



EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN KIRAN DESAI'S 'INHERITANCE OF LOSS'

Mr. Munjaji P. Patil

(M.A. M.Ed.) English Teacher

Abstract:

Kiran Desai is one of the talented and ambitious younger Indian diasporic writers who have a significant role in portraying and reflecting the difficulties and complexities of the experiences of the immigrants in literature. Kiran Desai's most notable novel, "The Inheritance of Loss" (2006) is set in Kalimpong, which is situated at the foot of mount Kanchenjunga in the North Eastern part of post -Independence India. This novel explores immigration, relationships and identity on both the interpersonal and international scale. Spanning India, England, and the United States, the novel details the conflict between traditional Indian ways of life and the shiny opulence of Western nations. The book won several awards, including the Man Booker Prize in 2006 and the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award in 2007. Desai wrote the book in the seven years following her 1998 debut, Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard. The novel highlights some of the outstanding issues of contemporary society such as globalization, marginalization, subordination, economic inequality, exploitation, poverty, nationalism, insurgency, immigration, hybridity, racial discrimination and political violence. To sum up , the novel deals with the conflict of culture , on the global level ; and on the personal level it deals with the internal conflict if identity (the past and present). In THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS, Desai tries to capture the pain and dilemma of an immigrant.

Key words: immigration, globalization, marginalization, exploitation, insurgency.

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

"The Inheritance of Loss" is a novel written by Kiran Desai, published in 2006. The story takes place in the Himalayas, specifically in the region of Kalimpong, West Bengal, India. The novel explores the interconnected lives of several characters, delving into themes such as:

- 1. Identity:** Cultural, national, and personal identity are explored through the characters' experiences.
- 2. Globalization:** The novel critiques the impact of globalization on local communities and cultures.
- 3. Class and privilege:** The contrast between the wealthy elite and the impoverished underclass is a significant theme.
- 4. Love and loss:** Personal relationships, grief, and memory are woven throughout the narrative.

- 5. Cultural heritage:** The novel examines the tension between tradition and modernity.

The story unfolds through multiple narratives, exploring the characters' experiences and interconnectedness. Biju's journey to the US and his struggles with identity and belonging are juxtaposed with Sai's life in the Himalayas, where she navigates her own identity and relationships. Meanwhile, Gorkhaland's political activism and Lola's spiritual quest add layers to the narrative, culminating in a poignant exploration of love, loss, and inheritance. Through "The Inheritance of Loss", Kiran Desai masterfully weaves a tale that not only explores the complexities of human relationships but also delves



into the broader social and political context of globalization, identity, and cultural heritage.

Major Issues:

Many of the characters of Desai, in fact, do deal with “The Great American Dream” particularly well and prefer not to avoid challenges to the things they believe to be true. It resulted from globalization, economic disparity between nations, and consumer-driven multiculturalism. Desai’s *Inheritance of Loss* depicts a cross-section of Indian society in characters such as Jemubhai Popatlal Patel, Panna Lal, Gyan, Biju, Saeed-Saeed, Sai Mistry, Haresh-Harry and the two sisters, Lolita and Nonita, to highlight how the simultaneous experience of the colonial, the global and the local, creates “ambivalence” in the individual’s perception of his/her identity and imparts behaviour in the local institutions of Kalimpong. In the novel “*Inheritance of Loss*” Kiran Desai illuminates the pain of exile and the ambiguities of post-colonialism with a tapestry of colorful characters.

The novel highlights some of the outstanding issues of contemporary society such as globalization, marginalization, subordination, economic inequality, exploitation, poverty, nationalism, insurgency, immigration, hybridity, racial discrimination and political violence. Kiran Desai who has personally undergone experiences of multiculturalism, cultural clash, displacement and dislocation, presents situations in which characters find themselves rootless and lead a life of loneliness and solitude. In such traumatic phase, it is only their values, which they have inherited since birth, helps them to cope up. The novel deals with the losses the characters of the novel went through. They suffer from emotional and intellectual loss as the title of the novel suggests. This novel seems to be the perfect peace of artistic perfection. The novel unfolds many trends of globalization, terrorism and post

colonialism. Desai’s “*Inheritance of Loss*” not only shows how people who move out of India and migrate to countries like England and America feel rootless and alienated in a strange land but it also reveals how people in their own mother land feel isolated and suffer from loss of identity.

In her novel “*The Inheritance of Loss*” Kiran Desai tried to dive deep into the sea of human psychology and immortalise the literary work. She minutely discusses the issues without suggesting and stressing any particular issue. Though she has not given priority to any specific issue yet we find in her novels the issues of globalism and American dreams most prominently. Kiran Desai’s book, “*The Inheritance of Loss*” presents the picture of a cross-section of Indian society in characters such as Jemubhai Popatlal Patel, Panna Lal, Gyan, Biju, Saeed-Saeed, Sai Mistry, Haresh-Harry and the two sisters, Lolita and Nonita, to highlight how the simultaneous experience of the colonial, the global and the local, creates “ambivalence” in the individual’s perception of his/her identity and imparts behaviour in the local institutions of Kalimpong. The paradox of globalism is put forward in these following words by Desai: ... “Each of them (Sai, Father Booty, and Uncle Potty) separately remembered how many evenings they'd spent like this... how unimaginable it was that it would soon come to an end. Here, Sai had learned how music, alcohol, and friendship could create a grand civilization...” While analysing the thematic concerns in the novel Ragini Ramachandra observes: Made up of various strands the novel presents not merely a kaleidoscopic picture encompassing different countries, continents, climes, cultures, peoples, their struggles and their conflicts, their dreams and their frustrations but also a mature understanding of life itself at various level.

(The Journal of Indian Writings in English. P.19)



Impact of Globalization on Identity, Cultural and Human Relationships:

In Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, globalization profoundly impacts the characters' identities in several ways. The novel explores the impact of globalization through the lens of colonial history and its lingering effects. Characters like Biju, who moves between India and the U.S., experience cultural displacement and struggle with a loss of identity as they navigate between different worlds. The clash between traditional values and the pressures of global capitalism creates a sense of alienation and confusion about one's place in the world.

The story reflects how economic globalization exacerbates social inequalities. The affluent, like the judge and his niece Sai, experience a form of cultural disconnection and existential crisis as they grapple with their privileged positions within a globalized world. Meanwhile, Biju's struggles as an immigrant worker in the U.S. highlight the exploitation and marginalization faced by those on the lower end of the economic spectrum, further affecting his sense of identity and belonging. The novel also examines the effects of colonialism, which globalization perpetuates. The remnants of colonial attitudes and structures influence the characters' self-perceptions and relationships. For example, the judge's internalized colonial mindset reflects the lingering impact of British rule and its role in shaping social hierarchies and identities in post-colonial India.

The story illustrates how characters like Biju and Sai navigate cultural hybridity. Biju's experiences in the U.S. force him to assimilate into a different culture while grappling with his Indian heritage. This hybrid identity reflects the broader impact of globalization, where traditional and global influences intersect and often clash. *The Inheritance of Loss* portrays the complex ways in which globalization affects personal and cultural identities, revealing the tensions between

tradition and modernity, and the challenges of navigating a rapidly changing world.

The economic divide exacerbated by globalization creates tension between characters from different socio-economic backgrounds. For instance, the wealthy judge and his niece Sai live in relative comfort, while Biju, their servant, faces hardship and exploitation abroad. This disparity highlights the strain in their relationships, where economic inequality fosters resentment and a sense of alienation. Biju's experiences as an undocumented worker in the U.S. illustrate the isolation and loneliness that can result from globalization. His separation from his family and homeland creates emotional distance, affecting his relationships with loved ones and contributing to a sense of estrangement. The novel explores how colonial legacies impact personal relationships. The judge's lingering colonial mindset affects his interactions with those of lower social status, reinforcing hierarchical divisions and impeding genuine connections. This colonial influence underscores how historical global forces continue to shape human relationships.

The integration of global cultures into local contexts can lead to interpersonal conflicts. For example, Sai's relationship with Gyan, a local tutor, becomes strained due to political and cultural differences exacerbated by globalization. Their differing perspectives on modernity and tradition illustrate how global forces can influence and disrupt personal relationships. Globalization's impact on personal identity often leads to emotional disconnect in relationships. Characters like Sai and Biju grapple with their identities in the context of global pressures, leading to challenges in forming and maintaining meaningful connections. Their struggles reflect how the search for identity in a globalized world can impact their ability to connect with others.



The Inheritance of Loss illustrates the complex and often challenging ways in which globalization affects human relationships, revealing the intersections of economic disparity, cultural displacement, and historical legacies.

Conclusion:

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, I observe that, Kiran Desai intricately examines the impact of globalization on identity, culture, and human relationships, revealing a complex interplay between these elements. Globalization creates a tension between traditional and modern identities. Characters like Biju and Sai grapple with cultural hybridity and displacement, reflecting how global influences can both enrich and complicate personal identities. The clash between local traditions and global pressures often leads to a crisis of self, as characters struggle to reconcile their cultural heritage with new global realities. The novel highlights how globalization affects cultural practices and values. Cultural homogenization and the erosion of traditional norms are evident, as characters like the judge and Sai navigate a world where global trends often overshadow local customs. Simultaneously, there is a counter-movement where characters resist these changes, striving to preserve their cultural heritage in the face of

overwhelming global forces. Globalization intensifies economic disparities and cultural divides, impacting relationships in profound ways. The economic divide between the wealthy and the working class creates friction and alienation, while cultural displacement can lead to emotional isolation. The novel portrays how these dynamics strain relationships and contribute to a sense of fragmentation and disconnection among characters.

References:

- Desai, Kiran. *The Inheritance of Loss*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2006.
- Mishra, Pankaj. "Wounded by the West." Rev. of *The Inheritance of Loss*, by Kiran Desai. *The New York Times Book Review*. 12 Feb, 2006.
- Ramachandra, Ragini. (2008) "Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss*: Some First Impressions." *The Journal of Indian Writing in English*. Vol. 36, No.1, Jan
- Maharana, Dr. Diptiranjana. (2014) "KIRAN DESAI'S 'INHERITANCE OF LOSS': A STUDY ON GLOBALIZATION, IMMIGRATION AND POSTCOLONIALISM." *JETIR* August, Volume 8, Issue 8.

Cite This Article:

Mr. Patil M.P. (2024). *Exploring The Impact of Globalization on Identity, Culture, and Human Relationships in Kiran Desai's 'Inheritance of Loss'*. In **Electronic International Interdisciplinary Research Journal**: Vol. XIII (Number IV, pp. 7–10).