



ISSN 0976-299X

www.literaryendeavour.org

ISSN 0976-299X

LITERARY ENDEAVOUR

UGC Approved Quarterly International Refereed Journal of
English Language, Literature and Criticism

UGC Approved Under Arts and Humanities Journal No. 44728

Print ISSN: 0976-299X

Online ISSN: 0976-299X

Vol. IX

Special Issue. 2

August 2018

Chief Editors

■ Dr. Ramesh Chougule ■ Dr. S. Subbiah

14	THE SELF - IDENTITY OF WOMEN- GAYATHRI SPIVAK VS TAGORE B. Ponmalar	48-50
15	A PLAYFUL MIXTURE OF FACTS AND FICTION: A HISTORICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN ALICE MUNRO'S <i>THE VIEW FROM CASTLE ROCK</i> D. Preethy Johnita Esther	51-53
16	ECOLOGY, ENVIRONMENT AND ECOCRITICISM: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE P. Dominic Joseph	54-58
17	THE STIGMA OF MARGINALISATION IN MAHASWETA DEVI'S <i>OUTCAST: FOUR STORIES</i> Dr. C. Geetha	59-62
18	ANITA NAIR'S <i>LADIES COUPE</i> : THE CONFIGURATION OF THE CULTURAL DETERMINANT WOMEN. S. Kavitha & Dr. C. Geetha	63-67
19	THE ELEMENTS OF NOSTALGIA IN KIRAN DESAI'S <i>THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS</i> Dr. J. Preethi	68-71
20	COLONIAL EXPERIENCE AND TRANSPLANTATION OF WESTERN CULTURE AND TRADITION IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S <i>THINGS FALL APART</i> Dr. P. Balamurugan	72-74
21	DALIT PROTEST THROUGH EDUCATION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF BAMA'S <i>KARUKKU</i> Dr. S. Ramanathan	75-80
22	THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN <i>THE FOREIGNER</i> AND <i>THE LAST LABYRINTH</i> BY ARUN JOSHI Dr. J. Josephine	81-83
23	RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES IN THE SELECT WORKS OF V. S. NAIPAUL Dr. Y. Vidya & S. Kamatchi	84-86
24	HUMANIST TENDENCY THROUGH SELECTED POEMS ON RACE AND GENDER K. Anitha	87-89
25	POSTCOLONIAL VENTURES AND REIMAGING THE MYTH OF HUMANISM IN ALLAN SEALY'S <i>THE EVEREST HOTEL</i> AND MICHAL ONDAATJE'S <i>THE ENGLISH PATIENT</i> . K. Antony & Dr. C. Geetha	90-92
26	POSTCOLONIAL READING OF BAMA'S <i>VANMAM (VENDETTA)</i> J. Alan Andrew	93-95

The Elements of Nostalgia in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

Dr. J. Preethi,

Assistant professor of English,
Jayaraj Annapackiam College for Women (Autonomous),
Periyakulam.

Abstract

In general, Diasporic literature deals with alienation, displacement, existential rootlessness, nostalgia and quest of identity. It reflects the immigrant experience that comes out of the immigrant settlement. Robin Cohen, in *Global Diasporas*, defines a Diaspora as a community of people who have settled outside their native country but still have fidelity towards the country of their origin. Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, which has won the 2006 Man Booker Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award, pictures the condition of 1980s in India where a Cambridge educated Indian judge living out his retirement in Kalimpong near the Himalayas, with his granddaughter until their lives are disrupted by Nepalese insurgents. The novel also interweaves the story of Biju, the son of the cook who works in the household of the judge. Biju struggles to survive as an illegal immigrant in the United States. The novel throws adequate light on isolation, alienation, aloofness in the point of view of illegal immigrants, their loss of homeland, diasporic articulation and the dialectics of marginality. The present paper is a modest attempt to examine Kiran Desai's diasporic consciousness emerged from *The Inheritance of Loss*. It attempts to have a descriptive, diasporic analysis on immigration with illegal documents. It unfolds the experiences of Biju's dislocation and unsettlement and his inner conflict and feeling of insecurity as a "shadow class" in the new land.

In general, Diasporic literature deals with alienation, displacement, existential rootlessness, nostalgia and quest of identity. It reflects the immigrant experience that comes out of the immigrant settlement. Robin Cohen, in *Global Diasporas*, defines a Diaspora as a community of people who have settled outside their native country but still have fidelity towards the country of their origin. Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance*

of Loss, which has won the 2006 Man Booker Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award, pictures the condition of 1980s in India where a Cambridge educated Indian judge living out his retirement in Kalimpong near the Himalayas, with his granddaughter until their lives are disrupted by Nepalese insurgents. The novel also interweaves the story of Biju, the son of the cook who works in the household of the judge. Biju struggles to survive as an illegal immigrant in the United States. The novel throws adequate light on isolation, alienation, aloofness in the point of view of illegal immigrants, their loss of homeland, diasporic articulation and the dialectics of marginality. The present paper is a modest attempt to examine Kiran Desai's diasporic consciousness emerged from *The Inheritance of Loss*. It attempts to have a descriptive, diasporic analysis on immigration with illegal documents. It unfolds the experiences of Biju's dislocation and unsettlement and his inner conflict and feeling of insecurity as a "shadow class" in the new land.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Biju is compelled to feel the borderline belonging neither to his motherland nor to his new land. It unfolds the experiences of Biju's dislocation and unsettlement and his inner conflict and feeling of insecurity. He is thinking of his home land and his father and longing to go home. For him, there is no sense of security or prosperity in the new land. It merely results in the creation of this "shadow class" who have no real existence but whose life is full of despair, sorrow, grief and pain. Thus the life of the illegal immigrant Biju in New York belongs to the "shadow class" life of spending much of his time dodging the authorities and moving from one ill-paid job to another.

The novel pokes into the problem of illegal migrants which is a result of the process of globalization. Kiran Desai exposes the complexities of the law and the Green Card syndrome. The cook believes in the dream of going abroad and his son is the medium of the execution.

He is ready to be exploited to realise the dream. But Biju, the cook's son, suffers great to meet his father's dream. He becomes a member of a new class named "shadow class." His character deliberately reveals the diasporic articulation of the novelist. He has migrated to New York in the pursuance of a good job. His findings in the USA, shows how the dream of globalization has become a threat to the identity of ethnic community. For them, to seek spaces in the American society is a challenge involving social chaos, economic insecurity, legal complication, the psyche of subjugation and persistent hurdles born out of the dearth of competence to cope with high tech social structure which is a major factor in attracting to foreign countries.

Desai says in an interview that "the idea of the American Dream is being embraced so enthusiastically by a very privileged, educated class of Indians....they are the living American Dream." To fulfil this dream and to lead a prosperous life, Indians drift towards America. Traditionally, diaspora as a translocation identity relies on the concept of home that has been left behind or lies elsewhere (Jigna Desai,19). The diasporic communities breaking the barriers and boundaries and moving on for personal progress and development have been termed by Fanon as "Individuals without an anchor without horizon colourless, stateless and rootless..." (Fanon,176)

Diaspora refers not only to physical displacements but it also refers to a sensibility in which nostalgia, alienation and sometimes cynical celebration are deeply engrossed. The physical and mental anomolism of diasporic life is what Homi K. Bhabha described as the condition of being 'unhomed'. (Bhabha, 9) The cook Panna Lal had taken initiative steps to send his son Biju abroad to earn more which is a kind of snobbery during the 1980s. He pines to have his position equal to other persons on high rank. Kiran Desai has reflected his anxiety and curiosity about Biju. It reflects the competitions in India to get visa.

"The cook had first made the effort to send his son abroad four years ago, when a recruiting agent for a cruise ship line appeared in Kalimpong to solicit applications for waiters, vegetable choppers, toilet cleaners – basic drudge staff...." (IOL 180)

The judge objected the cook to do further because it is illegal and the man who is recruiting sets up a temporary office in his room at Sinclair's hotel. Biju also took some of his fake recommendations with him to the interview and the interview was a success. The cook has an attraction towards the eating habits of the British. Thinking of his son, he prepares 'Angezhikhana' such as ham roll, tuna fish souffle', khari biscuit pie and proudly thinking of Biju that he would have got a higher position as a cook in America than in India.

Desai showcases the nature of Indians in keeping the letters safely. As a father, the cook advises his son to save money while replying. He is minding his son's friendship too which reveals the mentality of the Indian parents who try to treat their grown-ups as children. They never allow their kids to take any decision of their own. The cook mentions particularly that his son must be careful in moving with the Pakistanis.

"...What kind of place was he working in? He knew it was a country where people from everywhere journeyed to work, surely not Pakistanis!..."

"Beware", the cook wrote to his son. "Beware. Beware. Keep away. Distrust" (IOL 22).

Kiran Desai has documented the pitiable condition of illegal migrants in her novel adequately. Assimilation and acceptance of diversity is accepted as a necessary phenomenon but humiliation and negation of self-identity is the predicament of all migrants. The overwhelming feeling of humiliation experienced by ethnic groups who stand on the global dais of America to have a better future is registered by the novelist Desai through the character of Biju. The Diasporic experiences of the immigrants are not the same for it differs for different individuals pertaining to their status there in the foreign land.

Ashcroft, writing about life in a new land, asserts: "There is no one 'Diasporic Imagery.' As historical experiences diasporas are made up of many journeys, an interweaving of multiple travelling, a text of many distinctive and perhaps even disparate narratives" (47). Though Biju and – begin their journeys from the same land, diaspora gives them diverse routes to move on; to evolve with a true 'self.' Biju could not proudly accept his status of 'Otherness' in the Diasporic consciousness. Thus Biju, the exile in an alien land, fails to emerge as an empowered man since he is

unable to locate his 'self.' He returns to his native land India where he belongs.

Through Biju, Kiran Desai, presents the status of illegal immigrants and the feeling of alienation often experienced by expatriates. Even though they will be successful, they have to face humiliation. Behind the initial reference to the glamour of the West, the horrible experience of the bitter reality of Biju is a correct manifestation of the humiliation of Third World Migrants. Biju comes to know that he could never have the privilege of a legalized citizen. Through the interaction with other cooks, Biju got the idea of their real their position in New York. "Perfectly First World on top, perfectly Third World twenty two steps below (IOL 23). The illegal immigrants stay together in the basement of a building. "By the time he had found employment again, at a bakery on Broadway and Lasalle, he had used up all the money in the savings" (IOL 53).

In the US, as an illegal immigrant, Biju feels the difference in the treatment where they will not be paid properly according to their job. Eventhough they become sick, they will not be taken care of. When he is injured, he is maltreated, because any of the medical facility is denied to him. He busted with his throbbing knee and complains to Harish Harry, the owner of the Gandhi Café, who refuses to meet his medical expenses. Harish Harry uses his callous favourite axioms as usual.

"I take you in. I hire you with no papers, treat you like my own son and now this is how you repay me! Living here rental free" (IOL 188).

Biju also yells at him back defending the condition of their way of life, the underpaid rotten life of pigs.

"..This is how you make your money, paying us nothing because you know we can't do anything, making us work day and night because we are illegal" (IOL 188).

Bill Ashcroft in his essay "Home and Horizon" states, "Whether home is a place, a location, a feeling, a tradition, an ethnicity, it carries with it the sometimes imperceptible but ever-present reality of boundaries." (45) Living in America, Biju misses his native home India all the time. He couldn't have any facilities. Ashcroft

further speaks of 'home' and 'horizon' the two opposite ideas with special reference to boundaries because, "it is into the horizon beyond the boundaries of home that the diasporic writer takes us." To Biju dissolving the boundaries is so difficult since he has migrated to the alien land illegally. He is forced to live in squalor. Biju represents a typical Asian, who goes to meet the American dream, but is exploited and becomes hopeless and suffocated.

The livelihood is terribly miserable for the illegal immigrants. Millions risked death, are humiliated, hated and lost their families. They are underpaid and treated like slaves and never get apartments to stay. They are terribly afraid of the police and would often go into trauma. The siren of the police van scares them greatly. They are unable to settle in one place, often jumping from one job to the other. Feeling nothing but emptiness in life year by year is the common result of these immigrants.

Due to cultural differences they do not get the same hospitality. They are compelled to suffer in their homeland and the exile they opt for only increases their suffering more. Biju faces humiliation when he starts his second year in America at Pinocchio's Italian Restaurant. The owner's wife openly asserts that he smells badly with his hair oil and insists him to use soap, toothpaste, shampoo plus conditioner etc. as if he does not know to take bath properly.

"He smells", said the owner's wife. "I think I'm allergic to his hair oil." She had hoped for men from the poorer parts of Europe- Bulgarians,"(IOL 48) He receives complaints from the customers which adds to his tension. Even though the weather is cold outside, it is his duty to serve them food hot.

Kiran Desai humorously states the tendency of Indians who wants to help others without understanding the reality through the cook's character. Unaware of his son's plight and real status in America, he writes,

"Dear Biju, can you please help...his son big enough to get a job, but there were no jobs.... would be willing to start at a menial level....Dear beta, please see if you can help the Metal Box watchman's son."

In reality, at the bakery, they call the immigration hotline as soon as the clock struck 8:30 and takes turns holding the receiver. They put

down the phone hurriedly if they get a beeping high-alert from the electronic supersonic space speed machine that could "Trace the number through to their illegality."

Biju feels the loss of identity, loss of human relations, loss of emotional binding, loss of human value, loss of rationality, loss of peace and harmony, loss of human beings' faith in each other. Sense of loss is an integral part of every character's life. Biju feels so restless sometimes and barely tolerates that he couldn't show his anger to his father. He is like fish out of water there which is reflected in the following lines, "Biju couldn't help but feel a flash of anger at his father for sending him alone to this country, but he knew he wouldn't have forgiven his father for not trying to send him, either" (IOL 82).

Biju does not want to live in New York. His self-consciousness, his self-pity gets expanded day by day. Biju feels hollow when his friend Saeed leaves him after getting a job. "He thinks of his village where he spent time with his grandmother, eating fresh roti, ghee, fresh butter, fresh milk from the buffalo, playing through the grasses, going to market with his grandmother which is natural in the minds of the people living in the other land (IOL 102).

There is conflict between his wish and father's wish. He wants to go back to India whereas his father's expectation differs from his and his voice lingers in his mind. Yet Biju decides to return home. His father does not want him to come back to "this shitty place." But in India, Biju, may or may not have a promising career but he is not immune to nostalgia. He can "Feel the pulse of the forest, smell the humid air, the green black lushness, he could imagine all its different textures,

the plumage of banana, the stark spear of cactus, the delicate gesture of ferns" (IOL 230).

Returning home is an accomplishment to Biju. Back home is the feeling of achievement, root and getting back the inheritance of loss.

"Like a bus,... the plane stopped... the growing fetor of the bath room.

In the mirror of this bathroom, Biju saluted himself." (IOL 286)

Kiran Desai's novel provides an insight into the pain of refugee experience manifested in alienation, marginalization and identity crises in a new land. The inner conflict between the mind and body of an exile is vividly pictured through the novelist's diasporic articulation. The whole character of Biju is painted leaving no room for hope, for joy and for identity and strongly articulates diaspora experiences.

Works Cited

- Bhabha, Hamik. *The location of Culture* New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Desai, Kiran *The Inheritance of Loss*, India: Penguin Random House India Pvt.Ltd. 2006. Print.
- Desai, Jigna. *Beyond Ballywood*, Routledge.2004. Print.
- Franza, Fanon. "On Nation Culture," *The Wretched of the Earth*. London, 1963. Print.
- Punam Pandey, "Diasporic Consciousness and Multiculturalism in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*," *New Dimensions in Diasporic Literature* ed. Sharma, Ram, Jaipur: Aadi Publications, 2016, Print.
- Postcolonial Analysis : Desai's "The Inheritance of Loss"* (Website reference)
