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“Twenty-First Century: Cultural and Economic Globalization”

Multicultural Ethos and Conflicts of Globalization: A Study of Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*

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Abstract

This paper strives to highlight Indian Diaspora literature and is especially based on Indian Diasporas writer Kiran Desai who exposes the elements like multiculturalism, globalization, the quest for identity, nostalgia, cross-culture, etc. in her masterpiece *The Inheritance of Loss*. The paper explores, migration, racism, identity, hybridity, cultural homogenization are all on the effect of globalization, the real picture of globalization. This paper also deals with Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* from multicultural perspectives as reflected in the novel. The novel generally surrounds the theme such as multiculturalism, globalization, and the quest for identity through Jemubhai and his granddaughter, Sai., Gyan and Biju, the Cook’s son. They face many difficulties such as cultural hegemony, quest of identities and linguistic competence. Thus, how Kiran Desai brings out the issues related to multiculturalism and globalization in her novel.

Keywords: multiculturalism, globalization quest for identity, hegemony, displacement, dislocation

Introduction

Kiran Desai is one of the greatest Indian female diasporic novelists in the history of Indian English literature. She is the daughter of well-known Indian novelist Anita Desai. Kiran Desai studied at Cathedral and John Cannon School. At the age of 14 years, Desai migrated to England with her mother for a year. She studied creative writing at Hollins University, Bennington College and Columbia University in the United State. Her first novel *Hullabaloo in Guava Orchard* was published in 1998, for which she won the top prize for the Betty Trask Awards in 1998 and sets in the Indian Village of Shankot (State of Punjab) and a young man follows the exploits of Sampat Chawla who tries to avoid the responsibilities of adult life. Then she published her second novel entitled *The Inheritance of loss* (2006) which won the Man Booker Prize, National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award and Vodafone Crossword Book Award. Kiran Desai focuses on all the modern issues in her novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, such as terrorism, economic, human-relationship, immigration, inequality and marginalization, migration, racism, identity, cultural homogenization are the themes that Desai tries to explore.

In the novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Desai wants to show the real picture of the cruel class system in India and out of India. She tried to partial the struggle of cross-cultural people in America. This novel sets in a small town named Kalimpong which is near Darjeeling in North-west India. The story begins with Sai who lives in the high northwest Himalayas at Kalimpong with a retired judge, dog and cook. On other hand, Biju, an Indian young man, works for Sai’s grandfather in the United States. In the novel, Gyan introduces Sai’s conflict between Indian and British culture. She wants to maintain between both cultures. Sometimes, she considers herself as a part of Indian culture and the same time is part of the British culture. Thus, she becomes a victim of the conflict of both cultures.

According to Gyan, Sai will not be accepted by traditions but sees the higher standard. They want to go there to earn a better life than in India. Like many other members of the lower class, the cook is proud of his son Biju who lives in New York. Since his son was cooking English food, he had a higher position in society. In the United States, Biju has a friend named Saeed Saeed.

The immigrant peoples follow their culture in another country which affects the culture of the majority of peoples. The impact of minor community culture on the major community makes multiculturalism. Multiculturalism affects many fields and creates various associations with politics, ideology, social science, humanities, ethnic studies, race and nation or the political economy of politics and sociology. Multiculturalism is a very complex term and structure; no proper definition can define and does not provide a systematic or scientific meaning. It is not extravagant to say that a multicultural society not so much by the emergence of political movement but by a more fundamental movement of peoples. In the word of Chris Barker:

“The idea of a multicultural society has become official policy in many Western cultures and represents a liberal democratic attempt to promote ethnic/racial equality. It is premised on the idea of displaying tolerance towards a range of cultural practices within the contexts of the nation-state. As a policy approach it has been influential in the education and cultural spheres where it has underpinned attempts to introduce people to a range of different beliefs, values, customs and cultural practices.”^[1]

In the novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Desai presents multiculturalism and its related issues such as linguistic hybridization, cross-culture, the quest for identity displacement etc. Multiculturalism is a key theme to show the realistic picture of Indian migrate peoples suffering.

The term ‘*Globalization*’ is used for describing the growing interdependence of the economy, culture and population of the world. It was brought about by cross-border trade in services and goods, technology and flows of investment, information and people. An interaction and integration process that’s associated with cultural, economical and social aspects among people, companies and governments’ world wild of different nations is called globalization. The term ‘*Globalization*’ refers us to the increased multidirectional cultural political and economic connection across the national border. Cultural Globalization defines as the transmission of our ideas values, and meaning in all around the world to extend the social relationship cultural globalization involves my factors of culture such as the formation of shared norms and knowledge. It is a phenomenon which refers to the experience of every day like speared of ideas commodities, reflects a standardization of cultural expression in all around

any culture. The cook, actually his name is reviled Panna Lal at the end of the novel, belongs to a lower class that follows Indian the world through wireless communication, electronic commerce, popular culture mass media and international travel. According to Chris Barker:

“The concept of globalization refers us to the increasing multi-directional economic, social, cultural and political connections that are forming across the world and our awareness of them. Thus globalization involves the increased compression of the world and our growing consciousness of those processes. The compression of the world can be understood in terms of the expansionism of the institutions of modernity while the reflexive intensification of consciousness of the world can be perceived beneficially in cultural terms.”^[2]

Kiran Desai shows the reality of globalization. The novel also traces the impact of the introduction of a Western element in a country that took place in India during the British colonial days and was re-occurring with India's new relationship with the state. It is Sai who is the true representative of globalization and multiculturalism. She is a West Indian, reared by English nuns and represents a kind of isolated Indian living in India. She speaks English as her first language rather than the more indigenous Indian language. Although the novel has many characters, it focuses more on one central theme rather than one central character.

The common-sense meaning of displacement is referred to as the act of moving or being put out of the native place (usual or original place of residence). The feeling of displacement is caused by the loss of cultural ties with the place which further leads to the loss of one's identity. This novel demonstrates this problem in the character of a judge who experiences displacement twice and has a great influence on his behavior both times. In the novel, Kiran Desai creates the first glimpse of dislocation through the judge’s experiences. When his parents determine to send him to England, He may be able to work for the British government in India in the British Raj period. During his stay in Cambridge, he experiences a variety of events such as diasporic self and identity. Displacement and lack of cultural understanding cause the judge to lead a very lonely life. He has no cultural connection with Britain and since they are not accepted for their otherness, their self-esteem is also lost due to their lack of self-respect. According to Sumathi *et al.*

“Kiran Desai’s *Inheritance of Loss* mainly underlines multiculturalism. Multiculturalism has been legitimate arrangement in a few western countries. Since 1970s, for reasons that differed from nation to nation, including the way that a large number of the colossal urban areas of the western world are progressively made of a mosaic of societies. Another significant topic in the novel is globalization, which is a procedure of universal mix emerging from the exchange of world perspectives, items, and different parts of culture.”

Objectives of the Study

¹ Barker, Chris. *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies*. London: Sage Publications, 2004. Print.

² *ibid*

The original contribution is to bring out the critical insight into Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*. The main objectives of the research are listed below.

- To find the dissimilarity in the depiction of the orient and occident culture in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*
- To focus on cultural exchange, cultural hegemony and diasporic experience.
- To study the diasporic writers and her works.
- To find out alienation and linguistic hybridization.
- To study tradition and modernity, the global and the local.
- To search multicultural issues in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*
- To show the real picture of Global conflicts

Limitation of the Study

The extension of my study will be confined to Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*. This paper will be analyzed and explored the condition of cultural exchange, cultural hegemony, diasporic experience the portrayal of the East and the West countries, multicultural simulacra. It will deal with the aspects of multicultural issues, conflicts of globalization and cultural exchange.

Research Methodology

This study also focuses on the complete study of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* through the primary and secondary sources, using textual, critical, evaluative, descriptive, analytic and interpretive methods. The M.L.A Handbook of Research 8th Edition will strictly be followed.

1. Data Collection

For the research study, the data is collected from the primary and secondary sources that will be analysed.

➤ Primary Sources

Primary sources have been collected from the original work written by Kiran Desai like *The Inheritance of Loss*.

➤ Secondary Sources

A secondary source is a source that provided second-hand or non-original information including reference books on Kiran Desai. The secondary sources also include the biography, critical studies of the author's works, research paper, and research dissertation, Shodhganga, personal interviews, e-resources, Wikipedia, Britannica and other websites.

2. Hypothesis

This present study will help to find out the various elements that are responsible for creating similarities and dissimilarities in the portrayal of aspects of multicultural issues, conflicts of globalization and cultural exchange cultural differences, Oriental and Occidental Controversy. The present study has something concrete that will definitely contribute to present the real picture of multicultural issues, cultural hegemony and culture hybridity in the fiction of Kiran Desai.

Significance of the Study

The finding of this study will redound to the benefit of society on the basis of real facts. Due to the lack of prior research in this study area, a seven stages research design is

proposed for this study. The researcher will try to explain all aspects of this present study. The present research will be helped to understand the condition of multicultural issues and conflicts of globalization in modern society. This research will attempt to create awareness among readers about Indian diaspora literature. It will also create reference material and provide scope for further study.

Review of Literature

Dash, in his research paper 'A Critical Study on the Themes and Techniques of Kiran Desai's Fictions', wants to explore her major themes such as alienation, cultural clashes, displacement and exile are presented in the broad perspective of globalization. The sensitive socio-political issues concerning hybridity, insurgency, immigration, intercultural communication, identity crisis, loneliness, multiculturalism, poverty, racial discrimination, social realism, and search for home also find expression within the ambit of her novels. To conclude, the researcher says that Kiran Desai's achievements which lend universal significance to the hopes and aspirations of the diasporic characters in their approach to identity and response to multiculturalism in the midst of the trials and tribulations of their diasporic environment. [3]

Asghar, in his research paper "A Diasporic Study of Identity and also explores the first and second generation's dispersed identity. His paper practices the diasporic study of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* on the basis of the model of Autar Brah as a theoretical framework. Thus, Asghar comes to conclude that *The Inheritance of Loss* has found out the range of the spirit identities of individuals living in abroad. He also finds out the difference between the old generation and the new generation as strong and weak identities. [4]

According to Pandhare, in his research paper 'Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss: A Study in Identity Crises*' identity crises is one of the most suffers in human life. Every man comes into the world to have an identity so everyone living in conflict. The inheritance of loss shows mimics struggling for lost identity. The plot moves between local to global suggesting dislocation, a displacement which eventually results in the hybridized form of identity and culture as well. In this novel, the characters feel highly the requirement of their public acceptance. [5]

In the article, 'Kiran Desai's 'the Inheritance of loss: Perfect Synchronization of Indians Inters of Cultural Values and Ethics', Srivastava wants to explore the Indian cultural value, ethics, rules, norms. Which are helpful to guide us the difference between what is wrong and what is right in the proper direction in the novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*. To

³ Dash, B. (2014). A Critical Study on the Themes and Techniques of Kiran Desai's Fictions. *IJELLH*, Vol- 2(5), P-P 269-85.

<https://ijellh.com/papers/2014/September/26-269-285-sept-2014.pdf>

⁴ Asghar, M. (2020). A DIASPORA STUDY OF KIRAN DESAI'S INHERITANCE OF LOSS. *EJELLS*, Vol- 8 (3), P-P 25-33.

<https://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Diaspora-Study-of-Kiran-Desai-Inheritance-of-Loss.pdf>

⁵ Pandhare, A. (2020). Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss: A Study in Identity Crises*. *IJELR*, Vol- 7 (3), P-P 192-95.

<http://www.ijelr.in/7.3.2020/192-195%20AVINASH%20L.%20PANDHARE.pdf>

sum up this article, Srivastava comes to conclude that Kiran Desai has proved that wherever we (Indian) go along with over culture. Our values help to overcome the status of cultural stock.^[6]

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* questions the very existence of the immigrants in the present multiculturalism and globalization. She equates the anguish of the lost identity felt by the immigrants with the lost agony of Indians who are caught in the mirage of the glamour and splendor of the British empire. In her novel, she drew on her own experience of living both in and between two cultures. Her paternal grandparents came from Gujrat and her father was educated in England. Her grandfather was a refugee from Bangladesh. Based on her experiences, the novel attempts to capture what it means to live between East and West and what it means to be an immigrant.

The Inheritance of Loss is a brilliant study of various cultures in their transitional phases. The colonial neurosis brought out many changes in cultural living. The craze for western values, manners, language and lifestyle created space on the international level. The impact of modernization, consumerism, globalization and deep-rooted reaction to native values weaken the conservative mentality of people of various societies. The transition phase has some advantages as well as some disadvantages. The present novel delineates the advantages and disadvantages in the governance of human relations in the national and international arena. *The Inheritance of Loss* deals with the dwindling cultural identity of an individual, a group or a society in the context of colonialism, neocolonialism and globalization. One of the major concerns in the novel is the interaction between colonized British and Indian societies. Indian culture again is explained in the light of neocolonial and global thinking. It is compared and contrasted with American culture. During the colonial period, British and Indian societies were living together. In the novel, British cultural diversity is explained in various contexts. The character of Jemubhai Patel reveals the collision and cooperation of colonial British culture and Indian culture. Characters like Jemubhai Patel, Gyan and Biju are Indian in origin but differ in thinking, behavior and in ways of living. British colonial society is depicted through the physical and mental journey of Jemubhai Patel. He ignores the conservative customs and conventions in his family and goes to complete his education in Britain. His social, economic and educational experiences are revealed in the novel. The novelist focused on the changed mentality and the changed attitude of Patel. The change in the behavior of Jemubhai makes him a multicultural man. Jemubhai Patel is a striking example of an uprooted person in modern Indian society. He suspends himself from Indian culture willingly but fails to be accepted by a new western society. It results in the loss of face for Jemubhai. All that he inherits is nothing previous but the loss only.

Language hybridization is a resultant process of frequent code-mixing. The structure and grammar of any language are applied to the vocabulary of another language.

⁶ Srivastava, D. S. (2017). Kiran Desai's the Inheritance of Loss: Perfect synchronization of Indianess interms of Cultural values and Ethics. *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention*, 4(8), 3721–3723. <https://doi.org/10.18535/ijsshi/v4i8.05>

Language hybridization is one of the most significant elements in multicultural communication. Kiran Desai, as a Diasporic writer, introduces language hybridization from Hindi into the English language. There are many examples such as *tindu*, *loki*, *Namaste*, *Kusum Auntie*, *aayiye*, *baethiya*, *Khayiye*, *beta* etc. Kiran Desai uses Hindi words, Phrases, sentences to see the real picture of multicultural communication. She uses Hindi phrases such as: "Hamara kya hoga, hai hai, humara kya hoga,"... "Hai, hai, what will become of us?" "Hamara kya hoga, hai, hai hamara kya hoga" (8). "Bhai, dekho, aesa hai ...", "Aree Biju... to sunao kahani", "Hota hai hota hai". In the novel *The Inheritance of Los*, Kiran Desai presents the realistic picture of expression of nostalgia and a mark of brotherhood in the foreign land. Kiran Desai has been remaining successful to present the expression of nostalgia feelings and alienation through the various Bollywood songs. Biju and his friends while working in the restaurant sing Hindi Bollywood songs like "yeh Uulki zara si deewcmi lagti hai....". "Mera joola hai japani..." and "Bombay se ciaya mera dost—Oi." It is a part of the culture of their country in a foreign land. In fact, these extracts give us a basic understanding of the middle-class culture portrayed in the novel. The Bollywood songs in the novel are sung by illegal Indian immigrants not only reflect on the Indian culture but are also an expression of nostalgia and a mark of brotherhood in an alien land. "O, yeh ladki zara si deewani lagti hai..." is sung by Biju to cheer himself up. "Mera joota hai japani..." and "Bombay se aaya mera dost—Of, are sung by Saeed Saeed from Zanzibar who becomes a friend of Biju in that lonely land.

In her novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* shows the depiction of cultural dilemmas through her character such as Biju who dreams to go west for earning money but he sacrifices his culture and social conventions. Kiran Desai explores the immigrant's pain through Birju. When Birju was in dilemmas and thought about his own culture and says: "Those who could see the difference between a holy cow and an unholy cow would win. Those who couldn't see it would lose---- One should not give up one's religion, the principles of one's parents and their parents before them. No, no matter what. You had to live according to something. You had to find your dignity".

There are many religions in the world such as Christianity, Hindu, Muslim, Guru Nanak etc. In a multicultural context, Kiran Desai shows the conflict among these religions as when Sai observes Christmas, she is targeted as:

"For what reason do you observe Christmas? You are Hindus and you don't observe Id or Guru Nanak's Birthday or even Durga Puja or Dussehra or Tibetan New Year."^[7]

Further, Kiran Desai quest for identity and wants to show the reality of immigrated people who face many targeting sentences such as:

"This is our land." "It is not your land. It is free land," they countered, putting down the sentence, flatly,

⁷ Desai, Kiran. *The Inheritance of Loss*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2006. Print.

rudely. "It is our land. It is unoccupied land". "We'll call the police". They shrugged, turned back and kept on working"^[8]

There are many conflicts between the East and West world from ancient times. To prove this conflict, Kiran Desai presents multicultural conflicts, social conflicts, linguistic conflicts, religious conflicts etc. In the novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Desai presents these conflicts through many insulting sentences to Birju as:

"These white people shit! But at least this country is better than England", "Go back to where you come from", "your father came to my country and took my bread back" and "holy cow unholy cow"^[9]

Desai's tale features the view that multiculturalism is confined to the cosmopolitan urban areas of the West, yet it couldn't answer for the current reasons for radicalism and brutality in the creating nations like India. It doesn't propose, regardless of whether monetary globalization can clear the way to success for the oppressed. Desai's primary thought is that benefits could be appropriated among countries, cooperating. In the words of Sakthimala *et al.*

"Desai's "The Inheritance of loss", a grabber of booker prize, examines how people are fleeing to other parts of the world where Indian life is westernized with a type of migrant in a globalized labour market. The novel shows remarkable difference between poor and rich in a global earth, with racism as experiences with cross ethnic diasporas in America. The research article strives to explain the out turn of identity and culture due to the rise of globalisation which had paved way for the evolution of multiculturalism. It explores the colonial control in the past colonial era based on political social and cultural aspects with consumption. The adoption of western culture and ideologies has resulted in the loss of self identity with the advancement of globalization."

Conclusion

Thus, on the basis of analysis of the text and review of literature, we come to a certain conclusion that Kiran Desai is one of the greatest Diaspora female writers in Indian English literature. Kiran Desai creates the real situation, multicultural issues and conflict of globalization in *The Inheritance of Loss*. There are many diasporic key concepts like displacement; dislocation, nostalgia, linguistic hybridization, immigration etc. are presented to explain global and multicultural issues through characters Sai and Birju. In the novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, Birju is targeted in the conflict of multiculturalism and globalization. Thus, Kiran Desai declares in her interview. she says, "The characters of my story are entirely fictional, but these journeys (of her grandparents) as well as my own provided insight into what it means to travel between East and West and it is that I wanted to capture. The fact that I live in this particular life is no accident. It was my inheritance" Kiran Desai has been remaining successful to decay multicultural Ethos and conflicts of globalization. Kiran Desai performed influence of the political, West's cultural dominance, cultural changes that appear in cultural globalization.

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