

## Loss of Identity and Culture: A Study of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

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### ABSTRACT

Loss of identity and culture play a vital role in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*. This novel aims to show how migration effect on each individual person's life with their circumstances. The plot revolve around two central migrate character Biju and Sai from India to United States of America. Novel considered the experience of an immigrant and their hardship on the new place. Kiran Desai depicted that disregarded Indian culture and identity and who accepted the English way of life. It deals with the feeling and emotion of persons living India and also people coming from United States and back to their native land. Novelist tries to point out that contradiction between both American and Indian culture with present and past time. Novel ends with all the major character realized that loss of Indian identity and culture. Novel traverses just about every contemporary international issue, how migration crash because of globalization, multiculturalism and economic modernization. The process of economic modernization and social changes throughout the world are separately people from longstanding local identity. One of the major characteristics to clash identity and culture is basic; civilization is differentiating from each other by history, language, tradition, culture and economic inequality.

### 1. Introduction

In order to study thematic elements in the novel *The Inheritance loss*, the present study will attempt to investigate elements loss of identity and culture. This paper will discuss and estimate the theme of race, gender and loss of identity and culture. My main intention is to traverse similarity and difference between the four themes, based on a thorough analysis of all characters and conspiracy. This all themes will be seen through the mirror of migration and diaspora in a postcolonial time. My paper is focus on the reason of discrimination and oppression between Indian and American culture. This paper critically analysis the novel *The Inheritance loss* about all the characters, who are the trapped in India and American's culture and class. The novels themes like cultural, migration, multiculturalism, globalization and economic inequality, this issue are very new and dynamic representation in the contemporary society. Migration is the major theme throughout the whole novel, how it impact and effect on both culture. The reason of migration is various such as social, religion, economic inequality, culture have been significant. *The Inheritance Loss* is the second novel by Kiran Desai. She depicted in this novel mostly the experiences of immigrants and their hardship. The novel basically set in United States and India. It refers to the emotions and feeling of people living in United States and also in India. Novel is traverse how immigrants worker struggle in foreign lands. The novel largely deals with conflict between ancient and modern world. Kiran Desai gives us multicultural society in whole the world, the setting of the novel is in both east and west. The novel reflected that loss of identity and culture, who Indian accepted English way of life. Travelling is major factor depicted in this book and it totally deals with the opposite side places between mostly economic way, socially and culturally.

The novel largely deals with effects of colonial and postcolonial period, which time period represents both the side of eastern and western culture. Novels all characters dreams and ambition are clearly show in this novel. Their dreams

immigrating to America and ultimately abscond the stiff caste system of their homeland. In ordered to behold the significant of the disparate landscape setting and personalized characteristics. It will be useful to understand brief geographical fact concerning the country in question, in the particular country like America and India. Throughout the world today, there is influenced of American culture, and English is the chief international language. This is reason to the inheritance of the identity and culture due to America's economic wealth and power. America has acquired power through the control of the monetary markets and defiance security of the world. Kiran Desai instigate to the reader to countries of the third world: Bangladesh, Nepal and mostly India. Novel is associated with postcolonial period.

*The Inheritance Loss* is about unbalanced development of east and west, projected through the supremacy techniques of saying two corresponding stories. Desai provides numerous linking resemble imply to in this novel. Novel explore the emotional extent rather than geographical. Novel has conventional plot structure, in which author uses in cultural and socio-economic condition. There is differentiated economically condition between American one side and other backward India. Desai depicted some kind of element with the diverse some basic factor affecting in the novel. So it's totally concern with the how people influence by British and American culture, which is powerful nation in nowadays. In the modern time, basic demand of to live the life that people recognized power, respect, and economic wealth. These are the basic need to live life happily and without struggling, so certainly people follow these things to gain all this things. I am interesting in investigated that why people follow these kind element and how people their loss identity and culture, because of discrimination. My aim in this paper to point out linked between both British culture and Indian culture. I would also like to find out how the concept of superior power dominated the subaltern culture in this novel.

Novel refers to how Immigrant people followed and influenced British and American culture. It is concern with the hunger of wealth and money, whom loss their own culture and identity. Desai clearly show in this novel that all the immigrant character lived in United States, whom suffered from discrimination, domination and oppressed by American people. So these are the factor how impact on human, how every human individual life loss their own identity and culture, because of these attraction of wealthy and glamorous life. Desai has explored contradiction between first world and third world. The concept of loss of identity and culture is very significant for my paper, as the considerable between both the American and British culture. It will be therefore be necessary to discuss this kind of things that how people think about own culture and identity. This book is reflected the basic understanding to know about such contradictory and difficult situation of immigrant people in other nation or countries.

## 2. The Inheritance Loss: Loss of Identity and Culture

The starting point of my paper will be Kiran Desai's idea loss of identity and culture, the ideological leadership and superiority of one ideology. Desai defines loss of identity and culture as 'spontaneous' given by the great direction impact on social life by the dominant particular nation and culture. *The Inheritance Loss* is first published in 2006 by Atlantic Monthly press. Kiran Desai's work has been popular with three international awards. The plot of the novel is very simple. It deals with rise and fall of two person's stories. Novel's setting based on mostly in United States and India. Novel started with the some happily but end of the stories everyone has lost something or someone, whom they loved. The stories revolved around two major characters one is Sai and other is Biju. Kiran Desai wrote first line of the novel following way:

All day, the colors had been those of dusk, mist moving like a water creature across the great flanks of mountains possessed of ocean shadows and depths. Briefly visible above the vapor, Kanchenjunga was a far peak whittled out of ice, gathering the last of the light, a plume of snow blown high by the storms at its summit (8).

Kiran Desai had written this first line about natural beauty, it's compare with human circumstances deals with cheerful life and struggling life. Novelist tries to say's that human life is full of suffering rather than wonderful life by dominance power and people. It is the story of two major character who living in United States and mountain area in India. Story started with Sai, an Indian girl, who lived with his grandfather. Sai's grandfather Jemubhaipatelis a retired Cambridge educated judge. Sai's parents were died, so she lived with his grandfather. Sai fall in love with his tuition teacher, Gyan. Novel's second story is about Biju's life. Biju is live in United States as an illegally. He is working in kitchen as a slave for earn money. So, basically story revolved around these three major characters in this novel. The novel is about a how cultural discrimination, globalization, multiculturalism and economic inequality. It also deals with alienation and searching for identity. Loss of identity is the main theme of this novel.

Identity is clashed, because of mainly every nation's culture, religion, and civilization. Civilization is also clashed, because every nation has own history, multiple culture, language and mostly religion. Religion is the major factor affecting to discriminate every person, nation, society. And most important factor affected on people that is economic in equality. Therefore every nation has own economic growth, some nation are develop and some are developing countries in the world. So these are the some element affected on every human's individual life, liberty and property also. In this novel, Desai emphasized on the loss of identity and culture theme largely deals with all these three major character. The Judge and Sai lived in same house, but both are contradictory ideology. Physically they are close to each other, but emotionally, both opposite way. In this novel Desai explore relation between daughter and grandfather very contradictory way:

"Finally, he looked up and fixed his gaze on Sai. "Well, what is your name?" Sai. "Sai?" he said crossly, as if angered by an impudence. The dog sneezed. It had an elegant snout, a bump of nobility at the top of its head, ruffly pantaloons, elaborately fringed tail— Sai had never seen such a good-looking dog. "Your dog is like a film star," said Sai. "Maybe an Audrey Hepburn," said the judge, trying not to show how pleased he was at this remark, "but certainly not one of those lurid apparitions on the bazaar posters" (40).

So, Desai depicted in this novel that Jemubhaipatel is attracted by British people in his childhood. He is an Indian hated person and strongly believed in British principles. Judge hated everything, which belong to Indian country. He also lived in his house to care with the dog same as like British people. Present dialogue provided that Dog is more significant rather than his daughter Sai. His loved for dog opposite show his detachment to human being. The judge made his mind to indulged land of glory and hope. Jemubhai ignored his wife, father, mother and daughter also. It is clearly shows that how his closeness with British culture and people. But he very soon perceived that he could not be accepted in England. Therefore he disregarded with British people in England. How one well educated person loss their own identity and culture depicted by Kiran Desai in this novel. Finally judge realized his own fault, mistake and time, so he accepted own nation's culture and way of life. Desai clearly show in this novel that migrated people how loss their own identity and culture in a simple way.

Biju is the son of the domestic servant of judge. He is living in United States by tourist visa and work their as an illegal migrant. Cook hoped to his son earned wealth and money in America and very soon return in India. Biju also hope to create new world with his father's grace. He thought that he would be very rich and wealthy person. He also thought he bought car, built new house with his father. All his dreams came tofailed, because Biju's condition is not well settle in the United States. Biju survived in United States, because Biju and America needed each other. American government could have easy way to detected illegal migrant person like Biju.

"ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?" Biju shrieked on the New York street. "DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. DON'T WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING HERE. ARE THERE PROPER ARRANGEMENTS FOR EATING AT THE HOTEL? IS THE RESTAURANT GIVING YOU ACCOMMODATION? ARE THERE ANY OTHER PEOPLE FROM UTTAR PRADESH THERE?" "Give accommodation. Free food. EVERYTHING FINE. BUT ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?" Biju asked again. "EVERYTHING QUIET NOW." "YOUR HEALTH IS ALL RIGHT?" "YES. EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT" (238).

The dialogue provided that how care cook to his son, both are the different places, but son and father's relation is very love and wonderful. In this novel, both the character are loved much each other, but both lived in contradictory way. Economic inequality and globalization is the major factor to divided both father and son's relationship in family. We also live in age of globalization world, which is impact of western way of life. Native culture is important, but these factor loss identity and culture also. Globalization is very spread, because interaction of nation is also fast. This is the reason that communication and geographical distance to go near in very short time. Desai emphasized on the economic effect of globalization that is only talk about money, not human relation. Human relation is more important than money and wealth, but people followed only money and wealth not in human relation. So dystopian culture increase in nowadays, therefore people should know about this kind of culture that far away from dystopian culture as we could do. All people are blindly followed economic wealth, money, but they would lose their own identity and culture. All nations civilization is different, so that means every nation considered own identity and celebrating own culture. In this novel, Desai also projected this kind of situation that Biju is blindly followed only money making and wealth in other nation, but he loses his own Indian identity and culture.

Novel is written in third person narrative, and Desai uses allusion, metaphors, images, and symbols with to directly express her own ideas. Kiran Desai's ideas are clear to show in the title of the novel. *The Inheritance loss* is represented that all the characters are inheritors of loss. Jemubhai rejected his nearest person like wife and granddaughter. He blindly followed the culture of British Empire. Biju's condition in the United States is very Stuck, because he has not money and visa also. So his situation became horrible, terrible and struggling in America. Cook has recognized that Biju earn so money and wealth but is wrong. Gyan and Sai's love affair also could not flourish much, because both are belong to two opposite sociopolitical background. So both culture and nation also different each other, both bear the culture discrimination. Desai depicted in the novel that Gyan angry on Sai, although he loved sai, between both there is cultural and economic discrimination. Desai's description of human nature is rapture. There is always comic and tragic situation define in this novel. Novelist described about uses of flashback technique and present time. The Human relation and emotion are swaddle in word which creates where human relation goes nowadays. Desai uses both contradictory places between Indian and American. Location of both places are different each other,

where Himalayas has own peace and another side New York has only crowd. So this are the factor how affected on this novel that both location has their own culture and identity. Both location could not match each other, because both are very much contradictory, so it would not overlap in the present and future time also.

Multiculturalism is the vital role in this novel. Desai point out that India has different culture and America has also. So both place culture could not overlap, because there is own culture, belief, ideology. India has own ideology and freedom, and other side America has strictly followed rules, and regulation in the administrative way. Indian believed in human relation compare to American people, both has human relation each other, but there is always gap between economic equality and own culture. Therefore novel highlighted that the multiculturalism is spreading widely in the world present time. Indian and American culture is totally different from each other. India has larger culture than America, so that means multiple culture in India is reflected everywhere nowadays. Every nation has own ideology, culture and set of belief, but there is always gap between one nation's culture from another nation. So that is the reason, why every migrant persons loss their own identity and culture.

In this novel Desai explore mainly discrimination of liminality, which largely deals with Sai and Biju's character. Biju lived in poor and unaesthetic life in the richest country in the world. Sai also discriminate with own grandfather, so there is huge discrimination, because of culture and identity. Jemubhai's mind totally wrapped with British culture and principles. Desai also uses that psychological effect on every major character in this novel. Sai and her grandfather's relation is the best example to identified psychological effect. Jemubhai's ideology is blindly followed other nations culture and way of life, so his mind and emotion effected by psychological relation between British and Indian culture. The Judge's mind wrapped with the British culture and way of life style. So he has not wisdom to understand own culture and identity.

In this novel all the major character find wisdom in another place and culture. They lose their own identity and culture. They don't know own culture and belief, they blindly followed money and increase economic wealth. Globalization and multiculturalism has advantages, but other hand own nation or country loss their own identity and culture. People gaining power and wealth, because of this kind of reason that they could not understand own countries way of life, belief, culture and identity. Mathew Arnold also says in his poem '*Doverbeach*' that, people became cruel, because of industrialization, economic power and wealth. They are loss their own culture and human interaction with each other. Time and place is vital role in this novel, time makes them cruel and pessimistic. Place is also affected on human relation, because it create distance between one person to another. So two close human is far away from each other, because of this place.

The primarily need is human relation but people could not understand that human relationship is more significant rather than money and wealth. Without human relation, this world will

be became dystopian culture, so there is no humanity, no human relation, only machinery life. So it is very bad to way live the life, therefore human relationship is more important than the money and economic status in the society. Desai use natural world rather than urban life, because nature and natural beauty along with our lifestyle, so nature is significant part of human and this world also. In this novel, nature became important part, because novelist put down in her novel about Himalayas beauty, mountain and hill. Desai also depicted that how Indian people lived in own nation in Indian culture and Indian way of life. So it is largely deals with Indian tradition, culture, life style and ideology towards nation. People can do bad thing because of their situation, situation makes the people bad, cruel, emotionless person and narcissist. Economic and social power is also dangerous for destroy the human relation. Therefore novel concerned with the migration, culture, religion, economic inequality, multiculturalism and terrorist violence.

Novelist defines life's brutality and with phrases of harshness reality. She also uses humor to deals with reader's tension. This issue like race, gender, discrimination and integration is linked with the deeply in this novel. Desai highlighted the term identity including culture with Indian perspective. Sai and Biju emphasized that discrimination between Own identity and other identity very clear way in this life. So both the character represented the basic need their own identity disappeared, when both accepted other nation and culture begin in their life. Desai clearly saw how own identity loss by own people in our country. People does understand own identity and own way of life, where they go to other nation like America and other super power nation. So these are some factor affecting to lived Indian context of life that, how people bear the situation, hunger of wealth, power and money. So

there is always discrimination between the economic inequality and our own indent, it totally depended on each individual person. Money is the symbol of fullness of life and human relation is also symbol of lived their life.

### 3. Conclusion

The titled of the novel *The Inheritance Loss* is also represented the loss of our own identity and culture, which specially deals with the dominance and discrimination of socially and culturally way of life. Novelist tries to say that real nature of all humans. The first world countries, how dominated third world countries to say about in this novel. Desai's microcosm of view of life is that how this world, violence and discrimination have destroyed the remnant of human kindness. As the end of the novel all character realized their own identity and culture's significant and nation's significant also. The various characters in the novel also became good represented human traits and ordered of human life. Desai raises a multitude of crucial issues that tries to through light on the cardinal motives that govern human conscience. Desai's novels often focus on the sheer depravity staining the human relation and soul. Desai highlighted vision of human nature and it's potential for brutality generate, which great deal of negative impact on human capability with their life style also. The novel also examines the major character adopt their barbaric and domination nature. Novel tries to acknowledgement the defects of society back of cruelty, barbarity and diminution. So end of the stories all character realized that own identity and culture is the best rather than other nation, so basically, novel reflected mainly how people followed economic wealth and money and how they loss own identity and culture given by Kiran Desai's novel.

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