



POSTCOLONIAL CRISIS: INDIAN CONTINENTS WITH AN EYE OF AN IMMIGRANT

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Abstract

In 1947, we got the identity as a nation and the India was born out of the sufferings and hardships of our national leaders who later, surpassed the maxims of hard work by dedication to construct the base of new India. Since, then we have been trying to develop and redevelop our national image in the world politics making local as global. The colonial rule made it difficult to overthrow the deep rooted legacy of the English. This neurosis is often perceived as hybridity or identity crisis. Our nation emerged as powerful with maintaining its aloofness and focused on the development of its continents. These continents largely reflect the image and the progressive nature of a country with all its colonial stagnation and the postcolonial neurosis. The present paper is a sincere endeavor to bring into light such postcolonial crisis by studying the novels of the Man Booker Prize winner novelist Kiran Desai. The researcher takes into account Kiran Desai's two novels; *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss*.

Keywords: Cultural resistance, Other, Orientalism, Cross-culture, Colonized, Hybridity, etc.

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Introduction

The postcolonial criticism came into existence with an idea of rejecting universalism; a situation depicted in a piece of writing can be applied to all human interactions. Further, it is stated that the insignificant colonial rule set the definitions of what is known as superior. Thus history of orients becomes inferior and unidentified with an eye of colonizer disconnecting the colonized from their roots. The colonialist ideology rejected and devalued the past of the colonized. The postcolonial era refers to the efforts of the colonized to reclaim their past and the erosion of the colonialist's ideology. The theory based on finding voice and identity gained much significance. Kiran Desai with her two novels tries to accentuate the theoretical findings of postcolonial crisis such as the search for self, identifying 'Other'. The Man Booker Prize of 2007 was bestowed on the author for second novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. She gained acclamation all over the world for her minute study of human relations in the postcolonial period which also caught the attention of the jury. Kiran Desai took a break from writing after her debut novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* published in 1998. No doubt, the debut novel also brought her into fame by coveting the Bretty Trask Award. She endured the loss of identity through this gap. She studied and researched for the concrete images by travelling from one place to another. The fruitful journey helped her to emerge as a mature and reliable novelist. The focal point of her study was the illegal lives of the immigrants who fled from their motherlands in search of better opportunity to the Western countries like America and England demeaning their motherland as 'Oriental'. They become the 'Other' and sacrifice their lives in attempt to imitate the colonizer. It is interesting to note the journey of the author; India to US. She spent her childhood in India till the age of fourteen and left for England with her mother Anita Desai; a renowned novelist. Later, both of them moved to US. The journey influenced and shaped the ideology of Kiran Desai which reflects through her limning the narration of her stories of individual.

The debut novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* is quite different from the former *The Inheritance of Loss* yet they resemble each other in the context of postcolonial crisis. HGO depicts the story of a young man named Sampath and his father Mr. R. K. Chawala; the ambitious, opportunistic and pragmatic man. The novel set in postcolonial modern era features the connections of orientalism present in Indian continents despite the scientific discovery and advancement in technology. It is apt

to note that the image of Indian imagery continent Shahkot and the people are presented with all its peculiar features like any other city which seems quite convincing. The narration begins with scientific efforts suggested to bring rainfall from the readings of a newspaper by the protagonists' father. Mr. R. K. Chawala is a banker and married to an insane daughter of a wealthy family only to get dowry. She delivered a male baby named as Sampath. The protagonist Sampath is portrayed as a twenty-years-old; a useless duffer. This young 'thin and worried looking' man is turned and transformed into a demigod by the inexorable vicissitude of the events that encircle the entire town and the authorities. The encompassing incident happens to gather news in national newspaper by the illogical, absent-minded and unscientific inquiry of its reporters.

The story revolves around Sampath who despising the materialistic world climbs up on the guava orchard in search of peace by refusing all the liabilities and the responsibilities of a young man in the male dominated society. His father, kenning the possibilities of family fortune, sets up a business based on the religious beliefs. It appeals to the faithful religiosity and throngs of mass turn to the shrine to worship their demigod. The picture portrayed by the novelist is not idyllic but a common; visible at various enshrined places. Kiran Desai sarcastically projected the orientalism prevalent in Indian society. 'She writes about the hegemonic view of India and the way in which the West perceived the East as taking form of its own fantasies.' (Qadeer 81) It was presumed that the independence would definitely defeat the 'oriental' image of Indian continents and replace it with scientific and technological progress. No doubt, the Western educational approach opened the window of knowledge and its seamless impact on the educated Indians produced a wise generation who took their country to new heights of advance in the post-independence era. No field is left untouched by India's stalwarts. Yet, most of them kneel down before the name of religion as per their beliefs and creed as offered by the constitution. Therefore, the novel throws light on the adamant prospects of the religious faith that the people of various strata foster. The devotees comprise illiterate as well as educated who brood their faith by rejecting the scientific and geographical research. The very purpose of educational system fails when the Superintendent of Police bows down before the Monkey baba, Sampath.

'The superintend placed his unpleasantly greasy head under Sampath's toes and felt as though he

were being washed gently and cleansed in sweet blessing; it reminded him of the feeling he had when he was given presents on festival days. 'Can you tell me, Baba, when can I expect a son?' he whispered...But the policeman nodded amiably. 'People like this are not of this world and so it is natural that sometimes they separate out.' (*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* 116)

The people tend to safeguard their religiosity by showcasing absolute faith in religion. The overpopulated country with no family planning is the real classic post-colonial crisis. The novelist also projects the growing population through its narrative. The novelist has a keen interest in projecting such and many issues through the narration. Her second novel *The Inheritance of Loss* brings a variety of postcolonial crisis in the post-Independence era. The colonized had greatly influenced and affected by the Westernized education responding to develop into a double identity or hybridity. They rejected or demeaned the Indian ways of living; a bane to the educated colonized Indians which drove them away from their roots. Jemubhai Poptal Patel is such an instance. He is sent to England to become an ICS in pre-Independence era. He faces racial discrimination, learns to despise all that is Indian by accepting English lifestyle. He cuts himself from his roots on his return to India. The identity crisis turns into contemptuous non-transient behavior. He avenges racial disparity over his wife and gives vent to his anger by levying torturous restrictions on her. He keeps himself aloof from his family and community too. His Englishness anonymously changed into the cultural resistance.

Kiran Desai portrays Anglophile characters in her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* such as Sai, the Bengali sisters; Lolita and Nonita, Uncle Potty, Father Booty and so on to strike the postcolonial identity crisis that developed mostly in the post-Independence era. By painting these characters, the novelist highlighted her perception about the India and its continents. She builds her narrative at the Kalimpong; a small town at the foot of mount Kanchenjunga with its picturesque and scenic beauty. The populous comprises the Gorkha community, the Nepalis of India; a poor and socially, economically backward community. Despite their majority in the region, this community is identified as underprivileged and deprived. They have no means of access to better career opportunities and economic development. The deep rooted polarization between the prime residents and the amateur residents causes the GNLFF protest; a politically invoked emergency for

the rights of Gorkha; 'fed up with being treated like the minority in a place where they were the majority. They wanted their own country, or at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs.' (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 9) There are strikes after strikes that affect the calm, serene and composed lives of amateur residents. The businessperson, anglophile people and such are recognized as the 'Other' who are taken into account responsible for the disharmonious environment between the two poles. The elite section of the outsiders becomes the mainstream of the society who ken the 'Gorkha' community as savage and uncivilized. They imitate the Westernized modification of colonial and the colonized. They subsume themselves as colonizer who are dominant over the colonized Gorkha community. According to Nonita, 'It was important to draw the lines properly between classes or it harmed everyone on both sides of the great divide.' (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 67) Kiran Desai aptly presents the 'global conflicts of religion, race and nationalism by showing the same disorderly and uncivilized state both in the centre and the periphery. Thus Desai unsettles the Western hegemony and destructs the reality of the centre.' (Prasanna, 166)

The cohabitant of Western ideology cut themselves from the Eastern culture. They celebrate Christmas not Diwali, they prefer cake over *ladoos*, 'fork spoon knife better than hands...English was better than Hindi.' (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 30) The cultural divide results in estrangement about the local culture. The ICS judge Jemubhai Poptal Patel returns to colonial India by learning to despise all that is Indian. 'He was a foreigner—a foreigner—every bit of him screamed...as *Western transportation*. (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 167) He contemptuously remarks after losing his powder puff, 'What the hell do all of you know?...Thieving, ignorant people.' (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 168) With the course of his life, he left his entire family alone and settle in Kalimpong after retirement in estrangement. Neither he bothers to learn the language of the hills nor keeps any contact with the locals. He safeguards the English lifestyle by maintain standards. His granddaughter Sai accustomed to the polish standards is shocked to discover her lovers' living standards. 'Sai felt shame, then for him...and she felt distaste, then, for herself. How had she been linked to this enterprise without her knowledge or consent?' (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 256) Aysha Viswamohan rightly observes, 'Sai and her grandfather are relics of a self-engrossed world that is on the verge of collapse'. (Aysha, 262) The eruption of Gorkha

movement disrupts the lives of common masses living in the hills like the retired judge. The entire region is under the threat of danger. The illegal inhabitants have to leave for their countries. The underprivileged have no means of employment. There is shortage of daily needs and the question of bread and butter is challenged. The unemployed young boys under twenties are incited to loot, to rummage and to ransack the elite. These boys also break into the judge's house as well as the Bengali sisters. They humiliate them by mocking at them. The entire town Kalimpong turns into the deadly offspring of chaos.

'Everyone was running, the unwilling participants, the perpetrators, and the bashed-up police...The red of blood lay over the market road in slick pools mingled with a yellow spread of dal...Those mismatched colors, domesticity shuffled with death, sureness running into the unexpected, kindness replaced by the image of violence'. (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 278)

Desai also narrates the story of an illegal immigrant Biju; living in New York, Manhattan by changing insecure, ill-paid jobs and living in the kitchen basements. His father the Cook Pannalal works for the retired Judge Jemubhai Patel at Kalimpong, India. His experience of servitude compels him to encourage his only son Biju to immigrate in the West for good prospects. Both the son and the father are illiterate but enough to read and write English except speaking. They form their ideology of the West as a land of opportunity devaluing India as it fails to generate employment with handsome income to its youth. The temptation of the West drives such young people and their parents. The dominant force makes them encounter any obstructions. However, Biju succeeds in getting a week travel visa to US and stays illegally after the expiry of it in the hope of getting Green Card one day. The novelist focuses on this aspect with her research and presents the postcolonial crisis of Western hegemony. 'America is in the process of buying up the world.' (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 269) The writer also starkly presents the nostalgia of these immigrants, fed up by the endless work and longing for return. They plan to settle in the Indian continents with the help of their earning in the West. Biju, on his return, is robbed with all his belongings by the GNLf boys. The worst nightmare becomes the reality for him. His entire efforts are ruined to overcome his poverty-stricken life. The novelist opines through her characters the structural formed ideology of the Easterners about their motherland. 'Going back?...dont be completely crazy-all those relatives asking for

money! ...they will get you; if they won't, the robbers will;' (*The Inheritance of Loss*, 269).

Kiran Desai perfectly picked up the oriental image of the Indian continents in the postcolonial era. Leaving India, the novelist set up for her journey but reserves her judgment only to present an orientalism feature of the past. She lives in New York but visits her motherland intermittently to revisit her past. She derisively attacks on all those aspects prevailing in Indian continents that seem her inappropriate. It is apt to note that she examines the reality with an eye of an immigrant; a hybrid persona who developed her senses by learning what is appropriate for her motherland. The expatriate writers are often criticized for their presentation about their land of birth because of the undigested pills they try to serve in a plate of sweat dishes. The sore reality insignificantly harms the collective notional facts and are beyond imagination. Thus the postcolonial notion of 'cross-cultural' interaction helps to introspect the flaws within. This should be granted on the similar planks of thoughtful vein otherwise the attempts may be done to mask the challenges. The wisdom of the novelist encompasses not only idyllic notions but the stark realities of the postcolonial world. She succeeds in bringing forward the 'Imaginary Homelands' that beats the image of traditional glossy notion of ones motherland. The postcolonial world was definitely torn by and fall apart with divide yet the comprehensive efforts towards the transforming what is oriental would be praiseworthy. No, doubt, Kiran Desai by projecting oriental image of Indian continents shows the mirror to the world on the other hand it hints us to strengthen the ties among the communities as well as each individual.

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