometimes funny. Survival—finding job, food, and sleep—is all there is. Divisions allow character backstories. After her parents died in a car accident in Russia, where her father was preparing to be an astronaut, Sai moved live with her grandfather (these are the days when India and Russia are pursuing an unlikely friendship).

The acknowledgement of migration and cultural displacement, which facilitates understanding long-term historical processes, is interconnected with their account of the potential for inspiration in literature. It is most visible in Desai's novels, which exemplify global mobility, historical periods, and socioeconomic systems, and highlight dominant narratives of global individuals and collective sense of belonging to oneself. Desai uses fragmentary structure in the novel to demonstrate how immigration is a difficult nostalgic movement between past and present. Diaspora primarily addresses socioeconomic inequalities as well as socio-political formations; these two factors encourage readers to think critically about migration and global capitalism, both of which can be traced back to the primacy of European colonialism and cultural displacement.

The Inheritance of Loss, which interweaves between diaspora, globalization, cultural displacement, and colonialism, has done more than represent and recover the lives of the people who are living in these historical forces' socio-cultural formations. As a result, Kiran Desai is a member of the cosmopolitan elite in both her host society and her home society, and she can represent the world in both senses of the term. As a result, *The Inheritance of Loss* is self-consciously described as a diasporic novel, but it is precisely intervention between critical situations that is mingled. While Desai's novel does not have immediate effects on socio-political issues, it nevertheless intervenes in debates of cosmopolitanism and diaspora at the level of genre and readership. Desai reimagines the Indian diaspora in relation to various diasporic groups, as well as in the context of global capitalism. She follows the journeys of her Indian diasporic protagonists and highlights colonialism (past) and neoliberalism (present), demonstrating how late capitalism, like colonialism before it, primarily operates on the logic of exclusion of racism.

The Inheritance of Loss is a magnificent novel that illuminates the pain of exile as well as the many ambiguities of postcolonialism with cultural displacement. It ruminates back and forth between Kalimpong, a tiny part of the Himalaya, and the streets of New York City. With this novel, Desai wants to be clear about her intention: to expand her reach to the global arena and narrow boundaries. That's the good tale that connects India's border with Nepal with New York City. It comprises cultures, religions, generations, and different faces. Kiran Desai creates an elegant thought and study about families, the loss each member must confront alone, and the lies we tell ourselves to make memories from the past more palatable. At the centre of the story is a sixteen-year-old girl named Sai Mistry, the orphaned daughter of an English-educated Indian judge. Sai has lived in a crumbling mansion with her grandfather, Justice Jemubhai Patel, who is a maternal grandfather at Cho Oyu, since the death of her parents in a bus accident in Moscow. The judge, Jemubhai, seems to be very cold-hearted towards friends; when he studied at Cambridge University, he was not as friendly with fellow Indians. The only person he truly loves is Mutt. Sai's grandfather, who lives in a large mansion, considers himself more British than Indian and believes that hardworking but impoverished people like his cook Nandu, who hopes for a better life for his son Biju, are the driving force in his life.

The story of Sai living in Kalimpong, near India's northern border with Nepal, alternates with another story in which Biju, son of cook Nandu, is an illegal immigrant who is trying to have a better life in New York City. Biju working in a variety of jobs adds to the plight of the illegal immigrant who has no future in his home country and is forced to work illegally in the United States. as Desai explores the aspirations of their families. Sai's love for Gyan fades as he grows older; they both separated due to their social status; Sai belonged to a formerly powerful, educated family living in the west. Gyan's ethnic Nepalese family lives in poverty, and at the end of the novel we find inequalities between two cultures. Biju, despite his father's tall stories of his wealthy life in New York, lives in the same squalor he hoped to leave when he came to the country. His visa is

expired, and he works for almost nothing. Biju longs for home; it is a struggle every day to survive, to find food and shelter. This experience foreshadows what was hoped for him. After struggling and finally being subjected to abuse by a fellow Indian, he gives up his dreams and returns to his homeland. As a result of dealing with many different cultures, Desai displays various characteristics such as life's humour and brutality, passionate commitments, and delicate emotions in *The Inheritance of Loss*. *Each character wrestles* with two worlds: tradition in India and western culture. The book is a haunting look at how cultural expectations, isolation, and the search for identity can keep us in a circle of guilt and searching. By losing respect for their traditional customs, some of the characters in the book are left adrift in two worlds that never fully embrace them. They learn throughout that no act can assuage a guilt placed on our hearts by our own hands.

V. CONCLUSION

Kiran Desai is widely acknowledged to be part of a dynamic and flourishing postcolonial female literary tradition that raises awareness of power symmetries inherent in global capitalism and encourages cosmopolitan reading practices that lead to a disparity between the material histories of immigrant and diasporic groups. Desai tries to express the dream of empire, past and present, and lays bare the idea of cultural displacement. It ponders over the fact that those who leave for new beginnings find themselves lost in both their homeland and abroad. Their desire for a better life drove them to relocate to new countries, but those countries refused to accept them, treating them as aliens rather than intruders. In the case of Jemubhai Patel, we can see that he is a homeless person. While in England he was unaccepted, in India he doesn't accept others. Despite Biju's desolation as an immigrant, Sai retains the promise of future travel in a broader vision. Hence, Desai undergoes a transitional mobility; thus, the novel asserts the significance of cultural connectivities and displays self-awareness about cosmopolitan border crossing. Finally, she juxtaposes both Sai and Biju returning to their countries; this undergoes a deep drift that characterises the ideological view on immigrants and diaspora. The main feeling of the entire book deals with colonialism, diasporic feelings, cultural displacement, the loss of identity, and how it travels with the generations as a sense of loss. With keen observation and profound wisdom, Desai weaves the weight of colonialism with a bitter flavour of humiliation and gives multicultural facets to different characters who live with the questions of isolation and identity as exiles both at home and abroad.

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