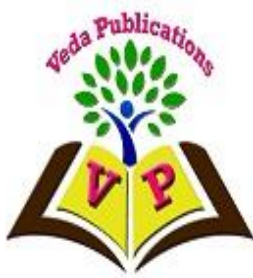




RESEARCH ARTICLE

**KIRAN DESAI'S PRESENTATION OF THE CHARACTERS FROM DIASPORIC PERSPECTIVE IN *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS***Kalpana Rani Kalapala^{1*}, Dr.E.Bhavani²^{1*}(Research Scholar, Krishna University)²(Assistant Professor, Krishna University, Machilipatnam, A.P. INDIA)Doi: <http://doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2022.9306>**ABSTRACT**

The Inheritance of Loss requires background information on two major historical movements in India. The first is British colonial rule in India and eventual Indian independence. At the end of the 16th century, the British aimed to challenge the Portuguese monopoly of trade with Asia. The British East India Company was chartered to carry on the spice trade. In the mid-18th century, the British forces, whose duty until then consisted of protecting Company property, teamed up with the commander in chief of the Bengali army, Mir Jafar, to overthrow the leader of Bengal. Jafar was then installed on the throne as a British subservient ruler. The British then realized their strength and potential for conquering smaller Indian kingdoms, and by the mid-19th century, they had gained direct or indirect control over all of present-day India. In 1857, the Indian Rebellion of 1857 took place in an attempt to resist the company's control of India. The British defeated the rebellion, and the British crown formally took over India and it came under direct British rule and the Indian Civil Service (ICS). The ICS was originally headed by British state officials, but these were gradually replaced by Indian officials in order to appease the public.

Keywords: *British subservient ruler, Indian Civil Service, British colonial rule.*



INTRODUCTION

In the ensuing decades, a reform movement slowly developed into the Indian Independence movement, which was popularized by Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress Party in the 1920s. In 1947, the British granted Indian Independence, partitioning British India into India and Pakistan. Jawaharlal Nehru of the Indian National Congress became the first Prime Minister of India after Independence.

The second political movement background of the novel is the Gorkhaland movement. After the British granted India independence in 1947, they drew India's border in Darjeeling such that many Nepali people were now in India. In the 1980s, Subhash Ghisingh began a movement calling for the creation of a state called Gorkhaland within India, separate from the existing Indian state of West Bengal. A violent movement was created in 1986 called the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), which creates much of the political conflict of Desai's novel. Various strikes and protests led to the deaths of over 1,200 people. A particularly bloody conflict on July 27, 1986, serves as one of the book's climactic scenes. Other Books Related to The Inheritance of Loss One of Desai's biggest literary predecessors and influences in this genre is V.S. Naipaul's A Bend in the River.

Early in The Inheritance of Loss, two of the characters discuss this book, which tells the story of post-colonial, traditionalist Africa encountering the modern world through an Indian merchant. In The Inheritance of Loss, the characters criticize the author for being stuck in the past and not progressing past

“colonial neurosis.” In The Inheritance of Loss, Desai attempts to push past these perceived lacks in A Bend in the River by demonstrating how colonialism has transformed into a more discrete but sometimes equally as harmful form of oppression and bias against Eastern countries through globalization

BACKGROUND OF THE NOVEL, 'THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS'

The twenty first century Indian writers in English have started to touch the context of globalization and the agony of the illegal immigrants from the third world countries carrying strong social subjects. The widening gap of the poor and the rich remains the other constant theme of these young writers, especially of the Booker winning Indian writers. The sad story of the 'shadow class' immigrants pictured in The Inheritance of Loss makes John Sutherland, the chairman of 2005 Booker committee to remark that Desai's novel has registered “the multi-cultural reverberations of the new millennium with the sensitive instrumentality of fiction” and continues to remark “it is a globalised novel for a globalised world.” The parallel story of this ambitious novel ricochets between Kalimpong town, located in the western part of Darjeeling Hills in Eastern Himalayas of India and New York in the U.S., the new haven of world-wide fortune-seekers. It extends to the lives of the poor class representing Biju, an illegal immigrant struggling in the U.S. to seek his destiny by serving in the squalid restaurant kitchens and the revival emergences of the poor class representing Gyan and of the middle class constituting the Indian counterpart by Jemubhai and his anglophile



neighbours amidst the turmoil of the Gorkha insurgency during the 80s.

The disparate characters from the East as well as the West shared the similar historical legacy, experiencing powerlessness, restlessness, pain, experience of impotence and humiliation. Supremacy of the West over the third world people, post colonial despair leading to self-assertion of ethnic groups and consequent violence, globalization, consumer-driven multiculturalism, green card mania, economic imbalance, fundamentalism, racial-discrimination, colonial hegemony and cultural subjugation are the other closely examined themes of the novel that challenges the survival skills of the characters.

True globalization was intended to be interdependent, but the sad truth is that it is degenerated for exploitation. Developed nations started to exploit the socio economic and cultural heritage of the third world nations. At the micro level the weaker section are exploited more, so they become the unconscious victim of the unknown superpowers.

Kiran realises the politics of migration moves to the new power centre of globalization. Donald Trump's recent repeatedly disparaged statement on the restriction of people from particular countries, building a wall on the border between Mexico and the United States and to deport illegal immigrants are the central themes of the political talks. As the Italian immigrants came directly from the slums of Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, now most of the illegal immigrants like Biju travel to the U.S., engaging in

some ill paid jobs using tourist visa. The illegal immigrants in the US constituted 12.2 million in 2007 and there has been a decline to around 11 million in 2014 and it's because the U.S. economy tanked.

The immigrants, legal or illegal, arrive the affluent countries to seek economic prosperity. It is to be recalled here that the First Lady of the U.S., Melania Trump, affirmed the reason for her emigration from her native Slovenia: "I wanted to follow my dream to a place where freedom and opportunity were in abundance. So of course, I came here." Officials confirmed that the illegal immigrants are more likely to come from India, China, and other parts of Asia and these days from Mexico. Even the Indian immigrants like Odessa and Baz, who settled peacefully in the U.S. running Brigitte restaurant had the common fear of the Americans that the U.S. may be inundated by the immigrants from the Asia, Africa and Latin America. Kiran substantiates that the American businessmen plan to gain large profit in the recently expanded markets in Asian region.

We need to get aggressive about Asia, the businessmen said to each other. "It's opening up, new frontier, millions of potential consumers, big buying power in the middle classes, China, India, potential for cigarettes, diapers, Kentucky Fried, life insurance, water management, cell phones—big family people, always on the phone, all those men calling their mothers, all those mothers calling all their many, many children; this country is done, Europe done, Latin America done, Africa is a basket case except for oil; Asia is the next frontier (IL 136).



Desai's presentation of the post colonial perspective of the powerful West against the underdeveloped East, different characters battling to survive in the social power structure, some for their own survival, and others to find better standards of life in abroad needs deep insight. Kiran unambiguously draws the plight of Indian diaspora in the U.S. by outlining the disgraceful betrayal of the poorest Indians in the U.S. by their western counterparts. "It was horrible what happened to Indians abroad and nobody knew but other Indians abroad. It was a dirty little rodent secret" (IL 138), yet for their survival sake every sort of bitter humiliation is swallowed.

Biju is presented as the post colonial counterpart of Jemu. Jemu drudged over his academic pursuits in England, whereas Biju battles hard to stay afloat in the U.S. But both are send by their encounter with the West. Biju belongs to the "shadow class" of illegal immigrants in New York restaurants, hopping from one ill-paid job to another and working under miserable conditions. Everyone rushes towards the West preparing to swallow up all sorts of humiliation for the sake of material gains, for rich and dignified life. Kiran harps on this ambivalent attitude through the bitter encounter of Biju with Harish-Harry "it WAS so hard and YET there were so many here. It was terribly, terribly hard. Millions risked death, were humiliated, hated, lost their families—YET there were so many here" (IL 189).

The survival strategy of Biju's illegal immigration to New York with a dream to make his life comfortable made him get disappointed that he was forced to lead a pathetic life as he has to sleep in shifts or to sleep on the floor of the hotel

where he works. But he prepared to undergo any kind of torment to make his ends meet. He was fighting to establish his own identity as he adapts to his life in New York. He worked in cold hours for about seventeen hours a day, to deliver food to the customers.

Life and Works, Biju is a representative of these teeming millions who suffer due to continuing western hegemony in the late twentieth century discourse of global politics and economics and who crowd the American cities to realize their unfulfilled dreams of better life nurtured in the lap of third world poverty and superstitious backwardness. Everybody from every corner of the world rushes to this land of wish fulfillment to share a fraction its seemingly inexhaustible material resources, as a means of securing better, more comfortable and dignified living.

To get the visa for the U.S Biju stood in the long queue with the dream to bid adieu to the doglike life of his father. The cook dreamt of sofa, TV, bank account and even imagined that his daughter in law would serve him food chick crack his toes and he would be swat with his grandchildren like flies. Biju battles hard to stay afloat in the U.S. Much to his surprise, Biju found that people from all the Third World countries had been gathering in the U.S., most of them are illegal immigrants like him, trying in vain to settle in their dreamland.

He was green-eyed on the legalized foreigners settled in the U.S, shopping at "discount stores for the miraculous, expandable third-world suitcase" in contrast to the people like him "who lived and died illegal in America and never



saw their families, not for ten years, twenty, thirty, never again." (IL 99) He was moving from one restaurant job to another and living with many others in appalling conditions. He led a fugitive life of an illegal immigrant, shifting from place to place like a beast driven by its hunter. In the U.S. he tried his hand with various roles, sometimes as a kitchen helper, sometimes dishwasher or a carrier of food. He realized and experienced the ugly and disorderly state of the West. Not knowing the troubles of Biju, the Cook writes him to "Stay there. Make money. Don't come back here." (IL 191) Biju finds the colonial experience at the Baby Bistro restaurant, "Above, the restaurant was French, but below in the kitchen it was Mexican and Indian. And, when a Paki was hired, it was Mexican, Indian, Pakistani" whereas at Le "on top, rich colonial, and down below, poor native. Colombian, Tunisian, Ecuadorian, Gambian." (IL 21)

Biju's most admirable friend, Saeed saeed, who is from Zanzibar made him survive without giving up his cultural values. His principles don't allow his survival by giving up his moral values. Saeed had resigned his work at Banana Republic as its owner was a gay and he refused to eat pig at any cost saying, "first I am Muslim, then I am Zanzibari, then I will BE American" (IL 136) that made Biju to resolve to live on line with his moral faith and dignity.

His reaction toward the West becomes a little more forceful when later he understands that he was exploited and ill-treated both by the customers as well as his masters and decided to make his livelihood from a vegetarian restaurant. Yet Biju never thought of the survival strategy of the

taxi driver who preferred to marry even a disabled or mentally retarded green card holder for his survival.

Biju's lovable friend Saeed also married an American waitress for the sake of his survival in the U.S. Though Saeed disliked his in-law's food habits and their other behaviour in general, for the sake of his living in the 'wonderful country' and as in the words of Saeed, the people of the U.S. are "the most delightful in the world" (122) The same idea was reflected by Biju's fellow dishwasher Achootan in the Brigitte restaurant, who had been in England. The English people openly shout against the immigrants and he admits that the U.S. is better than England that at least the U.S. people have some hypocrisy here, whereas in England, they shout openly

on the street "Go back to where you came from" (IL 135), for which Achootan had shouted a line repeatedly several times: "Your father came to my country and took my bread and now I have come to your country to get my bread back" (IL 135).

The London School of Economics in 2013 reveals that India is the hub for illegal U.K. migration (TOI 8 Jan. 2013). When Biju had realized his native moral values or the revival of his culture by not serving beef and finding a job at a vegetarian restaurant, his survival strategies were convinced by the logical argument of his friend, Saeed, that cows are holy in India, but the cow from which the beef was served in this hotel was not of an Indian cow; therefore it is not holy.

But in the next stage, he was caught up with his native conscience that made him to revive or at least to retain his cultural values and finally found Gandhi Café, an Indian vegetarian



establishment, as the most suitable kitchen for his living after meeting its owner Harish-Harry, who had his pen hovering over a request for a donation sent by a cow shelter outside Edison, New Jersey. He is satisfied in working with a Hindu establishment whose ambience reminded him of his own home, believing that he could preserve his traditional values and ethnicity.

On realizing the unfair world, where “one side travels to be a servant, and the other side travels to be treated like a king” (IL 269), he was prepared to say bye to the U.S. Moreover his working conditions and his powerlessness with overwhelming loneliness become the reasons to seek his root, India. While asking the Indian travel agent to book his air ticket, the travel agent Mr.Kakkar alarms and explains the difficulties of survival in India, all those relatives asking for money! Even strangers are asking for money—maybe they just try, you know, maybe you shit and dollars come out. I’m telling you, my friend, they will get you; if they won’t, the robbers will; if the robbers won’t, some disease will; if not some disease, the heat will; if not the heat, those mad Sardarjis will bring down your plane before you even arrive.” (IL 269)

Further he continued to narrate the revival process of the U.S. to be the leader of the world, so that everyone in the U.S. will be a globalised citizen as America is in the process of buying up the world and even after reaching India, he will be working for an American company there or here and convinced to think of the future of his children. But nothing has convinced Biju to continue to lead a dog life in the U.S.

The Swiss Father Booty decides to settle in the post-Independence India by establishing a dairy farm and to educate the local farmers to set dairy farm, his survival strategies have been shattered with the Gorkha insurgency, when the police had charged him to stay continuously in without renewing his passport. Gyan, the epitome of the modern youth had shown his solidarity by protesting to revive the rights of his Gorkha ethnicity.

The patriotic fervour of Gyan, the spokesman of the modern youth attempts to revive his culture by sending off the hypocritical Anglo Indian people like Father Booty. The indigenous fervour and patriotism for the survival of his people make Gyan to burst out: Who needs Swiss people here? For how many thousands of years have we produced our own milk?" "Why don't you then? Why don't you make cheese?" "We live in India, thank you very much. We don't want any cheese and the last thing we need is chocolate cigars." (IL 258)

The anti-Western Gyan felt ashamed of his tea party with Sai and her grandfather by ignoring the national spirit of his community. Then he lists out the subsequent grounds why should he not deceive Sai for the interest of the revival of his native people. She could speak only in English and pidgin Hindi; Sai couldn't eat with her hands; She never chewed a paan and had not tried most sweets in the mithaishop; She had never been to temple to worship, but only for architectural interest; She couldn't squat down on the ground; She thought that it is vulgar to put oil for hair; She used paper to clean her bottom; She felt happier with so-called



English vegetables – snap peas, French beans, spring onions etc. The judge ate even his chapatis, his puris and parathas, with knife and fork and persuaded Sai to imitate. So, finally Gyan made up his mind to deceive Sai.

These facts make him to move to an extent of passing the information about Cho Oyu, including the gun, and lack of communication facilities and no one to call for help, resulting in the robbery and humiliation of the judge Jemu. Then he joined his hands with GNLF, which promised to build hospitals and schools, providing jobs with their own people and dignity to their daughters. Biju was frustrated with not only the unfair treatment of the westerners, but also with the maltreatment of the affluent people from the Third World countries, who are settled in the U.S. His disappointment was to the core when he skidded on the rotten spinach and got his knees broken, he was refused the medical assistance from his master Harish-Harry stating the huge medical expense in New York. Further he accused Biju for his carelessness in maintaining the restaurant floor. Harish, who refused to provide medical aid to Biju, offered him Prasad from a temple. "Biju knew not to expect anything else. It was a decoy, an old Indian trick of master to servant, the benevolent patriarch garnering the loyalty of staff; offering slave wages, but now and then a box of sweets, a lavish gift..." (IL 189). And in that presentation of working class, were considered as the family members of the masters to take responsibility for their master's crimes.

CONCLUSION

The thought of green card virtually makes him to die. He decided not to return his home without green card. "This was the absurdity. How he desired the triumphant After The Green Card Return Home," and after a while he wistfully pondering over marrying some green card holder, "even a disabled or mentally distorted green card holder would be fine...The green card, green card, the machoot sala oloo kapatha char he could think of nothing else" (IL 191), sau bees green card that was not even green. It roosted heavily, clumsily, pinkishly on his brain day and night". But, Omar's ambivalent attitude on the white-skinned women for getting the green card is the global symbol of salvation. He says that the white women look good when they're young, but they fall apart fast at the age of forty "they look so ugly, hair falling out, lines everywhere, and those spots and those veins, you know what I'm talking about" (IL 101) In the post Trump U.S., Anu Peshawaria, a prominent immigration attorney based in the U.S. says, that a large number of undocumented immigrants, employers and agents who help them bend the rules too are likely to face strong legal action, after the Trump government swings into action. Some of immigrants got US citizenship illegally but when detected they can be stripped of their US citizenship and deported. The situation could even get more complicated if the Indian government refuses to take these people back due to lack of papers. Obama may go and Trump may come, yet different survival strategies are adopted by the third world immigrants as they are prepared to undergo any kind of humiliation to get into the U.S.

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