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Research Article

## Kiran Desai's the Inheritance of Loss: Perfect synchronization of Indianess interms of Cultural values and Ethics.

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**Abstract:** Man is a social creature and he is bounded with several rules and norms which guide his life in correct and proper direction. These rules one inherits from the society, family and ones cultural background and these values supports man lifelong like the backbone supports body. The present paper aims at highlighting that how much rich and strong our Indian values are and how they help people at various stages of their life to cope up from their state of identity crisis.

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**Keywords:** Indian values, culture, Ethics, Identity crisis.

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### INTRODUCTION

Kiran Desai was born in 1971 and she grew up in India, England and United States. Her first novel *Hullabaloo in Guava Orchard* was published in 1988. Then she took six years of time to present her second write up entitled *The Inheritance of Loss*, which won Man Booker prize and National Book Critics Circle award. Published to extraordinary acclaim, *The Inheritance of Loss* heralds Kiran Desai as one of our most insightful novelists. She illuminates the pain of exile and the ambiguities of post-colonialism with a tapestry of colorful characters. Overall, *The Inheritance of Loss* is a literary masterpiece, having a perfect blend of Indian Culture and values.

### MAIN STUDY

*The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) is set in Kalimpong which is situated at the foot of mount Kanchenjunga in the North Eastern part of post -Independence India. Though the novel is set in India mainly against the historical backdrop of the Nepali insurgency, it deals with the events that take place in India, England and New York. The novel highlights some of the outstanding issues of contemporary society such as globalization, marginalization, subordination, economic inequality, exploitation, poverty, nationalism, insurgency, immigration, hybridity, racial discrimination and political violence. Kiran Desai who has personally undergone experiences of multiculturalism, cultural clash, displacement and dislocation, presents situations in which characters find themselves rootless and lead a life of loneliness and solitude. In such traumatic phase, it is only their values, which they have inherited since birth, helps them to cope up.

The novel not only shows how people who move out of India and migrate to countries like England and America feel rootless and alienated in a strange land but it also reveals how people in their own mother land feel isolated and suffer from loss of identity. The novelist portrays various losses inherited by almost all the principal characters and their search for

values, in the novel. While analysing the thematic concerns in the novel Ragini Ramachandra observes:

Made up of various strands the novel presents not merely a kaleidoscopic picture encompassing different countries , continents, climes, cultures, peoples, their struggles and their conflicts, their dreams and their frustrations but also a mature understanding of life itself at various level.

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Jemubhai Patel, who lives with his granddaughter, Sai is the central character of the novel. Patel is a retired judge from the prestigious Indian Civil Service, the British Empire's old steel frame: a few hundred white civil servants, who had administered the subcontinent with the help of a handful of Indians, recruited starting in 1879. Patel relishes his glory days and is embittered by a painful past and of being an Indian himself. Patel has lived a wretched family life filled with broken relationships - inflicting cruelty to his wife, indirectly causing her death, and abandoning his daughter in a convent boarding school and then cutting her off when she marries a Parsi. He has likewise estranged himself from his parents, extended family and all the Patels when they gladly sent him off to Cambridge University, pinning their hopes on him for a better future.

In England, he realized how inferior he and his compatriots were to the whites, and wanted desperately to be identified as one. He would put powder on his too brown skin to somehow attain a fairer complexion. As his Indian classmates celebrated their cultural roots, and fought for independence, Patel remained in awe of the English and abandoned his inferior race. There was no one to speak nor any way for expressing desires. He was not able to connect his Indian values with those of Americans. This state of him is described in the following lines:

For entire days nobody spoke to him at all, his throat jammed with words unuttered, his heart and mind turned into blunt

aching things, and elderly ladies, even the hapless – blue-haired, spotted, faces like collapsing pumpkins – moved over when he sat next to them in the bus, so he knew that whatever they had, they were secure in their conviction that it wasn't even remotely as bad as what he had. The young and beautiful were no kinder; girls held their noses and giggled, "Phew, he stinks of curry!" ...Eventually he felt barely human at all,"

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Young Sai, who became orphan when her parents were killed in an accident in the Soviet Union, came to live with her grandfather when she was nine. His grandfather never knew she existed, as he banished his mother from his home when she married a man he did not approve of. Sai is very westernized and her grandfather tolerates it. She speaks broken Hindi, as she has been exposed to a fabricated English culture, brainwashed by the people around her that it is a far better one than the Indian roots she has sprung forth from. Here we find a loss of Indian values and ethics in order to assimilate with west.

Sai is an avid reader. She immerses herself in literature that exposes her to many worlds she has only journeyed only in her rich imagination. Desai says of her,

She was inside the narrative and the narrative inside her, the pages going by so fast, her heart in her chest, she couldn't stop.

*The Inheritance of Loss*, 156

Sai falls in love with her Nepalese Math and Science tutor, Gyan, a college student who was mutually attracted to her. Globalization, fundamentalism and sectarian and terrorist violence unravel Sai's passion for Gyan. Her adolescent passion is intertwined with a sense of danger and tinged with both wonder and darkness. Sai and Gyan's love affair becomes reduced to recriminations, highlighted by Gyan's spiel,

What's fair? Do you have any idea of the world? Do you bother to look? Do you have any understanding of how justice operates or, rather, does NOT operate?

*The Inheritance of Loss* (138)

Such verbalization from the youth wakes one up to realize that the world is not to be seen with rose-colored lenses. Sai learns that class envy and jealousy always overpower love. It is a totally human reaction and finally admits he fact that it is ones inherited values that helps at last to sustain ones identity.

Biju, Sai's friend and their cook's son is another important character in the novel. Biju, on the persistent provoking of his father, illegally entered the United States and does menial jobs in New York restaurants. Biju lives like a fugitive, fearing the INS to discover and deport him back to India. The book illustrates the sorry state of foreign immigrants who had flocked to the land of milk and honey seeking better lives than what they had in their own homelands. They accept the sufferings and abuse of their white superiors than facing the

shame of going back home. All they need is to secure the elusive green card to ensure their prolonged stay in America.

One can just imagine the stressed lives of these foreigners, exiled from their own countries and treated as low-lives. But still they desperately hold on to their idealistic perception of America, however stripped of their dignity and pride, and back at home, they would have been treated more humanely, despite their poverty and sense of hopelessness. Instead of conquering another world outside the sphere of the familiarity, they are enslaved by the whims and discriminatory treatment of the natives. This book eventually gives an unflattering view of the First World in the eyes of the inhabitants of the Third World.

Biju encounters other Indians and gets surprised at how they totally adapt to the American culture. He is shocked to see Hindu Indians eating beef.

"Do you cook with beef?" he asked a prospective employer.

"We have a Philly steak sandwich."

"Sorry. I can't work here."

"They worship the cow," he heard the owner of the establishment tell someone in the kitchen, and he felt tribal and astonishing.

He took on a sneering look. But they could afford not to notice.

*The Inheritance of Loss*.210

His Indian values cannot allow him to do so. Biju also returns back home when knows that his father needs him. While returning back he is throughout in a tussle and was not able to decide that should he come back to India or stays back in America. Here again we find the victory of Indian values were people run to accompany their loved ones when they are in need. He says to himself:

If he continued his life in New York, he might never see his *pitaji* again. It happened all the time; ten years passed, fifteen, the telegram arrived, or the phone call, the parent was gone and the child was too late. Or they returned and found they'd missed the entire last quarter of a lifetime, their parents like photo negatives. And there were worse tragedies. After the initial excitement was over, it often became obvious that the love was gone; for affection was only a habit after all, and people, they forgot, or they became accustomed to its absence. They returned and found just the facade; it had been eaten from inside, like Cho Oyu being gouged by termites from within.

*The Inheritance of Loss* (255).

Biju undergoes an illuminating transformation. His emotional connection to his father and the significant people in his life inspire him to appreciate his roots and enliven his loyalty to India. He has suffered enough in a foreign land, enslaved by whites, and worse, compatriots, who treat him so very badly. He can no more bear the torture over his soul and values. His

spirit and pride beaten up, he ironically comes home as a whole person. This transformation is described as:

He had shed the unbearable arrogance and shame of the immigrant. . . For the first time in God knows how long, his vision unblurred and he found he could see clearly.

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He finally realizes that he can choose the kind of inheritance he can get in being close to his roots, literally and figuratively.

To conclude, we finally derive to the fact that throughout in the novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, victory of Indian culture and values is celebrated. The novelist had proved that wherever one goes, ones culture always follows and it is ones strong values only that finally help to overcome the status of cultural shock.

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