



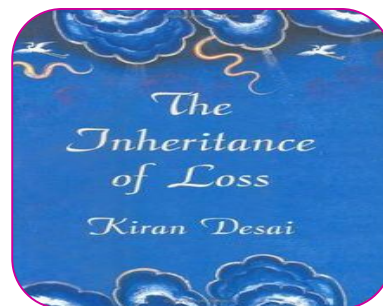
LONGING AND BELONGING: DIASPORA IN MANJU KAPUR AND KIRAN DESAI'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Manju Kapur and Kiran Desai deal with the various themes which are intertwined in their novels – *The Immigrant* and *The Inheritance of Loss* respectively such as, globalization, isolation, multiculturalism, displacement and loss of identity. Kapur portrays the life of a married woman beset with alienation and marital conflicts in an alien land where homeland, motherland, connectivity with native people remain distant things. Failure matrimonial saga in the novel brings out women's role at home and their awkward adaptation to alien culture. Kiran Desai deals reinforce the Westerners' impression of an Indian subcontinent under the process of globalization. She handles very subtly the issues of isolation, racial discrimination, inequality, fundamentalism alienation and xenophobia.



KEY WORDS : Alienation, Multiculturalism, Racial Discrimination, Third World, First World.

INTRODUCTION

The paper seeks to bring out the issues of nativity, homogenous, home, homeland, diaspora and belongingness catapulted and published by the acclaimed novelists Manju Kapur and Kiran Desai in their *The Immigrant* and *The Inheritance of Loss* respectively. Both novelists vividly narrate the sense of alienation, displacement and uprootedness and lack of belongingness with shattered and fragmented identities. Spivak and Ahmed have tried to identify such elements which control Third World. Simon During has defined the state of post-colonial as "The needs in nations and groups, which have been victims of imperialism to achieve an identity uncontaminated by universal loss or Eurocentric concepts and images." (S. During,142).When the so called third world countries pursue 'development' and modernization, they tend to be highly aspirational like the first world countries. No place is place until things that have happened in it are remembered in history, ballads, legends, monuments are literature.

The Immigrant begins with a feature of the physique of thirty-year-old spinster who is initially mired in the fiasco of love and pushed into fathomless alienation. Given the rigidity of Indian culture and patriarchal structure, she is not allowed to thrive professionally in her career and get married to Ananda, NRI. After marriage she hopes everything takes place at her disposal. Instead she is made to compromise and adapt to new vicious circumstances in the alien land. As Nina migrates to Canada her personality is doubly disintegrated- owing to her race and wing of her gender. No sooner dies she reach Canada than she bears the brunt of humiliation and indecency at the hands of Canadian officer lady who wounds irreparably her self-esteem. Manju Kapur says, "Some Indians becomes immigrant slowly." Nina realizes that she is not only ill-prepared for the unacquainted culture but also schisms of intellectual, ecotional and physical in her barren relationship.

Ananda and Nina face numerous excruciating experiences when they leave for Canada, leaving their homeland. With the untimely demise of Ananda's parents in an accident his maternal uncles insisted him to settle in Halifax. When Ananda desperately homogenizes the alien culture, with hustle and bustle activities of India. Ananda somehow adapts to the Canadian life by adopting non-vegetarian, indulging in Canadian food, enjoying Christmas and thanksgiving with a westernized name changed 'Andy'. He also asks Nina to be one like him.

These immigrants are always in two minds. Outwardly they adjust well. Educated and English Speaking, they allow misleading assumptions about a heart that is divided. In the new country they work lengthy hours to gain entranacy into the system, into society into establishing a healthy bank account." (The Immigrant,123).

Immigrant psyche has very detrimental impact on Nina as a wife because she intensely longs for homeland when loneliness overwhelms her. She desperately wants to connect with her near and dear ones.

"It has been a month, and she was keen to set down roots that would make her feel home at home. In India these relatives had seemed peripheral, more tourist than family. Now her perception has changed, she wanted to be close to them." (The Immigrant,132).

In her fathomless loneliness to fill her vaccums and find solitude Nina started attending mother's club which also fails to give any succor as she intensely rues her childless state and sexual impotency of Ananda. Nina becomes resolute to get liberated herself says:

"I miss home – I miss a job – I miss doing a thing. I feel like a shadow. What am I but your wife" ..? (The Immigrant,237).

Eventually the concluding part of the novels shows Nina finally kicking off her maiden journey towards liberation. She separates herself from parasite life with Ananda and embarks on searching identity in an alien land with infidelity with Anten and indulgence in eating fish and meat. Thus, Nina shatters every restrictions and inhibition of her conjugal relationship and transforms herself into an individual, independent woman, who is no longer dominated by her husband's influence and no longer lost in the New World.

Edward Said in his *Orientalism* emphasizes *Eurocentric Universalism* which highlights the superiority of the westerns over the 'others' and their inferiority to the Westerns.

Kiran Desai in *The Inheritance of Loss* presents the excruciating hardships of illegal migrants that is destable phenomenon in the process of globalization. Adaptation and homogenization of variety is embraced as pre-requisite criterion but humiliation and negation of self identity is the predicament of all migrants. Desai brings forth horrendous legal intricacies and have a greater hazard in the process of cultural or assimilation. She differentiates the status of green card holder and illegal immigrants like Biju. Harish Sawhney and his co-partner writes:

"Desai portrays migration as a universal, multifaced experience, rescuing it from the clutches of myth and fetishism. Almost fifty years after the Judge went to England. Biju, the cook's son leads a grueling existence as an illegal immigrant of New York." (Sawhney,22).

The Inheritance of Loss dexterously brings together two viewpoints of narrative: transnationalism and multiculturalism. The novel embraces a number of today's burning and demanding issues such as violence, terrorism, fundamentalism, increasingly parocalism, economic inequality, multiculturalism and voluntarily exile. But more than these it sheds light on dislocation, migration, alienation, yearning of better future in alien countries, and the resultant is loss of identity of history and of family. The novel draws the attention of global communities towards the longstanding issues based on race, caste, gender and linguistic identity.

At the outset of the novel, Desai poses a question through the leading and central character Sai: *"Could fulfillment ever be felt as deeply as loss?"* and continue to decipher love as the *"gap between desire and fulfillment."* (The Inheritance of Loss:2). Jemubhai Patel, son of village tout, ICS officer, successor of the colonial justice, and a misogynist, is an epitome of the colonized in mind. As a student Jemubhai languishes

as an isolated and uprooted in racist England, the future of judge feel “barely human at all”. (IL,40). Jumubhai’s acute sense of displacement in a racist milieu draws him mad and sad. Racial discrimination shakes him completely. In the process of homogenization of imperialistic colour, his wife’s name Bela also undergoes a change, and she becomes Nimi. But the hypocrisy of Jemubhai is exposed as he chooses to live in the Kalimpong to sustain his colonized oddities and eccentricities:

In the entrance to the school building was a portrait of queen Victoria in a dress like a flouncy curtain fringed cape, and a peculiar hat with fatherly arrows shooting out. Each morning as Jemubhai passed under, he found her froggy expression compelling and felt deeply impressed that a woman so plain could also have been so powerful. The more he pondered his oddity, the more his respect for her and the English grew. (IL,38).

In the displacement the border between home and the world becomes confused, and uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting. In the stirrings of the unhomely, another world becomes invisible. It has less to do with forcible eviction and more to do with uncanny literacy and social effects of enforced social accommodation or, historical migrations and cultural relocations. Desai, on her own intimate experience, bring forth predicament of immigrants such as, Biju, Saeed, Harish, Harry, Saran, Jeev, Rishi, Mr. Lal Kaka and hundreds of Asians, Latin Americans and Africans toiling in the American and European developed countries. Father Booty is another instance of illegal immigrants who leads his life in India for forty-five years, while his visa’s validity is limited to two weeks only. Later in the vortex of insurgency of GNLF, he is evicted from country.

Biju is languishing in the hotels, restaurants in New York soon there was “green card check”. (IL,16). Immigrants’ plight and agonies of bitter experiences is worsened by the West. Saeed is allowed to apply for the coveted immigration green card each year, but Indians were prohibited. Under such harrowing plight Biju is compelled as fugitive at large to move from one ill paid job to another for thirty years. He gets terrified seeing the horde of illegal immigrants:

“...there were those who lived and died illegal in America and never saw their families, not for ten years, twenty, thirty, never again.” (IL,99). Biju who goes dreamland, America, soon faces grim working conditions, racial discrimination and imperialistic immigration laws. He is called as “Shadow Class” with the realization that how Third World immigrants are deceived, humiliated and exploited to the brink in the West:

Above, the restaurant was French, but below in the kitchen it was Mexican and Indian. And, when a Paki was hired, it was Mexican, Indian, Pakistani. Biju at Le colonial for the authentic colonial experience oh top, rich colonial, and down below, poor native, Colombian, Tanisian, Ecaudorian, Gambian. (IL,20).

In ancient era of exodus of migration people were compelled and driven to land in another countries, either forced or war, hunger or drought, with the goodbye their native countries permanently having no money coming back unless they have really progressed and prospered. they were required to acquire skill of language speaking where they migrated. It reflects that migrants are always fluctuated, tossed between anonymous language and strange culture. They always remain novice as torn, shattered, fractured and broken identity. Michael Cronin observes:

The condition of the emigrant is the condition of the translated being. He or she moves from a source language and culture so that translation takes place both in the physical sense of movement or displacement and in the symbolic sense of the shift from one way of speaking, writing about and interpreting the world to another.

Manju Kapur and Kiran Desai interweave the issues of Diaspora in their novels. Turmoil and chaos of immigrants, internally and externally, is adapting and colorizing is vividly portrayed with gruesome problems in a alien land. They employ the themes of the sense of frustration, bruised sentiments and displacement through the excruciating experiences of characters. Both novels bring out explicitly predicament of characters who bear the brunt of diasporic uprootedness in the globalized world.

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