



Research Paper

The Inheritance Of Loss: A Feministic Postcolonial Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, written by Kiran Desai provides true glimpses into power, poverty, colonialism, globalization, identity clash and crisis through the portrayal of several characters Jemubhai, Biju, Sai and others. The present paper attempts to examine the themes about characters drawn through personal touch and international outlook, especially Sai Mistry at the central spot with a feministic postcolonial perspective. It is a scholarly attempt to look into one of the major characters Sai with double perspectives - Feminist and Postcolonial. Sai projects a true feminist figure of identity clash and crisis. Thus, she has been explored through two lenses and as a result, it has been tried to establish that she is culture beyond and within the portrayal of the novelist who implicates something more under the guise of Sai. This paper illustrates the femininity in Sai from the post-colonial perspective.

KEYWORDS: Identity clash, Identity crisis, Colonialism, Feminist, Postcolonial, Feminism,

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Kiran Desai has portrayed a vivid picture of several abstract concepts in concrete forms by drawing various characters in her scholarly style. She has very objectively painted the characters but her subjective outlook is not missed at all. As human beings under cultural constraints live and enjoy their life and survive under several jerks, the characters drawn here are no exceptions. These characters are more or less life-like projections who are projected under several attitudes and observed from feminist and postcolonial perspectives, characters truly are apparent under these lenses if not realistic at all.

The *Inheritance of Loss* is the second novel penned by Kiran Desai. The novel portrays several characters along with various themes. Not a single character has lesser value and so, they play vital roles. It goes through incidents on local, national and international levels. The characters say much more than the roles played by them. Different values are attached to different characters.

The novel centres around several characters such as the judge, Sai, Biju and several others. All characters tell different stories and their stories represent different themes appealing to readers irrespective of their locality. Their attitudes determine several values available here and there and make one ponder from several angles and the different angles used to look into characters represent much more utterances that look blank in the story when penned by the novelist. In fact, under the guise of these characters, she represents different values and the introspection into such characters from different angles establishes various themes that need to be mentioned here.

Her present novel has been studied from several angles and tried to establish profound findings. The present paper is a fruitful attempt to study the characters, especially Sai and incidents encompassing the characters from two lenses - feminism and postcolonialism. Several scholars have tried to establish their findings in these two fields and without going through their profound results it is impossible to draw any conclusion concerning the characters, especially Sai and the incidents focusing on her and other characters encompassing her at the centre.

Through several characters, the novelist has better tried to highlight different issues prevalent here and there in different societies that need to be mentioned. The attitudes and actions of the characters also reveal much. The present paper has taken a serious attempt to look into the characters keeping Sai at the centre using feminist and postcolonial approaches.

An analysis of the character, Sai highlights lots of issues if viewed critically. The judge belongs to a family of the peasant caste. His father does a lot and saves some money to send him to the Mission school where he studies hard and becomes a topper in the class. Later he attends Cambridge and enrolls on the Indian Civil Service. A look into all these incidents in the judge's life generates some major issues concerning feminism and postcolonialism. The judge himself does not belong to a top-class family. He does a lot and actually with the proper support of his father he goes farther.

His admittance into the Mission school depends upon his father's proper care. Until and unless his father supports him, he cannot do better in his life. Here a feminist note is observed. As it is commonly observed in the patriarchal society that a woman is nothing in absence of a man and dare to say that in some circumstances women too assert it. But anyway here the judge is a figure that is nothing without his father's support. Also, he tries a lot to justify himself. Next, he belongs to a peasant family and when he is admitted into Cambridge, he is treated as an outcast and a second-class citizen. He is reserved enough there. He does not speak too much there. His silence tells a lot. He feels humiliated because of his colour of skin and his accent. Such a feeling is nothing more than a proper clutch of post-colonial context. One is dominated not because he should be dominated but because such domination makes one civilized and cultured. Such a feeling is evoked into the psyche of the judge and as a result, he suffers from the feeling of inferiority complex to establish such a feeling is the triumph of the colonial context and post-colonialism interrogates such a question. To make one free from such a feeling and make one feel self-confident are the remedies. Under post-colonialism as such occurs. The judge is not confident enough in the campus of Cambridge as he is made so. He involves himself in studying. His feeling of isolation, detachment and self-involvement mirrors colonial contexts and the judge later succeeds not only in self-improvement but also in creating the same ambience in others' lives. The judge brings a fair improvement within himself and thus, tries to shackle such colonial barriers by making himself upper-classed and to a great extent he does. But in return, he follows the same tradition as others. There he was made silent but here he makes others do the same as he did there. He inflicts pain and sorrow on others which he was a victim of himself in the past. He follows the same line in his life that makes him bored once. His attitude toward his cook, his wife and Sai justifies his intent. His attitude towards his granddaughter Sai has been examined from a viewpoint of feminism and post-colonialism. Sai is growing up at St. Augustine's convent with English customs which please the judge. The judge becomes very pleased at Sai's living in English customs. The judge and Sai follow the same cultures and so, the judge is much pleased. The colonial context is touched. At Cambridge, the judge himself feels humiliated in English customs and culture. He does not feel comfortable with English ways of living but in the case of Sai, he feels comfortable with western ways of living. The postcolonial approach interrogates - the way the judge once felt humiliated is enjoyed by him with Sai. The judge once was the victim of the colonial context and later he enjoys that very custom with others. The way that made him irritated, troubled and self-centred makes him compel to live the same life with others. The colonial compulsion has been erased but in reality, it has been manipulated in such a way that it has changed its form only. It makes its victim its master. The judge was harassed by his living manner at Cambridge to such a great extent that he feels humiliated by his skin colour and his accent. He tries to forget such oppression and gets rid of such a circumstance first by making himself highly engaged in studying and later making himself adapted to such a class and thus he justifies himself professionally and personally. Later, he searches for a victim that lives the same life that he lived at Cambridge. He behaves with his cook in the same way. Here the cook takes the form of the judge at Cambridge. Once the police accuse the cook of having a hand in the robbery at the judge's house, the police tear apart his meagre hut. The treatment of the cook by the police is proof of the colonial context. It should be mentioned that the judge becomes the master of the colonial rule and the cook its victim. Colonial culture has spread its wings only by changing its place and shape. The inflicter of pain later becomes a sufferer too. In the case of the judge and the cook, the same thing happens not in one circumstance but in several circumstances. Later the cook becomes ashamed of the poor treatment of the judge. The life that the judge once lived is observed by the cook and also by the judge and he starts torturing the cook in one way or the other. The cook becomes a silent and passive victim who sometimes becomes rude when he starts lying to other servants and he does not stop here. He tells a lie to Sai about the judge's behaviour and exaggerates the judge's wealth and social standing. The judge is hypocritical of his behaviour later but forgets his reality. And he starts showing himself before the ones who are subordinate to him in class. At such behaviour, the cook becomes irritated and becomes a silent victim but sometimes an active victim. Sometimes he listens but sometimes he protests. The postcolonial context discovered by the postcolonial critics is justified in the reciprocal attitude of the judge and the cook. Here the judge/cook makes a preference over the judge and binary opposition is also justified here. In another instance where Sai with the cook comes to meet her new tutor Noni. Here the feminist and postcolonial notes are justified. The cook makes Sai meet her new tutor. The cook who suffered too much under the judge understands Sai's problem and assists her in her education. The postcolonial context is justified. Here a victim understands the requirement of a needy one. At first, Sai becomes associated with a woman tutor Noni. Here the feminist tone is justified. In the first instance, a woman tutor is required as the study is done by a woman not because of her sympathetic quality but also because she is understated and Sai becomes too much

comfortable with Noni being a woman. The association of gender is justified. Why only a woman tutor here? The question raised here. But the real fact is that a woman can understand a woman better and Noni is not a worse choice. But anyway feminist tone is here. Later, in Sai's education, it is observed that Noni asserts that Sai's knowledge is better and Noni is not capable of teaching her Maths and Science now. So it is time to keep a new teacher and a new tutor Gyan, a twenty-year-old recent graduate. Here feminist and postcolonial notes need attention. Gyan who himself is not able now to have a job is hired to make Sai establish educationally. Gyan who himself has not justified his academic calibre is hired to make Sai capable. But only being a male, he is hired to teach Sai. In Maths and Science, only male teachers are required. Noni is not capable of teaching Sai now - why? Only Gyan is fit now, as he is a male member. Such conventions are highlighted by the novelist by selecting such gender-biased characters. The appearance of such characters justifies feminist and postcolonial notes. Only attention is required from such angles. Later it is observed that Sai becomes entranced by Gyan and both begin to bloom romantically. Once due to a monsoon Gyan is stuck at Sai's house, and they start flirting and playing games, measuring each other's hands, feet and limbs. Once Gyan asks her for a kiss and she justifies. They start a romantic relationship. Gyan is hired to lead Sai but he misleads her. Only in the name of leading, she is misled. The postcolonial element needs to be mentioned. She should be led but she is misled and a boy exploits a girl. A feministic postcolonial angle is justified here. She is miseducated instead of educated. Gyan surpasses Sai. In another circumstance, Gyan yells at Sai as he becomes frustrated by her complicity in English cultural elitism. The yell at Sai by Gyan needs gives a feminist note. This yelling is not only at Sai and not only by Gyan. There are several Sais and Gyans. Several Sais are yelled at by several Gyans. In the name of certain cultures and customs, one is yelled at by others and generates postcolonial notes. Several incidents observed in the novel justify the feministic postcolonial context and some more new angles must be observed to justify the incidents prevalent in the novel. The novelist has touched several new strata of different societies under one roof but these must be highlighted for the betterment of the society and thus, the dark society should be lighted not heated. In another instance, at his yelling at Sai, Gyan tries to apologize but both start fighting at English customs. Sai accuses Gyan of being a hypocrite who enjoys English culture with her but makes a joke at the same living with his friends. In such a scenario the fight occurs. Here the feminist note is of Sai's sympathy towards Gyan but from a postcolonial viewpoint, she is exploited for his own sake. Later he makes excuses to her. Here Gyan is observed surrendering but in vain as Sai fails. On another occasion, Sai enjoys English culture and the judge, too, follows her. She is a hypocrite. She tries to live with an outward appearance. She does not live a comfortable life. She tries to enjoy the English ways of life and she does. She makes exposure of her attitude and demands an earthly projection of Gyan's personality. It is Gyan's outward projection that compels her to become involved with him and later she accuses him of the behaviour that was once her liking. She faces a dilemma. The judge, too, enjoys English culture with Sai but once the judge feels humiliated because of that very culture. In another situation, Sai is seen celebrating Christmas with

Noni, Lola, Uncle Potty and Father Booty. Sai enjoys an upper-class culture. The culture that becomes troublesome somewhere else is enjoyed somewhere else and the culture that is not liked in one is liked in another. In the character of Nimi, a feministic postcolonial note is vividly observed. Desai has generated Nimi on this very note. The name Nimi is provided by the judge's family. Nimi at fourteen is married to the judge. The marriage is not because of the purpose of the marriage but because of fulfilling the purpose of the judge's travel to England as the judge lacks money for travel expenses and as a dowry he gains the money for his travel expenses. At marriage she is terrified but she has to pass through the procession. She is compelled to do so by her father who observes the very best future of his daughter with the judge whose own future is shaped and secured by the sum given by a wealthy father of a helpless girl. Really a tragic blow! The judge who is at mercy of another's money makes mercy on Patel and his daughter by marrying her. The existence of Nimi is at his but his existence is not secured. But the judge is determined enough to make her happy. They do not consummate at an early age Nimi is terrified enough to do so. But before departing for England both share a gentle moment in which he takes her on a pleasing cycle ride. They enjoy and he goes to secure his future at the mercy of Nimi who is here left at his mercy. Nimi is projected as a true figure around whom the voice of feminism and postcolonialism needs to be raised. The projection of Nimi is a voice of feminism and postcolonialism. Here the judge exploits Nimi for his own sake.

In another instance, when the judge loses the promotion and becomes embarrassed. He arrives home, curses Nimi, beats her and kicks her. Later she gives birth and a daughter is born but he never meets her. Such a treatment of Nimi by the judge is a colonial treatment that needs feministic touch. The judge's irritation with failure is victimized in Nimi.

The judge is a hypocrite who makes apparent appearances in name of real ones. He has kept himself between colonial context and postcolonial treatment. He makes flee from the culture and later enjoys the same culture. He gives shelter and later damages the shelter. He shows mercy and later becomes merciless. He follows the English line and becomes the victim of the same line. He needs mercy but exposes. He projects himself as a master but becomes a slave. At the disappearance of his dog Mutt, the judge blames the cook and threatens to kill him. At this, the cook goes to the canteen and there he runs into Gyan. Gyan resolves and finds

Mutt for Sai. The treatment of the judge toward the cook is on a colonial note. The judge makes the cook afraid and passively the cook surrenders. The cook returns and begs the judge to beat him over and over again with a slipper. Such inhuman treatment connotes colonial contexts where the postcolonial voice is raised. Sai yells for the cook. The judge has treated the cook almost mercilessly. The figure of the judge is the victim of the colonial context. The attitude of the judge needs postcolonial touch. He makes others troubled in the name of mercy. He follows the same line that once makes him troubled. The figure of Biju, the cook's son. Biju does a job at Gray's Papaya in the heart of Manhattan. Biju is a central figure that needs to be analysed from a postcolonial context. He at the name of a green card check is asked to leave the restaurant. Then Biju passes through several restaurants but in vain. He is tortured and tormented. The postcolonial treatment asserts that Biju has become the victim of the colonial context. He is fired from the French restaurant after a customer's complaint concerning the smell of the food. At the name of one and another Biju has to wander from here to there. Next, Biju takes a job at an Italian restaurant where he has to leave as he smells food as the owner believes so. Then, he takes a job at a Chinese restaurant where he delivers food on a bicycle. He does so and once he becomes late and the food becomes cold and thus he is deserted from the job. Biju has to pass through several ups and downs in his existence and he does so. He is seen leaping at the cook. Thus Biju projects the horrors of colonial contexts and the postcolonial touch is raised.

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 a crisp envelop, a ticket for passage on Strathnaver from Bombay to Liverpool. (Desai 2006:91)

The above-mentioned saying exposes the complete feministic appeal that must be centred from a postcolonial perspective. Such utterances do not stand at one pole but from dual poles – feminism and postcolonialism and as result a feministic postcolonial perspective.

You are your husband's responsibility. Go back. Your father gave a dowry when you married - you got your share and it is not for daughters to come claiming anything thereafter. If you have made your husband angry, go ask for forgiveness. (Desai 2006:306)

Such utterances are male-centred and the irony is that woman-utterance. When observed from such two angles a new perspective of duality is observed and a societal hollowness is projected.

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. I used to dream about becoming an archaeologist. I'd go to the British Council and look at the books in King Tutankhamen ... But my parents were not kind to understand, you know, my father was old- the fashioned type. A man brought up and educated only to give orders ... You must do it on your own, Sai. (Desai 2006:69) Women-centred duties are women bound. They are responsible for their places but a firm determination is required to make a healthy society.

Gyan's observation elucidates that:

She could speak no language but English and pidgin Hindi, she could not converse with anyone outside her tiny social stratum. She who could not eat with her hands; could not squat down on the ground on her haunches to wait for a bus; who had never been to a temple but for architectural interest; never chewed a paan and had not tried most sweets in the mithaishop...she who a Bollywood film so exhausted from emotional wear and tear that she walked home like a sick person and lay in pieces on the sofa; she who thought it vigar to put oil your chair and used papers to clean her bottom... (Desai 2006:176)

Such observations need attention on postcolonial and feministic perspectives and when observed it points out that such issues are in constant search of somewhat new and fresh angles.

Several critics on several issues write and utter the consequences but they lack when a text is observed from a fresh subjective outlook is still required. The present paper draws one thing or another from critics under the purview of feminism such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf and more recently Gayatri Spivak along with Elaine Showalter and under post-colonialism Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha are justified but only these are required. There need much more ones and much more utterances

The novel with all the characters keeping Sai at the centre when studied from feminist as well as postcolonial perspectives and in turn feministic postcolonial perspective exposes almost all the norms and laws a society inward keeps and prepares its members for a global society. Thus the characters of the judge, his wife, Sai, Biju, Gyan and all others keep one or another utterance on feminism and postcolonialism by several critics. Sai is a true projection of a feministic postcolonial perspective, the judge, postcolonial, and as such. If the gender-centred norm is avoided, almost all the characters are more or less truly projections of feministic postcolonial perspectives. The study is enjoyable and educating when observed from two angles but one perspective.

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