

THE PLIGHT OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS IN *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

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ABSTRACT

This article is going to explain the plight of Indian immigrants in the novel *The Inheritance of loss*. An immigrant is a man who leaves his native against his will in bitterness because of the social discontent in his own nation. Their pathetic conditions and sufferings are well expressed in this article. Through this novel, Desai vividly expounds the problem of the common people. It brings out a pictorial picture of the mental sufferings which the people undergo.

KEYWORDS: Consciousness, Desai, Indian, Novel, Biju & Immigrants

INTRODUCTION

Literature presents the essence of reality. Indian literature in English is a historically verifiable phenomenon. It is the result of the commercial, cultural and literary encounter between Indian and Britain. It cannot be presumed that a set of historically given conditions are to be identically interpreted or understood by successive generations of critics and historians. The wealth of Indian Literature available reveals the fact that the creativity and the experience of the writers have made a lasting impression. Indian writers in English have made the most significant contribution to the global literature.

Generally, Indian immigrant writers in America express Indian Consciousness. It refers to the group of writers in America who write about Indian culture, tradition, Social Changes, hunger and poverty and Indian freedom struggle. Most of the Indian writers in America are expatriates and their experience at hand is almost authentic. This fact is luckily not affecting the quality of Indians presented by them in their novels. Kiran Desai is one of the immigrant writers settled in America.

Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* does not have psychological probing, but it deals more with social reality in the life of Indian immigrants in America. In this novel readers are taken to New York to see the troubled life of Biju who has high dreams while coming to the land of opportunity. Biju is the son of the Cook in Kalimpong. Biju's high expectations reflect the state of mind of the families of migrants in native lands. Desai certainly to explore the pain of the immigrant and she gave a realistic description of the self-consciousness and excitements of immigrants to America.

The Inheritance of Loss illustrates the life of an illegal immigrant in New York's underground culture where workers are exploited at the city's restaurants. It describes how the inhabitants of a household near kalimpong where northern India borders the Himalayas are affected by a Nepalese insurgency in the mid-1980s. It centers on the solitude faced by many of its characters not only geographical isolation but also a mental one. Jemubhaipatel a retired Cambridge-educated Anglophile judge lives in an isolated house in the hill town of kalimpong, with his cook, who manages the

household and his beloved dog Mutt. The judge has experienced discrimination and humiliation in England. He has become a stranger to himself because of loneliness. By abusing and beating his wife Nimi, whom he had married when she was barely fourteen years of age, he vented his anger and frustration. There are four basic concerns in the level: the relationship between Mr. Jemubhaipatel, the retired judge and his granddaughter Sai, the relationship between Mr. patel's Cook and his son Biju, Sai – Gyan romance and the setting of insurgency in Darjeeling in the 1980s. Among the four, the cook-son relationship and the father's great expectation from his son in America is the most admirable one.

Throughout the novel, the cook is referred as 'The Cook!'. The novelist has very realistically represented him as a type of the cooking class, as he has no identity of his own, expected by his profession. The cook fashions a dream world for him and wants him to be a greater cook.

The cook has kept telling everyone that Biju works for the Americans. The next part of the novel portrays the story of Biju in America struggling to find a job. The story of the cook-son relationship runs through the letters exchanged among them between the two worlds. When the cook gets all the news from America, he overjoys and keeps on giving advice to his son to guard himself against cheats. During his second year in America, Biju becomes a victim in the hands of his Italian Restaurant's owner whose wife hates him for his Indian smell. Here Kiran Desai has exposed the racist feelings as well as class – caste language distinctions.

In course of time, Biju and his friends who are illegal immigrants have to spend most of their earnings on anonymous persons who promised them green cards. The novelist draws the readers' sympathy for Biju when he has an accidental fall at the Gandhi café and rough treatment he has received from the owner.

In America, Biju struggles hard to attain his Green card, but the card remains unattainable. He finds everything new, and everything looks strange to him. He encounters with a number of hurdles while in America. But he does not share his anxieties with his father and he does not like to destroy the old man's peace of mind and the old man writes to him every now and then:

The racial difference does not make one race superior and the other inferior, it does not make one forward and the other backward; it does not make one rare naturally privileged and the other deprived. It is only a man's personal thought based on his personal profit and loss, which produces radicalization and makes racial discrimination a inner fact of nature. (Singh 16)

The word immigrant is most often associated with minorities, the poor, the unemployed and the other groups who have limited power to bring about changes in society and other groups who have nothing to contribute to the society. They feel themselves alienated from the society, which causes nothing on their own growth and they feel meaningless in their existence.

Everyone knows that human existence in an alien land is better than the unwanted existence in their homeland. When Biju succeeds in getting visa, he is called "the luckiest boy in the whole world" (187). But remains unlucky on in U. S. He sees groups of person thronging in the basement of the bakery, all are outsiders trying hard to make money in the richest country, but humiliated, he faces the same situation, earning nothing only humiliation. He understands the

meaningless existence and finally, he is affected by nostalgia.

On the other hand, the cook is in Kalimpong. He is abused by the judge and beaten with his slipper for not finding Mutt. He keeps weeping. Desai presents the symbol of darkness and terror that loomed large in surrounding. She concludes the story with the meeting of the due in pain, darkness and gloom. The father and the son finally return to where it all began, into one another's embrace. Their yearning for the American dream is shattered as they inherit nothing at the end. But they are psychologically and physically united in an emotional location.

Migration creates the desire for home, which in turn produces the rewriting of home. Homesickness or homelessness, the rejection of home or the longing for home become motivating factors in this rewriting. Home can only have meaning once on experiences a level of displacement from it. (Shameem 51)

Judge Jemubhai is born into a middle-class Patel family. He has felt lost and contempt for his skin, color, and smell. Biju's experience in America is almost similar to the judge's first experience in Britain. He was full of self-hate. He succeeded in leaving India for a difficult education in England. His color, his religion, his tastes, his ethnicity, his language all made him the quintessence of "other" in England. Jemubhai became a stranger to himself England. He rarely lifted his lips for the smile. During his four years at school in Cambridge, he took refuge in the library where he was suppressed by the laughter at his curry smell by peers and a group of young girls. Unable to deal with these conflicts the judge waste away by self-loathing. "He envied the English. He loathed Indians at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become; he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indian, both" (Desai 119).

As he lived in Cambridge far away from his home and family, Jemubhai began to feel the immense loneliness and isolation and often found him ill at ease in mixing-up with the people of the foreign society. "Failed to make a courageous gesture outward at a crucial moment and found, instead, that his pusillanimity and his loneliness had found fertile soil. He retreated into a solitude that grew in weight day by day" (59).

Desai gives a very poignant as well as a caustic account of the judge's emotions while delving deep into the psychological explanations for the judge's uncanny behavior. She elucidates that though he had much love for his people within his heart, he always felt uncomfortable about their being uneducated and being up-to-date. He was basically a weak and mentally insecure person who lacked the will to assert his own self. Therefore, instead of holding on to his own individuality and convictions, he rather chooses to embrace an alien culture and thus, subsequently lost his own self completely.

CONCLUSIONS

The *Inheritance of Loss* is Kiran Desai's second novel. The story is set in the mid-1980's in a Himalayan town in India by the foot of Mount Kachenjunga and New York. Kiran Desai touches upon many different issues throughout the book such as multiculturalism, globalization, customs, tradition and immigration. I have mainly dealt with immigration in this article. I also remembers a section of immigrants about whom the nation is usually forgetful.

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