

Loss of Identity and Cultural Predicaments in Kiran Desai's Works



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Introduction

Kiran Desai is the latest and glorious name in the world of English writing and diaspora. She won the Man Booker prize for her very second novel 'Inheritance of Loss'. This award has put her in the first rank with Salman Rushdie, Arvind Adiga, Arundhati Roy, Ruth Prawal Jhabwal etc. She born in India and went to USA at the age of 14. she studied at there. 'Hallaballoo in the Guava Orchard' is her debut novel. She spent eight years to writing her second novel 'Inheritance of Loss'. Kiran Desai's works deal with the different theme. Kiran Desai's novels have their seed in the Indian soil and tradition. Multiculturalism, cultural predicaments, loss of Identity, class-distinction, existentialism, feeling of isolation and nostalgic emotions etc are the important qualities of her works. 'Hallaballoo in the Guava Orchard' and 'Inheritance of Loss' are very much Indian novels which deal with the Indian society, Indian culture and Indian people. Psychoanalytical Realism

Anita Desai is one of the most powerful and distinguished Indian English novelists. She has an extraordinary sharpness and penetration of vision. Her writings have drawn world-wide critical attention. Anita Desai has added a new dimension to the Indian English fiction: the exploration of human psyche. Cry, the Peacock, Anita Desai's first novel, has been described as a trendsetter in the field of psychoanalytical realism. It explores the inner world of the main protagonist, Maya, and demonstrates her fear, insecurity and strange behavior. Through her, she depicts a world of alienation, loneliness and suffering. Maya is described as a hysterical character whose impending tragedy is suggestively foreshadowed, time and again. SSSS
Identity and Cultural

'Hallaballoo in the Guava Orchard' is the story of a young man named Sampath Chawala and his struggle to get his Identity. Kiran Desai's almost every character struggle for identity and cultural set up throughout their lives. Sampath also the person who faced total failure and frustration in his life. Sampath got the job in the post office through the reference of his father R.K. Chawla who is the head clerk in the Reserve Bank.

But Sampath was not happy and satisfied with the job. He led purposeless life. He desired to escape from the mundane lifestyle and want to get new identity as a popular person. He always tried to seek the identity. He escaped from his middle class situation and want to get the better and peaceful life. He wanted to get rid of 'Hallaballoo' from his life. His seek of identity led him to Guava Orchard. He heads for the hills and takes up residence in a guava orchard on the outskirts of town, followed by his family. In this new context, Sampath's chronic daydreaming is reinterpreted as a life of spiritual contemplation and he swiftly develops a local reputation as a holy man.

For a while it seems that Sampath's escape has been a solution to everyone's problems as he settles happily into the life of a guru. The novel introduces the sleepy town Shahkot, which comes alive when Sampath Chawla, a middle-class purposeless post office clerk, tries to escape his repeated failures by climbing a guava tree and gaining recognition as a hermit.

Indian Atmosphere and Culture

Another character from 'Inheritance of Loss' is Jemubhai Popatlal Patel who also led isolated life in Kalimpong. Jemubhai Patel is called as the Judge. The judge always tried to establish his identity as a person. He studied in England. In order to qualify for the Indian civil service, Jemubhai, lonely and isolated, studies eighteen hours a day, hundred hours a week. When the results are declared and he has made it- even though his name is the last one on the list. In England, he had never accepted as a British man and his struggle between two cultures made him bitter and frustrated. Jemubhai crosses the border to return to his native country he actually never returns.

He crosses to another domain- a self-hate, where he is at odds with himself. He banished his innocent wife to her home where she gives birth to a daughter, languishes and finally dies tragically. Sai is the central character of Kiran's second novel 'Inheritance of Loss'. Sai is the granddaughter of the Judge and orphan girl of fourteen years. The young girl Sai is also someone who crosses over from boundaries of the convent to the world outside. Her parents had been

killed in an accident in Russia where her father was training to be a space pilot. With no other relative, and her maternal grandfather's name the only one listed in the convent register, the orphaned Sai is sent from Dehradun to Kalimpong. The two worlds are completely different from each other as are the people who inhabit them. In the Dehradun convent Sai had no real friends and the ambience of guilt and sin pervaded their everyday lives. In Kalimpong, she is thrust into the company of people who are idiosyncratic, peculiar individuals. In contrast to the worlds of rules and regulations and consequent punishments for breaking them, here she is free and interacts with all these people on her own terms. They too grow very fond of her accepting her for what she is making her a part of their group. She tried to find her identity in India and try to mould herself in Indian atmosphere and culture.

She is close with her house cook. The cook is the nameless character of the novel. His nameless character suggested his non-identical condition in Judge's home, society and even other's life. Nobody even care to know cook's name throughout his life. The character of the cook shows the clear class-distinction in Indian society. He lost the hope to get his identity in his own surroundings. He is happy with his son Biju's life. She send his son to USA to earn money and success. But Biju faced a great identity issues in USA. He went to America illegally. His life at there was very miserable and difficult. He worked in the chain of restaurant and lived in the basement. He hardly went out and never enjoyed the American life. When he worked at there, people despised him and insulted him by called him 'black man' or 'outsider'. He passed his days forcefully and miserably. He could not show his identity and could not adjust himself in American culture. At last, he came back to India but here also he could not remain happy. So, the cultural predicaments and loss of identity messed his total life.

Shameless and Loneliness of her Life

Judge's wife Nimi Patel is also the victim of the loss of identity and cultural predicaments. Bela, the wife of Jemubhai Patel, was so beautiful daughter of Bomanbhai. She married with him at the age of fourteen. At that time, the opinion of bride and groom was not at all important. Her only value is her father gave a lot of 'dowry'. Otherwise she was valueless. Her name was changed immediately after marriage and she became Nimi Patel. The judge always mistreated her and learnt same lesson of shameless and loneliness to her. She lived in her house like 'good for nothing'. He did not accompany with her husband anywhere and stayed alone. Like her life, she died within these four walls of her house and never became a 'better half' of her husband. She never got anything except her name. Her identity remained unconscious and purposeless till the end of her life.

There are many other characters who survived for their Identities and existences. The title of Kiran's second novel suggests thrust or seeks of Identity and effort to achieve it again. 'Inheritance of Loss' is about to maintain or fulfil hereditary loss. Kiran's mother Anita Desai nominated three times for the Booker prize but she could not achieve it. Kiran won the prestigious Booker prize for her second novel 'Inheritance of Loss'. She actually maintains her mother's loss and got the prize. The title is also very identical and appropriate for her award winning novel.

Conclusion

Kiran Desai's work described various universal problems like-class distinction, cultural differences, loss of Identity specially female identity, the role of woman in Indian society, insurgency, superstitious etc. Her first novel 'Hallaballoo in the Guava Orchard' is the nice example to show superstitious mentality pervaded in Indian society. People worships the Baba who was failure and purposeless Youngman who had nothing to do climb on the Guava tree and pronounced himself as a Baba. It is marvellous satire on the Indian society. Kiran Desai points out the keen analysis and psychoanalysis through her works and writings.

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