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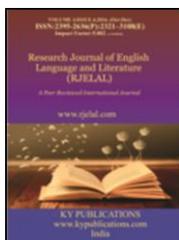
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IMAGE OF WOMAN IN KIRAN DESAI'S *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

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ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to study the image of woman in Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. Kiran Desai portrays various woman characters with different colours that paint the image of consecutive generations of women. Explanation in detail will throw sufficient light on Desai's postures regarding woman. Kiran Desai has touched three generations to portray the odyssey of women from suppression to liberation. Sai is such a character in Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, who becomes the perfect example of the New Woman. Additionally, gains her strength from her anglicized cultural improvement, obtained through the Western education in the convents, she attended. Sai's life sees some transforms coming in the contact of her lady tutor named Noni, who is also faced various difficulties because of weak economic condition and no financial support. Noni looks herself in Sai. She arranges a Nepali Gyan as a mathematics tutor to Sai. Sai falls in his love which couldn't meet her target. Kiran Desai portrays not only the inheritance of loss that is a part of the modern era but has also given a voice to various woman characters.

**Key Words:** Inheritance, Migrant, Patriarchy, Generation

Introduction

Kiran Desai is an Indian writer. In the age of fifteen years, she left India for England with her mother. Her mother's name is Anita Desai, who is also a recognized writer. After a year they moved to the America, where Desai has lived till date. She is a citizen of India and a permanent resident of the America. She is a part of the Indian diaspora. Kiran Desai's first novel is *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. In this novel, she is dexterously able to portray male psyche. She won Booker Prize for *The Inheritance of Loss*. This is her second novel. Desai is the youngest female to win the Booker prize.

The story of the novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* opens up with the residents of a town in the north-eastern Himalayas, specifically, a disillusioned old judge, his granddaughter Sai, his cook and their prosperous assortment of relatives, acquaintances

and friends. Running parallel with the story set in India we are also able to follow the vicissitudes of Biju, the son of cook. He is struggling to realize the American dream as a migrant in New York. *The Inheritance of Loss* has been extremely highly praised as a representative book. The novel focuses confusion, hopelessness, ethno-racial and chronological relationships between people from dissimilar backgrounds and cultures. Kiran Desai is intensely interested in India- the India of 1980s which sincerely explores the varied picture. Desai examines the whole thing from beginning to end the 'lens of being Indian,' without that point of view she acknowledged that she cannot write. The novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* is a novel of merciless bitterness and hopelessness. The novel presents its characters as eventually weak human beings struggling in look for of their individuality. It shows the feeling of

being trapped between two continents that infuses *The Inheritance of Loss* — a story replete with unhappiness over globalization and with happiness at the existing intimacies of Indian life. The novel is a unique study of Indian culture—the culture in its transitional phase. Changes are brought out by colonial neurosis, craze for the Western values, etiquettes, glamorous life style, language and effect of transformation, globalization, consumerism and subconscious response to native values which fail to maintain life. Characters feel bounded, inferior and beaten by their Indian tradition or heritage tackled with colonialism; as a result they develop grotesque complexes which mar their mutuality and give-and-take relationship.

In her novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Desai gives vibrant metaphors of multicultural societies from the whole world. The themes of wistfulness, rootlessness, patriarchy, domination have been explored through the lens of multiculturalism and migration. Particularly, the paper investigates that why some women are differentiated against and how literature explores this inequity. The paper highlights the tense relationship. This novel explores the ambivalence that rules the national conversation about globalized females' character. The various characters in the novel are caught by the ambivalence that surrounds global and local because the promise of opportunity is always conditioned by issues of class and society.

The main characters of the novel are the retired judge, his grand-daughter Sai, their cook and Biju. There are unimportant characters that too help in the development of different themes through their different tales. The characters stand against their individual areas with bigger issues of political confusion, racialism, migrant experiences, and regionalism. Kiran Desai focuses all these experiences of the characters in the novel. They are in their personal voyages. The individuality of each character is displayed in the novel. Approximately all the characters have encounters with the West.

The judge Jemubhai Patel goes to Cambridge in 1939. He is from a remote area namely Piphit where the benches on the railway platform are tagged "Europeans only" and "Indians only". His father says to him to go England because he thinks

his son going abroad takes them up the social hierarchy. Paradoxically the Judge's father earns his livelihood by obtaining false witnesses in courts. Jemubhai goes England one month after his marriage and he has not even examined his wife's face. He planks the ship at Bombay. The writer remarks,

"Never again would he know love for a human being that wasn't adulterated by another, contradictory emotion." (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 37)

Kiran Desai portrays various woman characters with different colours that paint the image of consecutive generations of women. Explanation in detail will throw sufficient light on Desai's postures regarding woman. The first generation belongs to Nimi, Sai's grandmother, second generation of women include Nona, Loli, Mrs Sen and Sai's mother. And, Sai comprises the third generation of women in the novel. Kiran Desai in the novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* has illustrated on the whole two categories of women; first one denotes the rural, illiterate class and second one educated and urban ladies. Nimi represents first category and Noni and Lola second category, first is shown as dominated by the patriarchal system while second reveals life of meaning and freedom. Nimi is sufferer of patriarchal system. She has lost her self, even her previous name Bela is changed to reject the fragrance of backwardness. She is rechristened Nimi by the family of her husband. Nimi was the name of a rich man's daughter who supplies the whole thing to army. She is not welcomed in her laws' home and Jemubhai leaves her when she was not familiar with them appropriately. She is showed as a traditional wife for whom husband is the whole thing. With him his wife's life begins and ends also. But husband doesn't feel any hitch to torture his wife under various illusions. Kiran Desai has touched three generations to portray the odyssey of women from suppression to liberation. Very expertly she has depicted that seeking promising career people floats to America, Europe, England and London etc. but under the multiculturalism they begin to loss their own culture. The best instance of such character is Jemubhai, who suffers lots in England. He is disgraced and subjugated there but he always hides

his humiliation behind a frontage of keeping up standards. Whereas truth shows that he marries Nimi only for monetary support to go out of the country. So their marriage was negotiated to gain a luxurious dowry:

The dowry included cash, gold, emeralds from Venezuela, rubies from Burma, uncut kundan diamond, a watch on a watch chain, lengths of woollen cloth for her new husband to make into suits in which to travel to England, and in crisp envelop, a ticket for passage on Strathnaver from Bombay to liverpool. (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 91)

Sai is such a character in Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, who becomes the perfect example of the New Woman. Additionally, gains her strength from her anglicized cultural improvement, obtained through the Western education in the convents, she attended. She is extremely engrossed in her thoughts of aloneness and exile and being an orphan. She looks for relief in nature and books. This feeling of a segregation and lineation is compounded by Sai's recognition with Kanchenjunga:

"A far peak whittled out of ice,  
gathering the last of the light,  
a plume of snow blown high  
by the storms at its summits."  
(*The Inheritance of Loss*, 117)

Sai turns miserable at the dilemma of everlasting aloneness and wants safe haven in the thoughts of love and her sense of crisis is an actuality. Sai Mistry, being a product of the postcolonial condition, finds the bits and pieces of the colonial past scattered all over her life. Born of the romance between her Hindu mother and Zoroastrian father, who had died in Moscow, she was entrusted to the care of a convent. She became a westernized Indian brought up by English nuns, a separated Indian living in India.

Sai's life sees some transforms coming in the contact of her lady tutor named Noni, who is also faced various difficulties because of weak economic condition and no financial support. She lives with her sister Lalita. She motivates Sai to meet her target preferred in life having no letting any

chance to ruin her life. She encourages her with her following words:

If you get a chance in life,  
take it. Look at me, I should  
have thought about the future  
when I was young. Instead,  
only when it was too late did  
I realize what I should have  
done long ago.

(*The Inheritance of Loss*, 69)

Noni looks herself in Sai. So feels sorry for her and have worry about her because she has still time to build her career bright. Sai herself couldn't help to be affected by her bold nature. She arranges a Nepali Gyan as a mathematics tutor to Sai. Sai falls in his love which couldn't meet her target. In the companionship of her math tutor Gyan, who is educated but couldn't find job. She wants her success in the love. But she gets him odd on many places and many times. She is rather intelligent than Gyan. He finds her attractive in the starting of their love affairs steadily couldn't see his match in her. As she has western manners and westernized style of living she wouldn't come up with life. He takes his steps back in love with her.

"Sai was not miraculous; she  
was an uninspiring person, a  
reflection of all the contradictions  
around her, a mirror  
that showed him himself far  
too clearly for comfort"

(*The Inheritance of Loss*, 262)

On other side Sai knows all very well about the reaction of Gyan. He never tries to investigate deep in Sai's heart and losses her with no tenderness. Gyan thinks that Sai could speak no language but English and pidgin Hindi, she who could not communicate with anyone outside her small social stratum.

Thus, it can be concluded that the present research paper has a reasonable endeavour to display Desai's women image search for individuality trembling the conventional shackles which women are tied with. Kiran Desai has created the woman characters with qualities of existentialism like estrangement, expedition and divergence. The life of few woman characters there is detachment,

segregation and aloneness. But other characters are displayed with sufficient potential and ability to carve new individuality on their own method. People worship goddess who is woman but they treat their wives not as human with blood and flesh. Kiran Desai portrays not only the inheritance of loss that is a part of the modern era but has also given a voice to various woman characters: some customary, timorous and obedient, some hopeless and misplaced, some confident, convinced and self dependent. This paper explores that Desai has represented various images of woman through various woman.

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