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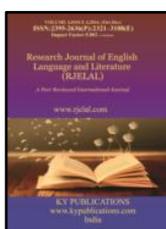
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FEMININE QUEST IN KIRAN DESAI'S -THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS

PRIYANKA BHADORIA

M.A. Research Scholar, Vijaya Raje Govt. Girls P.G.College, Morar, Gwalior, (M.P)



ABSTRACT

The novel *The inheritance of loss* (2006) is about poverty and characters that repeat across generations that seeks the study of the lives of hypocrisy through the character of Gyan so called Mathematics tutor. A revolution that includes women and men who wish the world to be equal without any boundations. These boundations are better known as discrimination and biases against gender, sensual orientation, age, marital status and economic status. Everyone views the world with his or her own sense of gender and equality. Feminists view the world as being unequal. They wish to see the gender gap and the idea that men are superior to women decreased or even abolished.

Keywords: women writers, gender inequality, feminism, hypocrisy, culture, religion.

Everything about it is the fact that although we live in this ever changing world for many people the governing response is this fear of change based on a deep desire for safety.' In the words of Roxana Robinson, 'A Whirlwind of a novel, rich and sad and funny. Kiran Desai moves between New York and the northeast corner of India, between the sense of lose and the sense of possession, between the big notion of colonialism and the small notion of intimacy'.Desai's enchanting -often hilarious-descriptions are pleaser to read.The inheritance of loss is set in the Himalayas, 'where India blurred into Bhutan and Sikkim....it had always been a chaotic map.'A young Indian girl,Sai,lives with her grandfather, a superannuated judge, in a soggy and putrefying house. The judge first appointed Nonita or Noni as a tutor to teach Sai- Science to Shakespeare. It was only when Noni's abilities in Maths and Science began to weaken when Sai was sixteen that the judge was forced to letting Gyan, twenty years old pal to take over these subjects. It was feb.1986, Sai was seventeen and her romance with Gyan, the maths tutor was not even a year old:

Could fulfillment ever as deeply as loss?
Romantically she decided love must surely
reside in the
Gap between desire and fulfillment,in the
lack,not the Contentment. Love was the
ache,the anticipation,the
Retreat, everything around it but the
emotion itself.(Desai: 2-3)

Sai has ongoing relationship with her Nepalese maths tutor Gyan. But unknown to her, Gyan has become seduced by a group of Nepalese insurgents,some of whom are, as the book opens,trooping to Sai's house to steal food ,pond's cold cream,grand Marnier,and her grandfather's old rifles.In the story,Kiran Desai exemplifies the reality of female subjugation through the characters of Bela Patel, Judge Jemubhai Patel's miserable wife.In the beginning,the judge is fascinated with his young under aged wife.Bela is only fourteen when she is married off to Jemubhai,and so terrified that she begs to be spared the wedding night. Through Bela, Desai highlights the plight of young Indian girls who are expected to comply with the long held tradition of early marriage.

Child marriage is big business in India, with the bride's family responsible for the dowries the bride must bring to her groom's family, sadly, the size of some dowries can financially cripple an already improvised family. In Nimi's case, her dowry included 'case, gold, emeralds from Venezuela, rubies from Burma, diamonds, a watch, chain, length of woolen cloth ... On the day the couple marry, Bella's name is different by the groom's family, and she is renamed Nimi. Here, Desai the suppression of a woman's life – long, personal identity, this practice also foreshadows Nimi's own marginalisation in her marriage. Even if she suffers she is not weaker as Bhagbat Nayak puts it,

.....in the male dominated society where laws for women are made by men in its social matrix, a husband stands as a sheltering tree under which a woman proves her strength through her suffering. (16)

In due time, Jemubhai leaves for England, where he will train to become an ICS officer, he leaves his lonely, young wife behind and conveniently forgets about her existence. When he returns to India, he is feted with honour's by his village. After all, he is the first son in his community who has managed to win such an honour. Jemubhai keeps the English ways he has learned in England and proceeds to terrorize his return. He ever takes to powdering his face in order to appear lighter – skinned.

Nimi's, fascinated by her husband's treasured powder puff, appropriates the pink and white puff for her own use. When Jemubhai discovers this, he becomes infuriated. Already embarrassed by his family's mimicry of his wife in their bedroom. Far from disapproving of Jemubhai's behaviour, his relatives proceed to lock the couple in. The goal is for the husband to tame his spirited wife. Jemubhai violently rapes his wife and spends all his frustration on her, glad he could disguise his in expertness, his crudity, with hatred and fury... He would teach her the same lessons of loneliness and shame he had learned himself.'

As time continues, Jemubhai's treatment of his wife deteriorates. He deprives her of food if she cannot name any particular food item in English. When he goes on tours, he leaves Nimi behind. With

every cruel retort, hereduces the once beautiful young woman to a pitiful caricature of herself, her toiletry and beauty items are summarily discarded, and she is ordered to take off her traditional Indian jewellery because they don't confirm to her husband's new, English tastes. As a result of his physical and emotional abuse, Nimi withdraws into herself:

She had fallen out of life altogether. Weeks went by, and She spoke to nobody, the servants thumped their own leftovers on the table for her to eat, stole the supplies without fear, allowed the house to grow filthy without guilt until the day before Jemubhai's arrival when suddenly it was brought to lustre again. (Desai: 179)

Due to the stress, Nimi develops pustules on her face, which prompts Jemubhai to further denigrate her waning beauty. Nimi comes to realise the bleakness of her existence.

The quieter she was, the louder he shouted, and if she protested, it was worse. She soon realised that whatever she did or didn't do, the outcome was much the same. (Desai: 312)

Later, the text strongly suggests that the judge paid bribes to have Nimi's massacre look like an accident. When the news comes that a 'Woman had caught fire over a stove, the judge 'chose to believe it was an accident. After all, ashes have no weight, they tell no secrets, they rise too lightly for guilt.....'

Desai's feminist perception also highlighted alternatives to the kind of fate Nimitolerates. In the story, Kiran Desai represent the image of suffering and struggling women engrossed with her inner world, her moping frustration and the Strom of conflict within. Kiran Desai presents in this fiction Sai's strives to create a life of her own, far removed from the colonial clasp with which the judge and the two Afghan princesses hold on to the Hangover of the past. Through these characters Kiran like Anita Desai, makes a plea for a better way of life of women. The result of the inculcation of English leaves Sai disaffected in his own country. She seeks to escape her loneliness being engaged to her tutor

Gyan. But after a brief interlude as alien, belonging to different cultures, and different life patterns. The sight of chickens being hurt and raped by the rooster refers to the colonial situation where the rooster represents the English and the chicken the Indians,:

The birds had never revealed themselves to her so clearly
a grotesque bunch, rape and violence being enacted, hens
being hammered and pecked as they screamed and flapped
attempting to escape from the raped rooster.(Desai:256)

The scene illustrates the helplessness and vulnerability of the Indians in a colonial situation. Although Sai's sensuality trap Gyan, who enjoys prohibited pleasure, sexual dominance of Sai compels Gyan to feel as if 'she had chased and trapped him, tail between his legs, into a cage' (Desai: 249) When Sai seeks out Gyan and enters the prohibited domain of "other" her face instinctively mirrors her distaste and Gyan is no longer her beloved "momo" but a "dirty hypocrite". The act of betrayal by Gyan stems from the fact that Sai is one of them and that she cannot speak any other languages than English and Hindi. Sai and two Afghan princesses undergo what Homi Bhabha refers to as 'unhomeliness'.

Sai is not the timid, easily subjugated woman, she is superior to Gyan as she defies the norms of a docile of a Indian woman and make Gyan feel inferior. Gyan ashamed of surrendering to "the feminine pish, pash, mash, sickly, sticky baby sweetness..." (Desai,250). His refuge from his overwhelming suffocating world is to join in the Gorkha movement, to stand tall and to assert his masculinity. Sai, with her free-self, expression and unrestrained enjoyment, is an enticement an unattainable and mysterious express, a forbidden fruit to be enjoyed. Sai defies God who has abandoned her and decides to create her own world of happiness and love within it by leaving everything as expressed by Tyson

The feeling of being caught between cultures, of belonging to neither rather than to both, of finding oneself arrested in to psychological disorder but from the trauma of the culture displacement, within which one lives. (Tyson: 421)

By determining to her own mistress, free to adopt and regulate her own life. She characterises the new woman, but Kiran Desai also projects the traditional extensive suffering of Indian women who seeks to conform to the norms as she had limited alternative options, she must choose her life for herself. Towards the end of novel, we find Sai deciding to do just this, as she begins to envision the possibilities the world can offer her. As evidence in the novel, Desai's feminist voice rings clearly, and she speaks for those who cannot speak for themselves.

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