



## Panorama of Estranged World in Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss*

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### ABSTRACT

*Kiran Desai, following the path of the veterans of post-Rushdie era, realistically portrays the poignant issues of global age in her novels. The present paper aims to explore the depiction of estranged world in her Man Booker Awarded novel, Inheritance of Loss (2006). In her novel, she deals with tussle between two different races and classes and asserts that the valley between them is unabridged in this global age also. She highlights the pangs of marginalized people and their alienation. In the present novel, Biju suffers a lot in aboard and remains estranged from the other world. Jemu Popatlal, having his higher education at Cambridge becomes an anglicised judge and is separated from his own society. Desai breaks the belief and fascination of migration to other countries and presents realistic panorama of well connected globalised world.*

**KEYWORDS :** global, estranged, immigration, panorama

Kiran Desai, who had already received wide recognition in literary circle with the publication of her maiden novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998), gained immense fame in present literary scenario with her second novel, *Inheritance of Loss* (2006), which bagged her coveted Man Booker Prize. She reminded the readers of Margaret Mitchell, the author of *Gone with the Wind* (1936) and Harriet Beecher Stowe, the writer of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) who immortalized themselves with only one novel. Desai throws light on poignant contemporary international concerns such as globalization, multiculturalism, economic and social inequality, the problem of illegal immigrants and terrorist brutality etc. in her novels and established herself as a writer of global era. Talking about her Booker winner novel, John Sutherland, chairman of the year-2006 Man Booker Judges remarks, "Desai's novel registers the multicultural reverberations of the new millennium with the sensitive instrumentalist of fiction... It is a globalised novel for globalised world." (Sutherland)

The world has become global village. The connectivity between the countries has been well and there happens huge migration from one country to another. But the migration whether it is compelled or intended, most of the times, turns into illusion. Even in this globalised era the gaps between the races and classes have not been abridged. The world of individual seems remote from the world of others. The structure of subaltern actively works and keeps the individual world estranged. These issues have been at the core of the post-colonial literature and Kiran Desai following this path acutely portrays it in her present novel. She realistically portrays the troubled souls of global village, their estrangement, their pangs etc. Her ideas are summed up in one of her interview with Tom Ashbrook : "In Desai's novel there's a trouble in a global village; unresolved rage and anger from colonial days, stunted alienated half global citizens; first world third world power imbalance; and a global economy that crushes as fast it creates." (Ashbrook)

The main plot of the novel focuses on a retired judge, Jemubhai Patel who lives with his granddaughter, Sai. Born into poverty in Gujarat, he had undergone tremendous struggling life to gain a successful Judge's rank through his journey from Piphit to Kalimpong. He left for Cambridge marrying an illiterate daughter of a prosperous businessman, Bomanbhai Patel dwelling on the other side of Piphit by the military cantonment. Bomanbhai supported Jemu to go abroad in hope of his daughter, Bella's bright future. Nimi Patel was often called as Bella at her parents' home lived in an orthodox, restricted atmosphere. When Jemu comes back from Cambridge he undergoes complete transformation. There was a great deal of transformation in the attitude, manners and behaviour of Jemubhai then and now. "He was a foreigner-a foreigner-every bit of him screamed." (IOL: P.166-167) The foreign-educated judge now found his wife to be too illiterate to match his competence. When he was obliged to travel for his official work, Nimi was left alone at home experiencing her lonely existence. The irony of her fate is that she had spent nineteen year within the confines of her father's compound and she was still unable to contemplate the idea of walking through the gate. The Judge

hired a bungalow and a companion for Nimi. The total treatment of the Judge was inhuman towards her. He said to her once: "Don't show your face outside. People might run from you screaming" (IOL:P.173) This treatment of Jemu to his wife makes her alienated and paves the of estrangement. On the other hand he wants to get rid of her. The whole circumstances turned opposite of the judge's intention when he sent a telegram her parents to announce her arrival. Nimi's Uncle mistook it as baby's arrival at home and attributed it to Jemubhai's concern for his wife's health, because it was appropriate to have a daughter returned to her parent's home for the birth of a first child. They also hoped that this baby would bring the father back to their community since his perfect manner and demeanor were very much British. But, Jemu sent a letter with money showing inability to keep Nimi. Her uncle turned her away from the door advising to seek pardon from Jemu. Jemu highlights the unsuitability of his wife and his unwillingness to accept her back. He behaved like a stranger with his own people who had sent him abroad in the hope that he would bring proud to the family. But their dreams were shattered by his snobbery. His father also arrived to him to persuade him for the sake of honour of the family. He had become entirely stranger to all of them and it seemed to be an utter blunder on the part of his father to send him abroad.

Another story about Biju and his father who serves as a cook in Jemu's house highlights hopes and illusions of servant class and their fate. In his second attempt Biju succeeds to get tourist visa to go to USA. It becomes a matter of pride for the cook and he boasts about it with everyone and everywhere. But it was the illusion of these people that they start their futile search for bread far away from their motherland in an alien country. No sooner did they land there, they face the crude and stark realities. It is annoying and despairing experience. The Cook feels on cloud nine at his son's stay in the US and banks all his hopes for future on him. However Biju faced cruelty and inhuman treatment not only from natives but also from the Indian immigrants who were well-off there. He had arrived at Nandu, the Cook's friend in New York who had been there since long time. At first, he did not answer the call by Biju. When Biju approached his doorstep, he tried to hide himself and when he thought Biju left, opened the door and found him there even two hours later. Biju served in many restaurants from one ill-paid job to another. He got his job in a Bakery, Queen of Tarts. The humiliation of continually losing a job is always present: "Nothing I can do, the manager said, pink from having to dole out humiliation to these men... Just disappear quietly is my advice..." So they disappeared." (IOL:P.16) This quote shows how the system of illegal immigrants works and how they are being treated. In Gandhi cafe, Biju experiences rudeness from Harish-Harry and Malini. Even the native Indians abroad become complete westernized and indifferent to the needs and predicaments of the new immigrants from their own country. To obtain visa for a stay and to have social security is Herculean task there. But many lived and died illegal in America and never saw their families. Being illegal immigrant, one doesn't have medical insurance and without it one has to face difficulties to fulfill the needs in medical emergency as it is too costly and inaccessible. Being too

poor, the illegal immigrants are unable to afford it. Another plot in this novel relates to Sai and her Nepali physics tutor, Gyan who are romantically involved with each other leading to their everlasting helplessly inevitable separation.

Thus Desai gives an account of Biju's story and tries to convey that the servant class, even abroad, doesn't succeed to escape from the clutches of subaltern agency and remains detached, estranged from the other world. However the anglicized manners uproot Jemu and estrange him from his own world.

## REFERENCES

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