



## Globalization in 'the Inheritance of Loss'

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## ABSTRACT

*Kiran Desai, the Man Booker Prize winner of 2006 is an acclaimed writer in Indian English Literature. In her prestigious novel, 'The Inheritance of Loss', she delineates several aspects of globalization through her characterisation. The West's attempt to globalize its ideals, flow of resources, struggle for existence of people from Third World countries, the failure of economic globalization, challenges of globalized society and issues of ethnic identity are some of the aspects of globalization that the author has tried to expose. What the characters inherit through their struggle to be a part of a globalized society as the title suggests is nothing but a sense of loss. Kiran Desai's attempt to present certain impacts of globalization is successful.*

**KEYWORDS :** Globalization, Multiculturalism, Economic freedom, Immigration, Ethnic identity, Existential struggle

## Introduction

In the present century, globalization is a buzz word like communication. Globalization is the process of incorporation of worldwide ideas, technology, trade, products, information, business, various aspects of culture etc. The four aspects of globalization identified by IMF are trade and transactions, capital and investment movements, migration and movement of people and dissemination of knowledge. In Kiran Desai's 'The Inheritance of Loss' some of the aspects of globalization are clearly visible.

Kiran Desai, the Indian English writer has two novels to her credit- 'Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard' (1998) and 'The Inheritance of Loss' (2006). Desai, the winner of the prestigious Man Booker Prize of 2006 explores with insight various contemporary international issues such as multiculturalism, modernity, gender bias, impact of globalization, life of immigrants, terrorism etc. through her second novel, 'The Inheritance of Loss'.

The author delineates a westernized community in the small town of Kalimpong that has inherited a sense of loss. The entire novel is set in the background of insurgency rising in the North-Eastern part of India. The GNLF movement disrupted the normal life of the people in those areas. "Gorkhaland for Gorkhas" was the slogan of the movement. Desai exposes the immigrant experience of the Non-Nepalese in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and other neighbouring hilly areas on one side and the experiences of illegal immigrants in the USA on the other side.

Jemu Patel, the retired judge's house is besieged and his hunting rifle is plundered by some hooligans. The story unfolds as a sixteen year old girl, Sai, comes from a convent to live in Kalimpong, a Himalayan town in the Indian state of West Bengal with her grandfather Jemu. Sai falls in love with her Maths tuition master Gyan. Biju, the son of the judge's cook is in the USA. He changed his job from one Indian restaurant to another. The action of the novel revolves around life in the USA and the hilly town in India.

Sometimes in the story we feel that the West is trying to globalize its ideals. The judge's house Cho Oyu is full of foreign materials. Sai is reading National Geographic, a western magazine as the dog Mutt is snoring gently in her lap. A cook prepares "Angrezi khana" for the judge. He marveled at a white person to pick up a brown person's bag. When he came back from Cambridge with a degree, the judge's mental horizon was too narrow to accommodate the people in India, though they were his kith and kin. He ill-treated his wife. He found that his granddaughter Sai is quite acceptable as she is like him- convent going Indian girl brought up by English nuns. As a school boy, the judge had admiration for Queen Victoria's portrait in school as she was a woman of great influence. His mother packed some food for him to eat on the way to UK. He thought of his mother's love as "undignified love, Indian love, and stinking unaesthetic love" and threw the food away in the ocean.

The expansion of economic freedom, providing equal opportunities, better education, eradicating poverty etc. are the general aims of globalization. That is, globalization is characterized by the flow of resources like human resources, economy, information, technology and trade and thereby providing opportunities across borders. As a result of this, naturally and obviously cultural and political issues arise. Biju's migration to New York is a very clear example of the impact of globalization. Somehow reaching New York, he and his fellow immigrants had to live in the basement of a building. "But 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 was so many here" (189).

Biju is a typical example of the struggle of the people from Third World countries. He went abroad for better prospects, but bitter were his experiences there. He had to fight out the climatic conditions of the country.

Biju smelled the first of the snow and found that it had the same pricking, different smell that existed inside the freezer; he felt the thermocol scrunch of it underfoot. On the Hudson, the ice cracked loudly into pieces, and within the contours of this gray, broken river it seemed as if the city's inhabitants were being provided with a glimpse of something far and forlone that they might use to consider their own loneliness. (51)

When Biju hurt his knee his employer gave him two days leave but he didn't consult a doctor. He had to be sponsored in order to consult the doctor. We hear Biju retorting to Haris-Harry- "...This is how you make money, paying us nothing because you know we can't do anything, making us work day and night because we are illegal. Why don't you sponsor us our green cards?" (188).

An employment in the USA is thought of as a dream career for many Indians. The cook is a typical example of this sort. He pictures the prospect of a "legal employment in the USA". He even manipulated some fake recommendation letters for his son. When Biju was selected in the interview, the cook overjoys at the achievement and compares himself with Mrs. Sen whose daughter was also in America. We hear him proudly announcing,

My son works in New York. He is the manager of a restaurant Business... New York. Very big city. The cars and buildings are nothing like here. In that country there is enough food for

Everybody...One day soon, my son will take me. (84)

Biju buys all sorts of foreign items from a store. He even bought T-shirt with "I love NY" and "Born in the USA". Though Biju an Indian born he had a fascination for foreign things.

His father's friend advised him to go back to India. Then he realises the immigration problem that he has to encounter even to go back to his native land.

The green card the green card. Without it he could not leave.

To leave he wanted a green card. This was the absurdity.

How he desired the triumphant. After the Green Card Return

Home, thirsted for it (99).

When Biju was getting ready to go back to India, Mr. Kakkar tells him,

You know, America is in the process of buying up the world.

Go back, you'll find they own the business. One day you'll

be working for an American company there or here. Think

of your children. If you stay here, your son will earn a

hundred thousand dollars for the same company he could

be working for India but making one thousand dollars. How,

then, can you send your children to the best international

college? You are making a big mistake. Still a world, my

friend, where one side travels to be a servant, and the

other side travels to be treated like a king. You want your

son to be on this side or that side? (269)

The circumstances that led Biju to leave New York underline the failure of economic globalization. The man who had gone to expand the horizon of his economy comes back gaining nothing but losses and thus contributing his share to the losses of other characters in the novel. The man who went abroad for a remedy for the malady of poverty meets the horror of it. He realises that "his life was not amounting to anything at all" "And yet another part of him had expanded: his self consciousness, his self pity" (268).

Gyan opposes Sai's servile nature towards the west. Regarding the X'mas celebration of Sai, Gyan says, "You are just like slaves that's what you are running after the West embarrassing yourself. It's because of people like you we never get anywhere" (163).

Because of their love for Western names, Lalitha was westernised as Lola. She went to the GNLF chief but he refused to accept the name as it seems Indian or Nepalese. Lola was ever proud of Pixie alias Pi-yali Bannerji being a BBC reporter. Mrs. Sen thinks of her daughter as an asset to her country as she was employed in CNN.

As Desai herself puts it: "Profit could only be harvested in the gap between nations, working against the other". In the end, we see the cook admitting to his master that he had cheated him and was responsible for the loss of Mutt. The master beats him. Sai is disgusted of the whole chaos. Biju ransacked by the Gorkhaland activist, returns to Cho Oyu.

Desai chooses the global language to tell the aspects of globalization through the story of 'The Inheritance of Loss'. She presents before us two categories of people- illegal immigrants in the USA and a group of Indians settled down in a hill town. Characters of both these worlds are confronted with the challenges of a globalized society. Desai exposes how the ethnic identity becomes a threat on the way to globalization. She succeeds in exposing certain aspects of globalization.

## REFERENCES

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