

**Multicultural Approach and Cultural Conflict in the Select Novels of
Anita Desai and Kiran Desai: An Analysis of *Bye Bye Blackbird* and *The
Inheritance of Loss***

A Dissertation

Submitted to Lovely Professional University.

for the partial fulfillment of the Degree of

Master of Philosophy

in English.



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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "Multicultural Approach and Cultural Conflict in the Select Novels of Anita Desai and Kiran Desai: An Analysis of *Bye Bye Blackbird* and *The Inheritance of Loss*" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy in English** from Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, is my own work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this or any other university.

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ABSTRACT

The statement of Uma Parameswaran, “Home is where your feet are” posits the theory that all immigrants get themselves conformed to the new land, uncritically accepting its protruding edges and glaring margins. However, the picture that emerges while reading immigrant literature is often different and disappointing. Pain, failure and nostalgia govern the life of immigrants. Only a few of them show their fortitude by integrating themselves with the new land, whereas many others fall a prey to frustration, anguish, despair and loneliness.

This research attempts to analyze the dilemma of the migrant, tracing his quest for inheritance. The study investigates whether the immigrant agrees with the paradigm, “Home is where your feet are, and may your heart be there too”, or not. It is also an attempt to explore how multiculturalism, a social theory/ideology, plays a vital role in literary studies. Multiculturalism challenges a monoculture society and celebrates cultural pluralism. The coexistence of numerous cultures and subcultures can develop a healthy human society characterized by co-operation, tolerance, respect and love. The idea of preserving all cultures is a way of recognizing different cultures and representing them as equals in the public arena. The preservation of different cultures leads towards the integrity and truthfulness of society.

Multiculturalism opposes cultural hegemony and appreciates cultural diversity and respects the notion of multiple identities. It recognizes and respects minority cultures that have been suffering because of social injustice, exclusion, marginalization, dispossession, dislocation

and social discrimination. It explores the possibilities of breaking down inter-ethnic, inter-racial discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies and supports the maintenance of social harmony and mutual acceptance of all cultures. The various facets of multiculturalism included in the research are harmonious coexistence of multiple cultures and subcultures, value of tolerance (non-discriminatory attitude), privileges and protection to minority cultures, importance of cultural, religious and ethnic diversities, significance of cultural, communal, ethnic and religious identities.

The manifestations of multiculturalism abroad and how they affect Indian immigrants are two ideas explored here with reference to Anita Desai's *Bye Bye Blackbird*. The Indian immigrants' problem of acculturation is an important theme of the novel. In the process of acculturation, there is a continuous dominance of the Occidental culture over the Oriental. That dominance leads to social disharmony, cultural shocks, unrest and friction. Desai presents blackbirds (Indian Immigrants) as marginalized, dislocated, rejected and unwanted foreigners staying in an alien land. The feelings of alienation, emptiness and barrenness perturb the immigrants. Throughout the novel, *Bye Bye Blackbird*, we see continuous shifts of ideas in the minds of different characters. Thus the analysis of the novel brings to focus Adit's fascination for and disregard to Occidental culture, Dev's disregard to Occidental culture, Europe's racial discrimination, cultural intolerance, problems of interracial marriage, identity crisis, social ostracization, marginalization, cultural rootlessness, socio-cultural conflicts, acceptance, rejection, adjustment and oscillation between Oriental and Occidental culture.

Kiran Desai's Booker-winning novel *The Inheritance of Loss* analyze the immigrant experience and challenges that they face and tries to come in terms with the same heart wrenching question that haunt the immigrants: who am I? Where do I belong? Desai certainly wants us to

explore the pain of the immigrant, and the unfairness of a world in which, as one character puts it, “one side travels to be a servant, and the other side travels to be treated like a king.” The ambitious plunge at the riches of the new globalized world is one of the derivative problems of modern life and consequently concerned with the emigrating masses. Part of the narrative which explores the travails of immigrants reverberates with the first-hand experience of the struggles of Desai herself. Her plot unravels at around the time when the author first came with her mother to America. The novel while focusing on the fate of a few powerless individuals, adroitly tackles every contemporary international issue: globalization, multiculturalism, insurgency, terrorist violence and economic inequality, to name only a few. It captures the true emotions and feelings of an immigrant, and illuminates the pain of exile and the ambiguities of post colonialism across a tapestry of colorful characters.

Chapter 1

Multiculturalism and Cultural Conflicts

Culture is one of the most motivating and stimulating subjects of study in academic circles. It includes anthropology, history, literary studies, sociology and politics. Culture is a slippery but a comprehensive and inclusive term. It is not born or created but it evolves and grows. Therefore, its scope and relevance are not clearly defined. It is often used as a synonym for 'the social' in nature. It is a way of living, a set of beliefs, behaviors and values that makes one particular way of life distinguishable from one another. The meaning of culture in social science is broad enough to include all human traits and social structures which are learnt and not innate. In general non-innate traits are assumed to be different in various societies and the variations contribute to the formation of multiple cultures.

The term 'culture' has a complex, multifarious history and diverse range of meanings in contemporary discourses. Different anthropologists use it differently. E.B. Tylor was the first 19th century anthropologist to define and make extensive use of the term and according to him, "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society" (18). This definition highlights that culture is a social heritage and is a gift of society to mankind. However, anthropologists have made a distinction between 'culture' and 'civilization'. Culture is regarded as the moral, spiritual and intellectual attainments of man, whereas civilization is something outside us and consists of material culture, technology and social institutions. Civilization reveals the external properties and the development of a society whereas the term 'culture' covers the entire field of man's achievements. Culture encompasses all forms of art, recreation and language. It is plural and its plurality includes ideas, languages, forms of worship, architecture, dress and handicrafts which

contribute to its continuity and richness. It means culture does not include only art, music, dance and drama but a whole way of life.

The word 'culture' can be used in two different ways. One is the 'thin' notion of culture and the other the 'thick' notion of culture. The 'thin' notion refers to the style of dressing, cuisine, music, arts, dances and languages. The 'thick' notion is more comprehensive. It connotes a whole way of living -- the integrated web of ideas, traditions, values, customs, habits that give a community its distinctive lifestyle

While the 'thin' notion of culture, involves material (visible) components, the 'thick' notion of culture, involves non material (invisible) components. The former relates to physical objects like artifacts of community but the latter to knowledge, beliefs, values, principles, ethics and the whole way of human life. In the discourse of multiculturalism, it is the non material components of culture that are always taken into consideration.

The term culture has attained larger dimensions of meaning over the years. One of the early scholars of cultural studies in Britain, Williams Raymond defines culture as "an individual habit of mind; the state of intellectual development of a whole society; the arts; and the whole new way of life of a group or people" (16). The aim of culture is to pursue perfection in all walks of life. It is capable of developing the faculties of man in a harmonious and balanced manner. So the cultural man perfects not only himself but also the world. Williams Raymond challenges the Victorian practice of explaining culture as something that pertains to upper and middle classes. Williams does not exclude any class, even the lower class, from the scope of culture. Culture is a way of life which has its bearings not only on art and learning but also on institutions and ordinary behavior. Thus, culture is a process of training, not merely a body of intellectual and imaginative work. With

the passage of time, culture gained newer dimensions with respect to social, economic and political changes.

The 19th century British poet-critic, Matthew Arnold, has defined culture in various ways. "It is sweetness and light, it is the best that has been thought and said, it is internal to the human mind and general to the whole community; it is a harmony of all the powers that make for the beauty and worth of human nature" (48-49). These definitions underline culture's dynamism and its presence in every aspect of social life. The individual who internalizes culture, has the qualities of a real human being. In T.S. Eliot's opinion, "Culture is the way of a particular people living together in one place. That culture is made visible in their arts, in their social system, in their habits and customs and in their religion" (120).

However, each culture has its own distinctive flavor and characteristics, even in the individual representing that culture. The values, pleasures, pains and gestures of an individual bare the imprint of his culture. Culture has its own regulatory force which enables it to approve/disapprove of certain forms of behavior and way of life. It can thus control the nature of human relations and stabilize them. As Abid Hussain says:

Culture is a sense of ultimate value possessed by a particular society as expressed in its collective institutions, by its individual members in their depositions, feelings, attitudes and manners as well as in significant forms which they give to material objects (3).

Culture can be embedded directly from our social contacts and indirectly from television, movies, books, magazines, etc. Since it is basic to the defining of individuals and society, its role in preserving the character of human race is great. Thus, according to Laudon Harvey, "Culture is for men, what water is for fish and air is for birds " (84) and Edward Said has something enlightening to say about culture. "Culture is never just a matter of ownership, of borrowing and

lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather of appropriations, common experiences, and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures" (84). He also underlines the influence of culture on arts, literature, communication etc.

Culture and literature are mutually related. Literature is more than a realistic depiction of human life. It highlights the whole panorama of human life by subsuming in it the cultural traits, institutions, social stratification and power structures of a society. Thus, literature enshrines in it all the cultural aspects of society including its beliefs, knowledge, values and practices. Edward Said has acknowledged the interrelationship between literature, culture and society thus:

Too often literature and culture are presumed to be politically, even historically innocent; it has regularly seemed otherwise to me, and certainly my study of orientalism has convinced me that society and culture can only be understood and studied together (27).

Further, literature embodies social, cultural and universal values which can affect human lives in various ways. A literary work is organic, holding within it a number of cultural themes. As Terry Eagleton says, "a literary work self comes to be seen as a mysterious organic unity... It is 'spontaneous' rather than rationally calculated, creative rather than mechanical" (17).

Literary creation has its roots in various social service such as language, economics, politics, ethnicity, race, gender, class and culture. A text thus is an organic unity of socio cultural relations, racial differences, religious ideologies, class conflicts, gender biases etc. Through it one can view the web of human relations and values of a society. The study of literature of a country therefore, can be enlightening. African literature, for instance, puts before the international audience of various cultural aspects pertaining to Africa. It is through the means of literature that the international audience becomes aware of the 'life' of various countries. Indeed and the press can keep people informed of other cultures, but literature takes them more closer to human life and

hence it is more appealing. Thus, isolating culture from literature is impossible as literature depicts human life that is deeply embedded in a particular culture.

The term multiculturalism was basically used in the USA in connection with the demand of the black and other minority communities for equal representation in American culture and society, including schools, colleges, and universities. Through the years, multiculturalism has gained the status of a movement. It insists that American society has never been 'white' but has been multiracial having various backgrounds. Similarly, as a movement, multiculturalism tries to underscore the value of distinctly different ethnic, racial and cultural groups which cannot be permitted to liquefy into a common culture.

Accordingly, with national boundaries expanding multiculturalism has turned into the new paradigm of education for the Twenty-first century, the world over. Notwithstanding, it is a slippery term greatly misjudged and highly misused. It has gone under examination from a number of people such as politicians, critics, cultural theorists, scholars, who view it differently, contingent upon from where they behold.

Multiculturalism subsumes within it a considerable measure of human differences which essentially include race, culture, ethnicity, religion, occupation, national origin, socioeconomic status, age, and gender. The scope of multiculturalism is very vast. As a social theory, it is applicable to all people representing various backgrounds. At the same time, it can also be a structure which can be used as a standard for assessing one's beliefs, values, and perceptions about cultural diversity, human rights and privileges in a society.

Like other -isms, multiculturalism also has distinctive connotations and implications, both positive and negative. Multiculturalism is not a collection of homogeneous ideas. Rather it is an assortment of different thoughts, ideas, and opinions. Multicultural societies vary in their

composition and thus, there are different versions of multiculturalism. Definitions of multiculturalism will illustrate this perspective. According to Turner Terence, "Multiculturalism is one manifestation of the postmodernist reaction to the delegitimization of the state and the erosion of the hegemony of the dominant culture in advanced capitalist countries" (419).

Postmodernism celebrates the rights of all classes and castes. Thus, it supports the rights of women, Dalits, African Americans, homosexuals etc. It also makes use of the religion, culture, knowledge and belief of the non-West for defining Human Rights. Postmodernism attempts to give voice to all cultures, decentres the 'centre' while making the 'periphery' the center of all cultural action and gives 'voice' to the 'voiceless'. It is projected as a new source of liberation .

Multiculturalism also draws ideas from the postcolonial theory which stands for the rights of the marginalized and weaker sections of society. As Leela Gandhi says "Postcolonialism has found itself in the company of disciplines such as women's studies, cultural studies and gay/ lesbian studies" (42). It intends to challenge the center while being in the periphery. Edward Said, one of the earliest postcolonial theorists, has critiqued the Western/ European disposition of superiority and the Europeans' prejudice against the non-Western cultures, especially African and Indian societies. They group Eastern culture as Oriental cultures or 'others'. European histories projected the Easterners culturally backward, sensual and passive.

As indicated by Said, Western cultures have only projected Oriental culture as something inferior and worthless. Said's idea of orientalism underscores the fundamental point that the West's idea of the East were meant to create discriminations and further imposing power structures. The ideas often augmented the hegemony of the West. Edward Said has explained the term 'hegemony' in Gramscian terms:

In any society not totalitarian, then, certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others; the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as hegemony, a key idea for any comprehension of cultural Life in the industrial West. It is hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, that gives Orientalism the durability and the strength (7).

Multiculturalism does not exist simply as a subject of debate and discussion. It has been accepted in the policy decisions made in countries like Australia, Canada, and the UK. As an official strategy, multiculturalism prevails to make social cultural harmony, mutual tolerance, and respect for various cultures. It not only acknowledges the fact of cultural diversity but also holds that such differences should be respected and appreciated publicly. It enables the visible minorities to attain equality and social justice. It also encourages different ethnic groups to sustain their ethnocultural identity and preserve their religious and cultural beliefs, tradition, rituals, customs, and their lifestyles comprising food habits, and different social cultural practices.

The bearing of multiculturalism on other areas of knowledge has been acknowledged by many. Because of its relation to various disciplines, (such as political science, sociology, education literature etc.) it has acquired various themes from them. Following are a few of them: harmonious coexistence of multiple cultural and subcultures; values of tolerance; equal respect and value to all cultures (non-discrimination); privileges and protection to minority cultures; cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity; cultural liberty; acknowledgement of cultural, community, ethnic and religious identity; recognition of minority cultures, and their differences with the main culture; equality and equal opportunity for all cultural groups; social-cultural harmony; special rights, exemptions and exceptions for minority culture; social heterogeneity and diversity; movement for social change; opposition to cultural imperialism.

Multiculturalism recognizes the presence of many cultures and as a value, it legitimizes the relevance of all of them in a geopolitical area. It acknowledges cultural pluralism based on race, language, and ethnicity. Alex Thio argues "The coexistence of numerous subcultures can develop into multiculturalism, a state in which all subcultures are equal to one another in the same society"(44). The harmonious coexistence of diverse cultures is an indication of a healthy society. Such a society is distinguished by tolerance, cooperation, forbearance, respect and understanding of each cultural group.

Multiculturalism establishes cultural contacts, exchanges cultural ideologies and promotes harmonious coexistence of many cultures -- dominant, patriarchal, superordinate, subordinate, weak, marginal, minority etc. As an -ism, it reinforces the idea of difference and heterogeneity that is symbolized in the concept of diversity. It does not simply point to the presence of many cultures within the nation-state but affirms distinctiveness and uniqueness of each culture which makes human life more varied and meaningful. Each of the many cultures, present in a society, is a unique and heterogeneous entity. So distinctiveness and uniqueness of each culture need to be recognized and considered separately.

Tolerance is a recent political term used in social, cultural, and religious debates. It vigorously contradicts discrimination and conflicts caused by such discrimination. In multicultural society race, culture and religion all foster their own set of values and rules. If we tolerate racial differences, cultural identity and religious diversity, it helps to minimize the chances of conflict and friction in society. As Ramakant Sinari says:

From a utilitarian point of view on tolerance the part of everybody is a prerequisite for the world community's unity, stability and progress, it ought to be the norm of one's behavior irrespective of the nature of circumstances one happens to be in (20).

Tolerance is a positive force, which facilitates good relations in human society. In a vibrant multicultural society, we need to tolerate and respect differences, may be cultural, religious or racial. But differences should not be treated as a deficiency of a specific culture or a group. Therefore, tolerance needs to be considered as a positive value of multiculturalism which seeks social harmony, peace, and coexistence.

Multiculturalism ensures equal respect and value to all cultures. In a sense, each culture contains something that is valuable and admirable. Therefore, all cultures deserve equal respect and value. In this regard Sarah Joseph views "Multiculturalism is used to refer to a desired end-state, as a way of referring to a society in which different cultures are respected and the reproduction of culturally defined group is protected and social diversity celebrated" (159). Each culture gives stability, strength and meaning to human life and holds its members together as a community. It is obvious that respect for culture means respect for a community's right. So culture offers us the overall quality and value of a good life. Respecting culture entails respect to community, principles, beliefs, thoughts, practices and lifestyles. Different cultures represent and characterize different systems of meaning and vision of a good life. Therefore, multiculturalism responds to the issue of cultural discrimination by privileging the goal of respecting minority culture. It means that there is no point of comparing one culture with another, because all cultures are equally rich and deserve equal value and respect. And there is no objective evidence for claiming that some cultures are 'inferior' or 'superior' for human development and social stability. Bhikhu Parekh remarks on the equal value of culture:

Multiculturalism makes culture the central fact of moral and political life and is committed to some form of moral relativism. It holds that individuals are culturally embedded and shaped, that their culture is the most important fact of their life, that cultures are self

contained wholes and neither permit nor can be evaluated by transcultural and universal standards, that they are or should be presumed to be equal value, and that cultural practices need no further authority than the fact they are part of a group's culture (136).

Advocates of multiculturalism view that all cultures, especially minority cultures within a society, should be protected and made secure. The idea of preserving cultures is a way of recognizing minority culture and representing them as equals in the public arena. Multiculturalism values dignity and status of the minority culture. Irrespective of color, caste, origin and nationality, all the minority cultures should be protected and respected. This kind of humanitarian approach enhances social integrity and peace. Gurpreet Mahajan says "Awareness about the dangers of cultural majoritarianism, coupled with the emphasis on cultural diversity, has made preservation of minority cultures as a primary concern of multiculturalism" (64). The preservation of minority cultures leads towards the creation of a healthy and strong human society.

Today, almost every society is internally plural. If our democratic setup is to remain intact, we need to preserve and value all the minority cultures with their differences and uniqueness. Failing to do so can engender endless ethnic violence, cultural conflicts, and confrontations. Therefore, one of the primary concerns of multiculturalism is the minimizing of cultural discrimination and respecting minority cultures.

Multiculturalism is a new coinage with different implications. Its close relations to the postcolonial nations is well known. John Rex says:

Diversity has to be recognized within ethnic communities, as well as between the separate communities, and there must be the possibility of political expression for a variety of different types of individuals with differing types of affiliation to their own communities. The notion of diversity receives a positive value in the discourse of multiculturalism (136).

It suggests that each culture has an individualized particularity, and that uniqueness should be appreciated. Canada, of one of the multicultural nations, has adopted multiculturalism as an official policy and successfully manages its increasing diversity and multiplicity. By providing equal rights and balancing common responsibilities to all the citizens, Canada attempts to cherish multiculturalism. Their endorsing diversity has taught them to accept and respect diverse views. Therefore, the presence of many diverse cultures enhances our self-awareness and offers alternatives ways of life.

Large scale migrations of Africans, Asians and Europeans, due to varied political and economic reasons, have taken place throughout the last three centuries. Imposed shifts of territories have been targeted at different class levels. The masses that were transported as indentured labor became the silenced, invisible ground beneath the feet of the empire builders in their large scale, capitalistic agricultural and other economic enterprises, people who inhabited more than one culture, yet belonged nowhere.

Since the late nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century, migrants to the metropolitan cities (along the second and third generations of the these migrants) have formed a major part of the existing diaspora. The move to the west, towards the center, may be due to “uneven development”, as Gurubhagat Singh notes, “within capitalism” (21). This global movement to the West has led to the emergence of a new narration of travel, displacement, dislocation, and uprooting. The loss of the original homeland has roused visions of imaginary homelands, which in themselves constitute a longed-for utopia. In these narratives, new themes, new anxieties, and searches have been expressed that reflect the traumas and tensions of the displaced as they strive to recover a sense of self or construct a new selfhood. The literature of the

diaspora have taken a position beside the mainstreams, calling for recognition for their acute agony, contingency, and subversion of the established literary principles of general use of language.

Multiculturalism values cultural diversity as it enriches our lives and widens our horizons. If we recognize the richness of cultural diversity of the world, we can easily minimize the severity of some problems like social conflict, discrimination, racism, xenophobia, caste, and gender-related discrimination intolerance. Cultural diversity does not merely include the visible products, like food, clothes, and style, it but it implies freedom to the people in a pluralistic society. Gurpreet Mahajan says

Multiculturalism is not just a statement on the discrimination of cultural minorities in the nation state; it represents an agenda in which promoting cultural diversity is considered an essential condition for ensuring equal treatment for all community within the polity (146).

It means cultural diversity encourages a healthy competition between different systems of ideas and ways of life. After all, culture does not exist in a vacuum but exists in different social groups. So cultural diversity becomes an integral part of human existence and affiliating oneself to it is essential for a peaceful life. Cultural diversity is valuable because it teaches one to identify oneself with others. Diversity also open up the possibility of having dialogues with varied ethnic groups and thus evaluate various parties, involved in the dialogues, their socio-cultural identities.

Religious diversity can be explored from psychological, anthropological, sociological and historical perspectives. Tolerating another religion might not be a great task. But engaging oneself in the religious ideologies of various religions and acknowledging and appreciating them are essential features of multiculturalism. Only such exchanges can bring about peace in a multi religious society, which is a common entity across the world. The culture of a country is often

shaped by its religions as well. Therefore, the people who have imbibed the culture have in them the elements of all these religions. So it may be hard to say that one religion is bad while the other is good. Multiculturalism highlights this aspect.

Like religious diversity, ethnic diversity is also a characteristic feature of any multicultural society. Ethnic diversity has often led to rivalries and clashes. Each ethnic group, multiculturalism implies, has its own value system that is dear to it. A minority's culture heritage can not easily be shattered by a majority culture, although such shattering has already taken place in the world. The important fact is that ethnic diversity opposes ethnocentrism and promotes regular interaction between minority and majority culture.

Human life and its development depend considerably on cultural liberty. Although tradition has its value, individual cultures progress by expanding their liberty for making their own choices. The Human Development Report has underlined that cultural liberty is an important aspect of human freedom, central to the capability of people to live as they would like and to have the opportunity to choose from the options they have -- or can have. Cultural liberty lends newer dimensions to values, beliefs, and various social practices and it can expand so without harming the multicultural fabric of a society. Multicultural democracies prosper with the prosperity of cultural liberty.

One advantage of multiculturalism, as has already been mentioned, is that it challenges the hegemony of a single dominant culture (multiculturalism as a replacement for hegemonic monoculturalism) and attempts to strengthen the ties between other cultural groups by appropriating their differences. The upper hand of one culture is thus discouraged. Thus, multiculturalism has many beneficial functions: it prioritizes cultural pluralism; encourages social

heterogeneity and it sensitizes societies to the dangers of cultural dominance, hegemony, and governance. As Rajeev Bhargava points out:

Multiculturalism brings together a number of distinct themes such as identity, recognition, cultural belonging, which all respond to common human needs but are understood and dealt with variously in different societies (13).

The common sociological assumption about 'identity' is that it mostly pertains to the individual. But the postmodern era has lent its wider connotations. Identity no longer has a monolithic implication but it now carries the notion of multiple identities, which include culture, group, ethnicity, religion, community, nation, universal identity. Such implications constitute identity politics. The individual of the present times, when he/she moves around the borderless world, carries with him all these implications of his identity and apparently the postmodern world has begun to acknowledge them.

Samuel Freeman argues "Multiculturalists advocate that one's cultural identity is so central to a person's good, each distinct cultural group in a multicultural society should recognize and respect the cultural practices of others and not impose its norms, particularly its liberal norms, on them" (19). Cultural identity pertains to an individual affinity to his / her own particular cultural group which shares certain values and bonds. It also involves the visible as well as invisible aspects of a specific culture that differentiates its people from those of other cultures.

Community identity also forms a major issue in multicultural studies. Surinder Jodhka says:

Multiculturalism can come to be viewed as a possible way of dealing with the problem of equality among groups and communities. As a framework of state policy, it recognized cultural differences and community identities as politically significant realities and

advocated for their participation in the functioning of political processes as collective agents (296).

Multiculturalists are of the opinion that in a non-homogeneous nation state minority communities can be at a disadvantageous position. Majority communities in a nation-state can maintain social advantageous positions which can lead to the prejudiced marginalization of 'lesser' communities and the marginalization can deprive them of their rights and opportunities. The agenda of multiculturalism consists of strategies which can resist such deprivations. So that the less privileged also get the opportunity to extend their relations with the wider society. Thus, the value of community identity and its distinctiveness are respected. Further, each community is encouraged to explore their potentialities in a society providing equal opportunities. Again, multiculturalism's community identity stands above all kinds of elimination and humiliation of the marginalized groups.

Another aspect that forms a major theme of multiculturalism is ethnic identity. Dusan explains:

Multiculturalism is a human, democratic and civilized act of society applying it, with a declared position and supporting legislation that members of different ethnic communities should be allowed to express their own cultural/ethnic identity freely (111).

The ethnic identity of an individual is a part of his consciousness. The term 'minority' and 'ethnic' are sometimes used synonymously in order to identify groups which share a common race, language, nationality or relations. However, with the surprising progress in the means of transport and availability of jobs, Western countries have acknowledged the necessity of being multi-religious and multi-ethnic. Ethnic identity helps one to distinguish oneself from the other groups

of a society. Ethnicity puts the respective groups under a single umbrella with its different colors of language, race, religion, nationality and common cultural markers.

Religious identity is a powerful theme in democratic and secular politics. However, over consciousness of one's religion can lead to clashes with other religions. Indeed globalization has accelerated migration and the flow of people from one country to another. The consequence of such movement is religious assortment at a global level. Yet there are occasions when religion clash. The purpose of multiculturalism is to avoid such religious frictions in a society and create the awareness that helps to keep each religion's religiosity intact. However, it is also a fact that religion is often politicalized especially when it comes to the sharing of political power. Politicization of religion often leads to the loss of its ideological face. Multiculturalism treats religion as a spiritual force which can stabilize human life and, as such, asserts that religious identities should be protected and respected. Multiculturalists have given special attention to the minority cultures. Their attempt is to bring to the notice of the wider public the deprivation of minority cultures and to highlight the struggle of these cultures due to nonrecognition. They stand for the equalization of different cultures and communities which can contribute to social harmony and peace. Gurpreet Mahajan remarks: "Multiculturalism is concerned with the issue of equality: it asks whether the different communities, living peacefully together, co-exist as equals in the public arena" (11).

Every culture has its own limitation and only dialogue between disparate cultures can sort out the issues of difference. Such dialogues can be very fruitful when the participants in them have openness of mind and the willingness to acknowledge other's points of view. Multiculturalism advocates cultural sensitivity. All human beings as the bearers of a universal human nature- as persons- are of equal value from the democratic perspective, and all people as persons deserve

equal respect and equal opportunity for self-realization. The principle of equal opportunity supports both majority and minorities for enjoying their cultures equally.

The success of equal opportunity depends on its practice in the actual socio-cultural and political contexts rather on its theorization. Social cultural harmony is a matter of great importance in any multicultural society. The health of such a society can be insured when it grows beyond inter-ethnic, inter-racial discrimination and cultural jealousies. The minority cultures have more deprivations, therefore, multiculturalism upholds the idea of granting special privileges for and exemptions to them. The privileges pertain to religious practices, mode of worship, invitation ceremonies, dress codes, food habits, etc. In Western democracies, a minority of other countries have been granted special concession and privileges. The example of Sikhs in Canada is a case in point. They are exempted from wearing helmets while riding motorcycles. Even in India, the constitution ensures protection to religious practices of all community and special rights to preserve their language and culture.

In the postcolonial situation, differences in terms of wealth, talent, status, interest and opinion matter a lot. Multiculturalism has its root in the politics of diversity and heterogeneity. As such promoting heterogeneity and diversity are two of its basic concern. The purpose of such promotion is the generation of cultural hybridity and novelty, which brings wearing variety in human life. All forms of cultural imperialism and homogenization are an anathema to multiculturalism. What is admired is the originality and identity of distinct cultures. Imposition of values, systems or styles by a dominant culture is never welcome. Underlining these facts, Rajeev Bhargava says "Multiculturalism opposes cultural imperialism and homogenization" (19). Multiculturalists are aware of the emergence of cultural imperialism of the recent times and the opposite by arguing for cultural conservatism.

Multiculturalism is not a single doctrine but is a body of different deliberations and principles. India, being a multicultural country, has adopted and promoted multiculturalism as a social ideology as well as a policy framework. Therefore, this dissertation aims to explore how different principles of multiculturalism are observed/violated in the selected novels namely Anita Desai's *Bye Bye Blackbird* and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*.

Chapter 2

Cultural Identity in the Fiction of Anita Desai

Anita Desai is a leading Indian woman novelist in English. She is concerned with the emotions, thoughts and cultural identities of her characters. Anita Desai said in an interview, "One hopes at the end of one's career, to have made some significant statement on life—not necessarily a watertight, hard and fast set of rules, but preferably an ambiguous, shifting, elastic kinetic one that always remains capable of further growth and change" (James 355). In Anita Desai's writing, one can observe the dynamic nature of her vision (pursuing its aesthetic goals with a single-minded dedication) always seeking to probe the depths of existence and bringing to the surface those submerged instincts, impulses and fears that mould personality and human behavior. In all her novels, readers are confronted with the searching sensibility of her her gravely sensitive characters and witness their attempts to make a coherent sense of their existence. The search for self fulfillment is a quest that unites the various characters of her stories and also reflects a search which is common for all of the thinking individuals in a world where everything is a flux and the chances of finding joy requires the individual's conscious effort and assertion. The psychological and philosophical connotations of her protagonists' quests contribute to the richness and complexity of the novelist's presentation.

Placed among the second generation of Indian writers of English, Anita Desai has been intimately associated with the realm of the introspective, psychological novel and a metaphysical inquiry into the existential dilemma of human beings. Along with other contemporary writers like

Arun Joshi. Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Bharati Mukherjee, Nayantara Sehgal, Shashi Deshpande and others, she represents a new focus and orientation of Indian English writing, which turned away in the sixties from delineating outer reality to the equally powerful inner reality.

Anita Desai's fiction reflects the turmoil of modern existence with its conflicting demands and pressures by delineating the crisis of human personality and human relationships. This is confined within the parameters of home and family in her earlier novels and because her range of focus is limited to the middle class urban sensibility, her fiction has been seen to occupy a limited space in terms of characters and situations. As Prema Nandakumar asserts, "Her novels and short stories are fairly insulated from blatant adulterous relationships, planned brutal killings or incendiary demonstrations.... The explosions in Mrs. Desai's only occur within narrow domestic walls."

Vijayalakshmi Seshadri, who has analyzed her fiction as a statement of female autonomy, links this new orientation to the emergence of a 'class oriented fiction' which addresses the predicaments of the urban educated middle classes as against the predominantly rural milieu of writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Kamala Markandaya, etc. Thus Anita Desai's fictional world reflects a small but strongly delineated space within which her strongly individualistic characters attempt to come to terms with their existence. In a way, the narrow space occupied by her creative world, instead of being a limitation is used advantageously by Anita Desai. Her fictional approach traverses the complex depths of human experience, reflecting its varied nuances in minute detail. The boredom and suffocation, the self centered existence, the intellectual pretensions and limited capabilities behind respectable facades of civilized life, all come under the scope of her artistic vision. Her own sensibility and that of her fictional world located primarily

among the educated, urban class, owes considerably to the twin influences of an Indian way of life and Western influences imbibed through an awareness of Western literature, philosophy and cultural ethos. Virginia Woolf, D.H.Lawrence, Henry James, Saul Bellow, Dostoevsky, Chekov, Hopkins, Kawabata, etc., have been acknowledged sources of illumination and inspiration for her and have undoubtedly influenced her vision and technique. This is visible in her choice of themes and usage of the 'stream-of--consciousness' technique that exhibits the mind's every level, both conscious reflection and unconscious strivings and captures how thought is punctuated by disconnected assertions, spontaneous outbursts, hidden desires, random memories, and persistent fantasy in her earlier novels in her earlier novels. This technique has been used effectively by modern novelists like Virginia Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway* and James Joyce in *Ulysses* to present the different levels of consciousness that operate simultaneously in the characters' mind and are independent of any given moment. Through this technique the writer could indicate the precise nature of the character's present experience and also elaborate on his life prior to the given moment, thus achieving a spatial and temporal expansion.

Combined with the introspective, internalized style favored by Anita Desai to project her characters' dilemmas, it becomes an effective means of exploring the depths of the unconscious which have a strong influence on the conscious behavior of characters. Her multi-faceted and layered narratives bring to center stage the universal existential paradox—of the individual's need of exercising choice and freedom in the face of a finite existence in a universe hostile or at least indifferent to human effort and existence. At the same time, her exploration of the Indian sensibility in the context of a transitional socio-psychological order is particularly relevant for bringing to life the fundamental conflicts inherently present in a changing society. This is

emphasized through the changing face of human relationships—incorporating both the individual's relationship with himself and others around him.

Though she stresses the psychological nature of her characters' predicaments, they are situated against concrete socio-political contexts which are integrally related to their tensions. Her forte is the exploration of sensibility—the particular kind of Indian sensibility that is ill-at-ease among the anarchists and the amoralists, the barbarians and the philistines,. The focus of her interest are those individuals who are situated at the crossroads of multiple influences and seek a rationale of existence that can order their disparate experiences into a coherent whole. The internal turmoil and restlessness of her questing individuals compensate for the limited external action in most of her novels, especially the earlier novels. She follows her own personal vision in formulating her characters' attitudinal predicaments. It would be incorrect to categorize her only as a novelist dealing with the psychic states of her characters because these mental dilemmas are caused by the awareness of certain social obligations and the novelist's interest revolves around the conflict between the inner and outer worlds of her characters.

The self, as the center of the empirical experience, is crucially involved in this search of fulfilment. Conceiving her characters as the pressurized inhabitants of modern world, aware of their individual identity and aspirations, confused about the direction life has taken or apathetic to it, resigned to their individual fates or rebelling against it, through their dilemmas Anita Desai reveals the paradoxes which govern life. Her philosophical exposition operates around a vision of people entrapped in mental prisons, partly formed by uncondusive childhood experiences and naturalistic conditioning, and partly due to their incomplete self-knowledge and knowledge of the world. With their fragmented personalities and shattered psyches, her characters seek the best

means of surviving in these rational times which have shorn life of all sustaining illusions and myths and have reduced man to leading mechanical lives. Full of despair and anxiety, they desperately seek a harmonizing vision that would enable them to achieve a measure of inner peace and calm. Existential despair seems a constant companion of these characters, acutely sensitive as they are. However, they become significant in their very awareness of the limiting propensities of human existence and in their desire to give meaning to life in their own terms.

Anita Desai makes us aware of, and validates, the psychic conflicts which lie beneath the surface of all individual lives, whatever their place in life, and gives a dignity to the anguished perceptions, fears and anxieties of characters who are ordinary human beings, distinguished only by their extraordinary sensibility. The individual is of paramount importance in Anita Desai's world-view and the individual consciousness is her chosen tool of exposition. The "thought, emotion and sensation" of her characters contribute to the somber picture of the world as visualized by her. Her fiction is peopled with anguished individuals who are locked within stifling prisons of self-created and societal expectations and have become alienated not only from others around them but even themselves. They consciously or subconsciously seek fulfillment through an attainment of their emotional, intellectual and spiritual desires but are incapable of a realistic assessment of their situation.

Anita Desai's protagonists attempt to eliminate pressure from their lives by taking recourse to certain strategies, but as the novelist's presentation obliquely suggests, pressure has to be recognized as a part of everyday life. The challenge for the characters, is how to deal with it. Honest self-assessment is a prime requisite for Anita Desai's characters in their search for self-fulfillment. It comprises for the writer the only possible means of living meaningful lives. Only

those characters who are capable of introspection and self-analysis are able to achieve a meaningful reorientation of their life-supporting theories. Those who remain unwilling or incapable of appreciating the multitudinous aspects of life remain incapable of modifying their instinctual and intellectual apprehension of their world and are doomed to restlessness and frustration. The writer emphasizes the sensitive and even over-sensitive consciousness of characters who are deeply unhappy but confused about the origins of this unhappiness, unsure about their future actions but keen to be rid of this anguished awareness by seeing some meaningful patterns in life that can resolve their dilemmas. Unconsciously, seeking for deliverance through some external agency, they ultimately realize the necessity of their own initiative in overcoming their dilemmas.

Anita Desai's protagonists are highly sensitive and are desperate to seek liberation. This results in depicting realistic conformist and non-conformist types of characters. Disillusioned, tortured and emotionally isolated, they find their survival threatened. Silence becomes their natural condition. As a woman writer, Anita Desai has added a new dimension in portraying women. N.R. Gopal writes:

Anita Desai happens to be a leading voice. We may miss in her fiction the customary strains of rural poverty, caste and class conflicts, but she has fascinating stories to tell about individuals who have had to traverse a ground too tricky and treacherous to handle smoothly (4).

At a critical moment when traditional and cultural values had almost become suspect with the collapse of modernism, very few writers seemed less likely to survive. With the impact of Western materialism in the postwar society, and particularly, in the post independent India, the novels of Anita Desai attracted readers from the West and drew-inspiring reviews and

commentaries. Her novels brought major critical shifts exemplifying a postmodernist style of writing, with the critical instances on postcolonialism, urbanization, consumerism relevant in the current times. She retains a powerful hold on readers and critics alike for having initiated the critique on postcolonialism through her novels.

Anita Desai makes an attempt to explore this submerged truth through the exploration of the psyche of her characters against her own vision of life, which is basically dark. While interpersonal relations are absurd, hardly able to give any emotional or spiritual sustenance; conforming to social routine means drudgery, loss of freedom and individuality, and all the vocations and avocations are monotonous and senseless (hardly worth pursuing), when the world is full of violence and destruction, death hovers dangerously over every ray of hope and meaning threatening destruction. An individual feels lonely and alienated in such a morbidly dark world. He is hopeless and full of despair, acutely conscious as he is of a sense of worthlessness and absurdity

With nothing pleasant to live for, almost all her characters revolt against the existing patterns of life but as they do not have anything to fight for, their fight remains half-hearted and ends in failure. Sometimes instead of fighting they tend only to withdraw; but to their shock, they realize in time, that their attempts are futile because withdrawal is unattainable. If they try to seek relief in another world -- the world of fantasy, after entering it they come to realize that it is no better than the world of reality. Thus, man is entangled in a maze from which there is no way out. He writhes in pain all the time and waits for death which too is incapable of giving any meaning to his waiting. Though Desai basically seems to be saying-the longer one lives, the deeper he suffers the bitter assaults of existence. Yet in her later novels, the change to a more positive attitude

towards life is noticeable. This might have been the result of her own changing attitude to life, running almost parallel to her own growth and maturity.

Her novel *Bye Bye Blackbird* deals with Indian immigrants' problems in the alien land of England. Before 1960, England had adopted multiculturalism as a policy to attract 'outsiders' or 'others' because England was in need of unskilled and uneducated workers for her material growth and economic prosperity. However, England has also accepted multiculturalism as a political weapon for ruling people of different cultures and backgrounds.

In the post-war period, people from all around the world with different cultures, backgrounds, religions, mentalities, histories and aspirations have flocked to England, a land of economic prosperity and opportunity. Thousands of Indians and other migrants from various countries arrived in England in search of blue-collar jobs in the growing industries. As K.N. Malik rightly says:

The immigrants were inspired to migrate by Britain's post-war shortage of labor, its expanding economy and the portrayal of Britain as a land of 'great opportunity' by those who had come to the UK through army and navy connections (91).

The ethnic groups of various countries began to subdivide themselves according to their linguistic, cultural and religious identities. As a result, England turned out to be a large multicultural society. retained/preserved their cultural and religious identities. They were very much conscious of their cultural, religious and ethnic identities in England. They asserted their identities by building gurudwaras, mosques and temples. These spiritual centers manifested their religious freedom and autonomy.

The migration of various non-white groups to England after 1960 had a number of important consequences. England started facing some serious problems due to the large inflow of the migrants. The natives believed that the immigrants as outsiders would invade their culture. So England, being a host country, changed its earlier policy of multiculturalism. As a result, the large numbers of colored (Asian) immigrants were paid less and were often discriminated against on the basis of color, caste, origin and religion. Such racial discrimination led to constant friction and conflict. Further, England started its policy of not accommodating and respecting 'other' alien cultures in its mainstream British culture.

In Anita Desai's novel, *Bye Bye Blackbird*, we see a continuous shift between the Oriental and Occidental culture. In the eyes of the Orientals, Occidental culture is more rational and superior which is characterized by logical thinking, tolerance, progress, modernism, independence and peace. However, Occidentals believe that Orientals are primitive, black, savage, violent, fanatic, underdeveloped, traditional and conservative. This has created a permanent rival relation of superiority-inferiority complex between the Occidentals and Orientals. With the help of their mass media, Occidentals have disarmed and neutralized the Orientals and labeled them as 'others' or 'outsiders'.

In power relations, Occidentals have placed Orientals at the periphery and maintained their centrality at a global level. Thus, Orientals become the victims of western ideologies and philosophies, which conceive Europe as a symbol of supremacy of power and civilization. In the post-colonial period, the clash between the Oriental and Occidental culture still continues. In fact, there is a continuous domination of the Occidental culture over the Oriental in the name of acculturation. This is an outright violation of the international assumption that each culture is

autonomous and free to retain its colors and flavors. The dominance and influence of one culture over the other leads to social disharmony, unrest and friction.

Edward Said in his seminal book, *Orientalism* expresses his view on the distinction between the Oriental sense of inferiority and Occidental superiority. Edward Said believes that:

Orientalism is better grasped as a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought than it is simply as a positive doctrine. If the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority, then we must be prepared to note how in its development and subsequent history Orientalism deepened and even hardened the distinction (42).

Anita Desai has successfully depicted Asian immigrants' problems, especially those of Indian immigrants in England. The immigrants from Asian countries were known as 'blackbirds' in the land of white people. In the novel, she presents blackbirds as marginalized, dislocated, rejected and unwanted foreigners staying in a country that has not adopted and accepted them honestly. The feelings of alienation, emptiness and barrenness disturb their lives. The novel starts with the arrival of Dev, Adit's friend, in England. Adit is an Indian immigrant, married to Sarah, a British girl. Their interracial marriage invites clash between two cultures-Oriental and Occidental. She is sandwiched and squeezed between two different cultural forces. By creating the character of Dev, Anita Desai has shown Indians' disregard for and disrespect to British culture. Initially, he is disturbed and distressed by the prejudiced manners and the racial discrimination of the British people towards Indian immigrants. But gradual changes may be noticed in the attitudes of both Dev and Adit during the course of the novel. By marrying a black Asian, Sarah has broken the

social conventions and codes of British culture, which is supposedly superior to and more refined than other cultures.

Throughout Desai's novel, we see the continuous ebb and flow of ideas in the minds of different characters. But the present study analyses the novel from sociological perspectives in order to see how multiculturalism is either reflected or deflected in the novel. The in-depth analysis of the novel reveals diverse themes: Adit's fascination and disregard for Occidental culture, Dev's contempt for Occidental culture, racial discrimination, prejudice, cultural intolerance, narrow mindedness, problems of interracial/intercultural marriage, identity crisis, social ostracization/marginalization, cultural rootlessness, socio-cultural conflicts, acceptance/rejection/adjustment and oscillation between Oriental/Eastern and Occidental/Western culture. Often we do not find a continuous flow of narration in the novel because of such psychological changes within the characters.

Adit, the protagonist of *Bye Bye Blackbird*, leads a settled life as an immigrant in London with his English wife Sarah, a leading female character of the novel. Adit is first of all "fascinated by the Occidental culture and then disillusioned by it. Initially he regards England as a "land of opportunity" (19) and material prosperity. Thus, we see Adit being very critical of everything Indian. He says "Nothing ever goes right at home-there is famine or flood, there is drought or epidemic, always" (129). His fascination for Occidental culture reveals his colonial hangover of valuing and respecting British culture as one that is more rational and advanced than the Oriental culture. J.P. Tripathi has rightly explained Adit's love for Occidental culture:

Love of England and the Occident is exemplified through love of English society and its order and employment opportunity and economic and social and political freedom, love of

English literature, English history, English architecture and monuments, museums, towers of victory and churches, English and Western art and painting and picture galleries of the past and the present, love of English countryside and nature, topography and rivers and valleys and the vegetations (44).

However, his fascination for the Occidental culture remains fresh only till the middle of the novel. His debate with his friend, Dev, exhibits his initial fascination for British culture. As an Asian immigrant, he sharply criticizes Indian ways of life but appreciates British culture:

I love it here. I'm so happy here; I hardly notice the few drawbacks. I'll tell you-I did go back, three years ago, when I got engaged to Sarah and my parents wanted me to come with her. I stayed there looking for a job for four months. All I could find was a ruddy clerking job in some Government of India tourist bureau...I'm happy here...I like the Convent Garden Opera house... I feel like millionaire. I like the girls here...I used to like dancing with them... I like thatched cottages and British history and reading the letters in The Times. I like the pubs. I like the freedom a man has here: Economic freedom! Social freedom! I like reading the posters in the tube... I like weekend at the seaside. I even like the BBC! He ended with a shout of triumph. (17-18).

According to Said, while the Occident promotes autonomy and liberty, the Orient is an embodiment of restrictions and limits. What one notices in him is a kind of fascination for a seemingly superior culture which is indicative of his colonial hangover. If his own country symbolizes a passive and sluggish life, the British society is vibrant in all its aspects: "...here there is no death at all. Everything-animal, vegetable, mineral-is alive, rich and green forever" (129). To Adit, things are really bright in England, "Here the rain falls so softly and evenly, never too much

and never too short. The sun is mild. The earth is fertile. The rivers are full. The birds are plump. The beasts are fat. Everything so wealthy, so luxuriant-so fortunate” (129). It shows Adit’s obsession for Occidental culture that separates him from his ‘home’ culture. Adit has molded and transformed himself entirely up to the expectations of England.

The other reasons for Adit’s admiration for England are social, political and bureaucratic. Thus, he points out that there is no corruption or bribe in England. He feels “the magic of England-her grace, her peace, her abundance and the embroidery of her history and traditions” (157). Further, the clerks of England, unlike their Indian counterparts, are not lazy and he does not have to be bothered by unpunctuality of trains and buses.

What England offers to him is a carefree life that suits a sybarite. What India offers him is a life of inconveniences and a difficult style of existence. But he enjoys the life of a bourgeois in England, which offers him pubs, women to eye and a lot of wine. England for him is a symbol of refinement and sophistication, while India is a home of crudities and dirt. The more he compares his own culture with that of England, the more Anglophile he becomes.

Adit’s fascination for British culture is not so objectionable, but the way he looks at his ‘home’ culture is not acceptable in the light of the theory of multiculturalism, because multiculturalism acknowledges cultural equality, recognition of differences and disapproves the dominance of one culture over the other.

As a person who loves and admires England, “her history and her poetry as much as any Englishman” (164), Adit is too critical of his own fellow countrymen in England. His rude comments on Dev’s behavior and his Indian thinking illustrate this fact “If anyone suggested going to the coffee house, it was you who pointed out that no one had money. If anyone thought of going

for a moonlight drive, you pointed out that there was no moon and none of us had a car. You think black by habit” (19). What is obnoxious in Adit’s behavior is his inability to acknowledge the fact that he himself is a product of Indian culture and that any imitation of English ways cannot make him a native of that country. It may also be argued that his Anglophilia is a consequence of his admiration for his own wife Sarah “I see gold-everywhere-gold like Sarah’s golden hair” (19).

While admiring the history and poetry of the West, Adit seems to forget, rather willingly, the fact that the British have used them to play up their hegemony and maintain their central position at a global level. They have been able to project the idea that what is Occidental is good and desirable and when the idea catches up with the subservient attitude of people like Adit. The task of the white men- to colonize the mind of the Third World-becomes easier. If Adit has greater admiration for the history and poetry of England than those of his own, then it implies the hegemonic success of the West over its blind cultural fans.

What is striking about Adit’s initial anglophilia is his utter disregard for what is native, what is his own. Over the years, the white men have done everything possible to belittle all that is non-European. What one notices in this kind of intellectual superciliousness is their reluctance to acknowledge the value of multiculturalism, the significance of minorities’ identities. Indians like Adit, at least for a while, fall a prey to the glitter of the white ideology of art, philosophy and life. The fact that he gets out of his obsession with everything White itself is a testimony to the hollowness of the White ideology. It also points up the fact that cultures can educate you when you attempt to study them more from close quarters and experience them by living in them. This is illustrated in the attitudinal transformation that takes place in Adit’s mind.

Dev, Adit's friend, comes to England for studying at the London School of Economics. Initially he is averse and reluctant to the idea of staying on in England as an immigrant. But gradually a slow change occurs in the attitude of Dev. His initial encounter with British people and their culture brings unhappiness and discontent. The cultural differences expand when Dev moves about in search of a job. He undergoes various experiences and cultural shocks. The difference between expectation and reality upsets him and makes him self-conscious and insecure. As he says, "I wouldn't live in a country where I was insulted and unwanted" (17). He wishes to go back to India as an "England-returned teacher" (17). He comes all the way to London for a proper education. But in London, he feels to be an unnamed stranger facing various sociocultural problems. In his desperate mood, he calls Adit, his friend "a spineless imperialist-lover" (19). He openly calls London "a jungly city" (10), where people live in their own cocoons without any social concern. Every encounter in London prompts Dev to compare the differences between Eastern and Western cultures (Oriental-Occidental). He observes the neighbors' silence, "their radios, their quarrels their children are all kept behind closed doors" (56). This kind of cultural difference shocks him. Therefore, he feels isolated in an alien land:

If this were India... I would by now know all my neighbors-even if I had never spoken to them. I'd know their taste in music by the sound of their radios. I'd know the age of their child by the sound of its howling. I'd know if the older children were studying for exams by the sound of lessons being recited (56).

It is true that thousands of Third World immigrants in London willfully forget the value of their own local cultures in the glitter of the Western city. But Dev has been able to perceive the loneliness that lurks beneath the sheen of the city. Every individual in the urban center is alienated

from his neighbor. What one notices is a breakdown of any soul-to-soul communication. If an Englishman cannot have real communication with another Englishman, then how can he establish any meaningful relationship with an immigrant who is a black or brownie? The white man's lack of concern for others is symbolized in the 'closed door' referred to in Desai's novel. Dev's confrontation with western indifference, unlike in the case of Adit, is the sudden realization that his own culture is accommodative; it is concerned about others' problems and personal sorrows. Individuals' sorrows in India can be the neighbours' too. And what Dev desires is a transplantation of his own cultural values to England (West). He wishes for the establishment of Indian religious centers and the transference of Indian religious gurus to England.

Indeed there is no dearth of moral and religious ideas, such as 'love thy neighbor as thyself'; in England but in the race for attaining material success, the white man has forgotten the value of such ideas. But what Dev notices is the practice of similar ideas in his own country. Material prosperity and superiority complex have taken away the emotions of love and concern for the other, thereby downplaying the relevance of multiculturalism. What Dev witnesses in England is social disharmony and stratification of cultures. The eagerness to be secluded and unconcerned is visible everywhere and, consequently, what one notices even in a busy city like London is emptiness. And Dev notices this:

Another thing to which Dev cannot grow accustomed, in all his walks and bus rides through the city is silence and emptiness of it---the houses and blocks of flats, streets and squares and crescents---all, to his eyes and ears, dead, unalive, revealing so little of the lives that go on surely must go on, inside them. The English habit of keeping all doors and windows tightly shut... of guarding their privacy.... It never fails to make Dev uneasy to walk down

a street he knows to be heavily populated and yet find it utterly silent, deserted -- cold wasteland of brick and tile (63).

Dev's anglophobia, thus, is a result of his intense observation of English life. The seclusion of the white man is often considered as his introspective nature. But if such introspection does not lead to the self-discovery that every human being has individuality, then it is a meaningless self-analysis. What one needs to discover is the connection of one's self with the other. Then multiculturalism, in spite of the diverse elements in it, can be a reality. Appreciation of a different individual is the appreciation of a different culture and what is lacking in a multicultural society like England is this accommodation of a different culture or the openness of a liberal mind. Consequently, as Dev notices, the city can offer only a sense of emptiness to the inhabitants. What he is aware is the close ties that exist in his own country, which is much more multilingual and multicultural than any European country, between people even in a sparsely populated locality and that is a noteworthy difference between the Occident and the Orient.

This difference is acknowledged even by the British as a response of Sarah, Adit's wife, reveals. When Dev questions the unashamed behavior of the lovers in Hyde Park, while they make a show of their love ignoring the passers-by, Sarah replies: "English people aren't as self-conscious as they are supposed to be" (65). They are not self-conscious because they are cocooned in their own places of dwelling. The Dev-Sarah discussion on the lovers' behavior reveals further the vast cultural differences that exist between the East and the West.

Here the comparison between Oriental and Occidental cultures is not so important, but cultural differences should be recognized positively if they do not cause harm to social peace and harmony. After all, each culture has something new and valuable to share with others, but sharing

cultural differences should not necessarily lead to social crumbling and disintegration. As a social theory, multiculturalism centers around the basic idea that every culture presents only a limited range of worldviews. The assistance of other cultures is required not only to understand the world better, but also to enrich its own culture and expand the horizon of general understanding. Therefore, no culture is wholly worthless; each carries some value for its members. This also suggests that no culture is perfect. So multiculturalism prioritizes cultural pluralism and sensitizes the dangers of cultural majoritarianism or dominance.

However, Dev also does not seem to acknowledge fully the value of multiculturalism. He assigns himself the role of a cultural ambassador to India:

I am here, he intoned, as an ambassador. I am showing these damn imperialists with their lost colonies complex that we are free people now, with our own personalities that this veneer of an English education has not obscured, and not afraid to match ours with theirs’.

I am here... to interpret my country to them, to conquer England as they once conquered India, to show them, to show them (123).

But he is performing his role as ambassador with Vengeance in mind. The expression ‘these damn imperialists’ bears this out. He is proud of the harmony and peace that exist in his country even though it is highly multicultural in its composition. There is an element of arrogance in his outburst and it causes him to downplay the sharp divisions that have existed in his country along the lines of caste and religion. What he desires now is a cultural invasion of England. His scorn for the Englishman’s ‘white’ superiority consciousness is understandable. His assertion that English language and literature were white man’s weapon for colonizing the Indian mind is also justifiable. But his desire to colonize the cultural thinking of the west is essentially wrong, for

multiculturalism does not rest on the principle of an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth. What is acceptable is Dev's critique of the continuing impact of British hegemonic attitude. But his imaginary moral and cultural attack on the British is suggestive of his own colonial aspirations. In this sense his Anglophobia is unjustifiable. What is perhaps admirable in his anti-British stance is his decision to not to be a "Macaulay's Bastard" (122).

In another early outburst, Dev hopes to reverse the whole history of the British colonization of India. He imagines the Sikhs and the Sindhis going to England as traders and gradually consolidating their power there. He imagines the large-scale migration of Indians and the spreading of Indian ways, customs and manners there. He visualizes the establishment of temples and gurudwaras as also the exchange of Indian yogis and gurus in place of priests and patrons. He also imagines the replacement of Greek and Latin with Sanskrit and Punjabi swear words. In short, he wants 'history [to] turn the tables now' on England.

However, once again we notice the impracticality of Dev's colonial imaginings. It is very difficult for anyone to take history backwards again. History has its own course and even if it repeats, it repeats itself. Dev's notion of the Indian colonization of the West is slightly quixotic. While being in an alien land he had all the opportunities to be a native imitator of the west. But he maintained his identity as an Indian. Yet, what is objectionable in his Indianness is his belief that everything Indian is good and everything British is bad. His hope to be a cultural ambassador in England does not seem to be impressive. The British has had the opportunity to confront a great cultural ambassador like Gandhi. Over the years many such ambassadors from various countries have tried to educate nations, including Britain, in the positive dimensions of multiculturalism.

Further, even in India there has been frequent instances of violations of multicultural values. The subjugation of the dalits by the so-called upper class is a case in point.

However, if Dev is Desai's mouthpiece, then Dev's outbursts may be viewed as her legitimate postcolonial stance as a writer. Then Dev's utterances should be taken as examples of exaggeration meant to express her anti-colonial stance. They serve the purpose of bringing out the pain of subjugation and hegemony experienced by the colonized. She seems to point up the fact that all forms of colonization are a violation of the essential democratic principles of multiculturalism.

India was a British colony for nearly three centuries. During this long period, England could consolidate its political power and exploit the resources available here. Although Indians outnumbered the British rulers, political and military power enabled Britain to keep Indians as their subjects and wield her power freely. However, the position of the Indian immigrants has been different. They have always been controlled by the laws of the country. As the number of immigrants began to raise, the laws became stricter. It was the Englishman's necessity to keep the immigrants as a minority and thus overcome the fear of the latter outnumbering the local people. The White man's rigid immigration laws only curtailed the freedom of the Indian. As Viney Kirpal says:

Englishman's feeling of insecurity made them accuse the immigrants of having lowered their standard of living, of having deprived them of employment, of having fouled up their beautiful countryside, of having brought crime and disease to their land... and so on and so forth (247).

The laws of the British government have often been discriminatory. They often manifest in society in various forms of discrimination based on race, color, origin and culture. A recent example of such racial bias is Shilpa Shetty's experience in England at the Big Brother reality show.

The suppressed racial antagonism against the Asian immigrants is a result of the white man's long-established belief that he is superior to the non-white people. Edward Said's attitude to the Orient, as he argues, is shaped by his own people's history of the East. As such, Indians, along with other Asians, face inequality on the basis of colour and race. In such a society multiculturalism does not seem to have a healthy future. There the immigrants feel frustrated, alienated and marginalized.

These feelings find clear expression in Dev's antagonism towards everything British. To quote K. Jha:

Bye Bye Blackbird is full of situations in which we find characters struggling to survive the racial onslaught. Racial prejudice often gets expression through the accusation against the coloured immigrants for spreading dirt and filth (161-62).

However, Adit's mother-in-law, a racist to the core, cannot accept her own Indian son-in-law and his Indian friends. When they enter her kitchen: "It was evident she was thinking that all she had heard about the filthy ways of the Asian immigrants was correct" (133). She "charged in, her face as flushed and her eyes as big as though she expected to find murder being committed in her kitchen" (157). What is evident in such remarks and instances in the novel is the age-old belief of the Occidentals that the culture of the Orient is primitive, filthy, inferior and dirty. The history of

the Orient, as narrated by the historians of the West, is meant to consolidate European centrality and to depict the Third World as the 'Other'.

The peculiar kind of racism that prevails in England has a historical background. The colonial dominion of the British in India has given them a sense of superiority which comes in handy in the present when the erstwhile subjects are immigrants in their country. Desai's novel comments on this secure position of the Englishman. As P.K. Pandeya puts it:

The novel touches on racial problems and feeling in England. This feeling becomes sharper when it comes to 3 colonizer nation like England who has ruled over us for a long time. It is not simply white man's burden but also the feeling of superiority by virtue of their being ruler over us (20).

Thus, Desai seems to imply that England cannot be a melting pot of cultures. It is a fertile ground for discrimination and marginalization of the Eastern people. The inherent craze of the ruling class once again manifests itself in the petty discriminatory feelings of Mrs. Simpson and Roscommon James, Adit's mother-in-law.

Discrimination based on color and race is treated with illustrations in *Bye Bye Blackbird*. The shocking fact is that even the white children grow up with a warped knowledge of color and race differences. Thus, while on a sightseeing trip to London, Dev is called a 'wog' by a schoolboy. Dev's reaction to the insult is sharp, but the point is the boy's awareness that anyone other than a white-skinned person can be insulted publicly. A little later we find Dev pointing out to Adit that "the London docks have three kinds of lavatories-Ladies, Gents and Asiatics" (17). Even nationality of an individual, thus, becomes a criterion for discrimination. In some cases, differences in race and colour can endanger the Asian immigrants' life. For instance, Mala, an immigrant

woman, explains how her son reacts when he is chased by a gang of English children. He shouts at them in despair: "I'm not black! I'm not black-I'm grey!" (26). As Usha Bande argues "In *Bye Bye Blackbird* Anita Desai tackles issues pertaining to racial and cultural prejudices, adjustment and acceptance, and the subjective and objective views of a historical situation hard to shake off" (*Colonial Consciousness in Black American, African and Indian Fiction in English*, 191).

What the immigrant feels in England is the pressure of the dominant white culture on him. The natives of England have succeeded in marginalizing the immigrants and in intimidating them with their status of a minority. There is no culture in England for the immigrants to identify with. Their desperate attempts to get back to their roots and Indian identity (as in the case of Dev, for example) suggest their cultural rootlessness in Europe.

There are occasions when the immigrants' economic worth is judged by their origin and appearance. The fact is that the immigrant's white counterpart may be less rich and lower in employment status. Yet the latter's air of superiority is evident, it is often repulsive. The behaviour of the pedlar of Russian icons to Dev is a case in point. Dev's attempt to know the price of an icon is contemptuously ignored by the pedlar. Note this exchange between them on the price:

'How much?'

'Oh', says the young man, smiling with an infuriating kindness, 'it is expensive.'

'Yes. How much?' repeats Dev, more heatedly, on fire to possess an object which he has so far viewed with a detached and objective ardor.

'Very much', the man bites on the words as though they were thin threads, snap-snap, still smiling like a jocular alligator. 'Oh, very much. I wouldn't even name the price to you.'

(71).

Dev is almost treated like an untouchable who is culturally backward and socially mean. However, what is bright about Dev's character is his ability to critique the hollowness of the white culture. The fact that he has married Sarah, a white woman, indicates that his anger is not aimed at the white human beings but at their superiority complex. What he expects of them is a certain degree of mutual concern and respect for the 'Other'. His irate outbursts are, in a sense, his challenges to the European cultural hegemony and an assertion of his faith in the inherent values of Indian culture, and, by extension, the relevance of other small cultures. What he seems to imply is that while asserting one's own culture, one can also maintain friendly relations with other cultures and minority groups. Multiculturalism promotes healthy dialogues between cultures, but what Dev is confronted with is prejudice, inequality, distrust, injustice and oppression.

The British in Desai's novels are so colour-conscious that even jobs are reserved for the fair-skinned Europeans. What is all the more shocking is how people are categorized according to their religion. Thus at an interview for a job, the interviewer informs Dev that the latter cannot be offered the job because he is not a Christian. And the interviewer openly speaks of the religious reservation of the job:

Not a Catholic? Not even Christian? ...I am sorry. Dear me, I ought to have mentioned it at once... we simply must have a Catholic, or at least a High Church man.

It's public relations...I'm afraid it wouldn't do to have a Hindu gentleman in this job. (108).

It now becomes evident that the white (European) hegemony is directed not only by cultural, social, racial and economic considerations but also by religious factors. The white woman Roscommon-James has no qualms about openly admitting religious priorities in giving jobs to people of other cultures and religions. Thus, she informs Dev that it is not easy for Indians to get a job in London, for "there are many people with right complexion, of course, but not for Indians"

(149). What is overlooked by the European employers is the qualification of the candidate. They begin with the assumption that Indians are of a lesser intelligence and competence and that they cannot be offered all jobs. Once again, discrimination in professional opportunities is a characterizing feature of British/European hegemony. The very hegemonic nature of the West is a direct violation of all principles of multiculturalism. It fails to acknowledge the necessity of cultural diversity and promotes favoritism. The existence of different religious groups can be a feature of a multicultural society, but when people are discriminated against on the basis of their religions and national status; multicultural principles get violated very badly.

What is perhaps shocking is the attitude of the Europeans to racial discrimination and the casual way in which they take it as a normal event in their societies. When Adit's friend, for example, asks Mrs. Roscommon-James about a riot that takes place in a factory, she replies, rather unconcernedly: "Heavens, one of those racial things" (136). Desai reminds us of the treatment that Asian immigrants have been receiving from the imperialists. To the imperialists, the immigrants have been outsiders and the latter often protest which lead to riots and acts of xenophobia. The immigrants are a threat to the natives and rather than passing laws for peaceful coexistence, they indulge in acts which have no justification in a civil society.

However, it is significant that Desai doesn't permanently distrust the possibility of a proper multiculturalism even in the racially ravaged England. Sarah's marriage to Adit illustrates this point. By marrying Adit, a colored Indian, Sarah has violated certain unwritten codes and conventions of the color conscious white society. At the surface level, the validity of such a marriage will not be challenged even by the rabid racists. They might remain silent for the sake of social propriety. But the silence is no indication of an approval of the marriage. Indeed nobody questions the validity of Adit-Sarah marriage. But once the marriage is over, she is humiliated not

only by her colleagues at her school, where she is a secretary, but also by the pupils of the school.

In this regard, N.R Gopal says:

Sarah incurs the anger of the white society by marrying a brown Asian as she had broken the social code of England. Hence, she is always subject to taunts and comments of not only her colleagues but even of young pupils of the school (175).

Her colleagues ask her about Adit and his family background. Julia, for instance, asks: “Your husband isn’t going to stay here forever, is he?” (36). Her students pretend not to have seen her. When they see her, they warn one another, “Hurry, Hurry, Mrs. Curry” (34). Her colleagues want to know Adit’s future plans, too. Thus, in her own country, which has had its dominion over many countries and cultures in the world including India, she cannot find any sign of mutual trust and cooperation. As Meenakshi Mukherjee says “Sarah is an unusual character who is displaced in her own country, whose crisis of identity will perhaps never be solved although she believes that going to India will be the final resolution of her ambiguous existence” (228).

This kind of humiliating existence created in Sarah's mind: a sense of alienation. The loneliness that she feels in her own white society becomes complete when even her parents extend a cold welcome to her and her husband on their first visit to her house after marriage. For the parents, it seems, the issue is that their daughter has married an Asian, the Other, with whom they cannot establish a heart-to-heart relationship. In fact, they maintain a feeling of aversion to him. Consider, for example, the father-in-law’s reaction, which confuses Adit:

Adit could not comprehend a parental relationship so cool that the parent did not rush out and embrace the daughter whom he had not seen since last Christmas, but kept himself out of her way as though he were avoiding her. He did not say this aloud-he had, in the past, sometimes mentioned his astonishment and disapproval of their colourless, toneless,

flavourless relationship only to have Sarah say impatiently, 'Oh we can't stand cuddling and netting and all that!' to which Adit had protested, 'But your mother loves it when I give her a hug and a kiss,' and then was offended when Sarah gave a small snort of scorn (142).

The father gives no sign of recognizing them or of being pleased by their visit. He has retired not only from his job but also from 'Sarah's life'. Such discriminatory treatment has made her feel marginalized. The taunts of colleagues, the contempt of students and the standoffishness of her own parents have had a weakening impact on her psyche. She doesn't dare to meet people like a normal human being. Like an outcaste, she avoids meeting people. Even for shopping she goes to distant places so that she can escape the accusing, jeering looks of her own people:

She walked out into the soft, muzzling rain with her packages, reassured to find herself an unidentifiable, unnoticed and therefore free person again. The bus came and she found herself a seat next to the door so that she did not need to push past or touch anyone, and she turned her face to the blurred window, observing the melting greys and greens of the common with that fixed expression of stark loneliness that had so stirred her husband on another rainy afternoon. (39).

The irony is that she can't feel at home in the company of her own white fellow beings. Further she can feel her identity and freedom when she is amidst strangers. In a sense, she is homeless in her own native land, and that itself is a commentary on England's idea of multiculturalism.

However, what is striking about Sarah's character is that she does not like to be a passive sufferer for long. She faces marginalization at every place- home, school and society. In fact, these places are institutions, which are supposed to maintain human values and relations. Ironically, they

have become places of hatred, spite, discrimination and contempt. They have cleaved Sarah's self and shattered all her sense of belonging. Any woman could become a nervous wreck in such a situation. Indeed she is shattered but she makes an earnest effort to piece together her shattered self. She realizes that unity of self can be achieved only by renouncing and denouncing her own culture and society, which are white and hegemonic. She wants to get back to her own identity as Sarah, although she is not unhappy with her identity as Mrs. Sen. The problem is Mrs. Sen is nobody, she is only a mask:

Who was she- Mrs. Sen who had been married in a red and gold benares brocade sari one burning, bronzed day in September, or Mrs. Sen, the Head's secretary, who sent out the bills and took in the cheques, kept order in the school and Was known for her efficiency? ...She was nobody. Her face was only a mask, her body only a costume. Where was Sarah? (34-35).

Surprisingly, unlike the typical white (wo)man, Sarah has great faith in the institution of marriage and the bond of love that has sustained it over centuries. For recreating her own identity and also for maintaining the validity of marriage, she decides to move out of her own country. She takes the path breaking decision of settling down in India, the land of her husband. It is a land; she seems to have understood, that still holds some respect for marital relationship. It is a land that has accommodated people of diverse backgrounds, cultures and religions for centuries. Further, it is a land that has been a shelter for the alien and the exile. Weakness though it may appear, the land was friendly even to the invaders (the Europeans) who were wolves in sheep's clothing.

Sarah's decision to adopt India as her homeland is an outcome of her feeling that "she had become nameless" (31). What she seeks is a land where she will not have to live with the silent fear of being indirectly ostracized. Since she has already "her ancestry and identity" (31), she needs

a place where she can find humanity, kindness, fellow feeling and self respect. As B.R. Parmar says:

Sarah is homeless in her own homeland on account of her marriage with an Oriental immigrant. Sarah is firm and fair in her commitments. She tries to be a sincere and loving wife to her husband. She does not want to destroy her conjugal life for the sake of her different cultural identity. She is so calm and composed that she never complains about anything either to her husband or to her parents. She does not like to remember her past. She wants to enjoy present with self-identity and self-respect (36).

It is significant that Sarah's decision matches Adit's disillusionment and disenchantment with English culture and manners. Bitter experiences in England teach him to respect his own country with all its weaknesses and drawbacks. If England has advanced civilizationally, it has failed to recognize human worth. What India's multiculturalism underscores, at least in principle, is the worth of a human being. In spite of all his 'love and regard' for England and self-hatred, England does not accept him (Adit). This realization of exclusion really hurts him.

Sarah's decision to move to India with her Indian husband has an element of protest in it. She is moving to a country that was ruled by her country in the recent past. As such her own people, with their hegemonic spirit, have been looking down upon the country and its people. But Sarah quite challengingly establishes a blood relation with an Indian and further adopts a British colony as her own motherland. When her own country disowns her, she makes her home in a country that England subjugated. In this she is joining the ally of the other and thus rises in revolt against the white assumptions of hegemony and superiority. Thus her marriage is a challenge while at the same time it is her means to blend the Occident with the Orient and thus suggest the possibility of multiculturalism that crosses the artificial boundaries of colour and creed laid by white

hegemonic/dominant structures. These structures are represented by her own parents, her colleagues, students and the society at large.

There may be problems of adjustment awaiting Sarah in her new avatar as an Indian wife. But it is definitely more tolerable than the humiliations she experiences in her own country. Therefore, she has decided to face the problems with utmost coolness. She decides to play her role as a wife who can validate the merits of marriage. She leaves the theatre of artificialities (England) and enters the real world. Anita Desai has effectively developed Sarah's image as an Indian wife who accepts her husband with all his cultural, religious, social and ideological diversities. Though Sarah has her roots in British soil, her decision to embrace Indian culture is worth noting. By marrying an Asian immigrant, she has tried to convey a message to the plural world that the time has come to respect and value different cultures because the world is becoming a global village where everybody has his/her own significance and relevance. Therefore, Sarah's marriage symbolically underscores the need to accept and respect all kinds of diversities- cultural, religious, social and ideological and develops a sense of tolerance, patience, open-mindedness and forbearance.

Adit's disenchantment with English way of life is timely. Desai uses his frustration to emphasize the value of one's own cultural identity. Sarah loses her identity in her own homeland, while Adit loses it in an alien land. The mistake he commits is to create a false foreign identity in a hostile surrounding. The shocks he receives from various sources in England save him from damaging his self under the pressure of racial discrimination. His visit to his Wife's house and the cold treatment he receives there is unbearable. He discovers that his mother-in-law hates and despises him. He feels "depression pouring into him like lead, hot when it entered in the form of Mrs. Roscommon-James' sniffs and barks..." (176). At one of the gatherings, Bella calls him an

'Indian', a 'foreigner' and a 'dirty Asian'. He realizes that he cannot be a normal human being in England. He even asks:

Why does everything have to come to this-that we're Indians and you're English and we're living in your country and therefore we've all got to behave in a special way, different from normal people? (187-88)

So Adit's problem is living an artificial life in the midst of standardized mores and manners. When he behaves in the most natural way he is branded as a dirty Asian. The values of his own culture do not get any respect among the white men. Confronting to the pretentious and unreal way of English life is a serious problem. The sense of alienation and marginalization becomes so acute in him that he realizes his mistake of being an anglophile all these years. The transformation now is from anglophilia to anglophobia. The latter feeling finds expression in his decision to leave England for good with his wife. He informs her and asks her if she will follow him:

I can't live here any more. Our lives here-they've been so unreal, don't you feel it? Little India in London. All our records and lamb curries and sing-songs, it's all so unreal. It has not reality at all; we just pretend all the time. I'm twenty-seven now. I've got to go home and start living a real life. I don't know what real life there will mean. I can't tell you if it won't be war, Islam, communism, famine, anarchy or what. Whatever it is it will be Indian, it will be my natural condition, my true circumstance. I must go and face all that now. It's been wonderful here. Sarah, you know I've loved England more than you, I've often felt myself half-English, but it was only pretense, Sally. Now it has to be a real thing. I must go. You will come? (203-04)

Witnessing this transformation of Adit is heartening. Desai carefully politicizes his experience by bringing it in the broad context of colonization. Thus, she wishes that Adit's shaking off of a

hegemonic impact should be ideally the move that every Indian should take. The novelist thus moves from the particular to the general. England is presented as ‘an aggressor’ who has ‘tried to enmesh, subjugate and victimize him with the weapons of Empire’. The significance of Adit’s transformation lies in his successful attempt to break away from all bondages of the Empire. England, Adit’s ‘once-golden Mecca’ has now taken the form of the proverbial colonizer who is opportunistic, brutal and cold. Adit’s decision is the revolt of the colonized. What is commendable is Sarah’s willingness to share his decision to wriggle out of the clutches of the colonizer. Both have suffered on account of their skin colour and inter-racial marriage. Sarah warmly sympathizes with him, because she has seen his whole personality cracking “apart into an unbearable number of disjointed pieces, rattling together noisily and disharmoniously” (200). She takes up the painstaking responsibility of piecing together his crumbling personality. Yes, she has her apprehensions about her new life in an alien land. Yet she is optimistic: “I think when I go to India; I will not find it so strange after all. I am sure I shall feel quite at home very soon” (219). She consolidates her hope practically by suggesting, “Let’s have an Indian meal tonight” (179). Even before reaching India she can compare the life in England with that of India. In her own country, “everyone is a stranger and lives in hiding. They live silently and invisibly. It would happen nowhere in India” (56).

Adit still has doubt about her willingness to leave her country and hence he poses the question, “Could you really leave all this, Sally, and go away to India to live?” (83). And her answer is an emphatic ‘yes’. Adit finds a partner in his revolt and the purpose of their rebellion is the establishment of true multiculturalism, which has international dimensions. With her, Adit is going to carry a message:

And how he was going to carry the message of England to the East-not the old message of the colonist, the tradesman or the missionary, but the new message of the free convert, the international citizen, a message of progress and good cheer, advance and good will. (225-26)

Their new message bears the multicultural principle of peaceful coexistence. Significantly, Adit who returns to India as a cultural ambassador has no grudge against the country of the white. And that indeed is a Gandhian attitude.

Anita Desai does not wish to suggest that multiculturalism is impossible in England. The activities of the character Emma, an English lady, illustrate this fact. She is an ardent fan of Indian culture. Very early in the novel, we read about her decision to start a club:

A little Indian club to which my Indian friends could come on Wednesday afternoons- I choose Wednesday because it always rains and strangers would be happy to have somewhere to go and have something to do. They could meet some really interested, intelligent English people and tell them, teach them about India. (41-42).

She is able to address Indians as her friends. She has recognized the value of Indian spirituality and has decided to “give lessons in yoga too” (42). The club has no materialistic concerns because, according to Emma, “there will be no money transactions at all in my club” (42). She wants the club members to learn from famous Indians: “Then, when famous Indians visit London- philosophers or painters or musicians~ we shall invite them to come and address the Little India club” (42-43). Emma is at least making an attempt to recognize the value of another culture-the culture of a former colony of her own imperialist country.

Matriarchal value system is not something that is not well appreciated in India. Yet Anita Desai’s Sikh lady upholds the merits of matriarchy. The lady is generous and munificent. Her

prime intention is to enable the immigrants from India to feel at home in the strange land of England. She is well aware of the pains of the rootless immigrants. Her matriarchal dominance is positive and encouraging. On one occasion she admonishes Dev for not seeking her help:

And you did not come to us for help? What is this--are we not neighbors? Am I not like your own mother? It is bad you have not thought of coming to me and calling me mother. I am here to be mother to all our poor Indian boys lost and alone in this cold country. And my sons-such strong young men-can't they help you? Each one of them has a good job, a good pay. Every week they bring their full salary to me. I divide it into three parts-one for their own pockets for they are my sons and I must keep them happy, one for the household, and the third, the largest, for our family and our land in Punjab. (18).

The warmth and love she exudes have wiped out the authoritarianism of the matriarch. While seclusion, privacy and fear of the other characterize western life, here is a lady who encourages people to maintain fellow feeling and mutual concern. She, too, upholds the merits of cultural accommodation.

Indeed we come across such instances through which Desai underscores the greatness of multiculturalism, which is essentially Indian. Yet she has no illusory belief that the fabric of Indian multiculturalism is strong. Rather, she seems to assert that multiculturalism is possible only when the parties involved have the readiness to forget and forgive. She also seems to believe that multiculturalism can be maintained only with difficulty. The picture of India outside is rosy and romantic, but it is not really so. Desai makes Adit say it for the knowledge of Sarah who is going with him to India with much hope:

...that romantic India in which all flowers were perfumed, all homes harmonious and every day a festival. 'She's not going to live in a maharaja's palace, you know. She's going to live in a family of in-laws, a very big one, and learn their language and habits (213).

The family she is going to is a microcosm of the culturally diverse India. It is large, there are people with conventional and modern viewpoints and there are also chances of friction. Yet such large families still survive; they show how this difficult balance of diversity/differences is maintained. Like these families, India too has maintained the balance of cultures, religions, sects, beliefs and opinions although it has been occasionally made upset by intolerant groups. Shedding of ego, adjustment to unknown set-ups and respecting others' sentiments are the essential factors that have contributed to the continued existence of multiculturalism in India. Desai says as much. The Sikh lady, for instance, tells Sarah that if the latter has to be happy in India, she has to be "an Indian wife, an Indian daughter-in-law" (218). The old lady perceives typical Indian qualities in Sarah: "When I look at you, when I see you going out in the morning and coming home, always so quiet with your head bent, not looking at anyone, then I think you are one of our own.... You will see it is your own country" (218). Sarah has already shed her English ego to adjust herself to a society that has certain cultural norms. Certainly, this kind of submission suggests colonial tendencies, yet they are necessary for the maintenance of harmony and unity.

True, such Indian set-up, where submission is a precondition, has its drawbacks. Yet there is an air of informality and freedom in the Indian way of life. Many things which are too formal (including family relations) and time-bound in the West are pleasantly loose and carefree in India. Violations of time do not always invite the wrath of others. There is a kind of timelessness in India, which may be irritating to the West, but forgetting the clock often strengthens human ties. Infringing the dictate of the clock is a way of culturally distinguishing the Oriental from the

Occidental. Entering a bar late in the night, with Dev, for a bottle of beer, Adit succinctly puts it across to the bar man:

You must admit that it is the trouble with Orientals--we don't really believe in watches and clocks. We are romantics. We want time to fit in with our moods. It should be drinking time when we feel like a drink, and sleeping time when we feel like sleeping. How is the Englishman to understand that? He's been a clock, watcher since the day he was born. Do you know, English mothers even feed their babies and put them to bed according to the clock? (162).

With the help of this passage, Anita Desai has properly compared two different cultures- Oriental and Occidental. The Orientals do not believe too much in watches, whereas the Occidentals are too punctual in their visiting hours and prompt in doing their work. As Adit says that Orientals are romantics who believe in mood rather than timings. By supplementing some factual examples, Adit appreciates the good habits of the Occidentals who live their lives in accordance with a clock. On the contrary, he passes negative remarks on the Orientals who consider no time constraint. Here the comparison of two cultures is not important, but cultural differences should be considered positively for maintaining social health and strength. After all, there is no one culture, which is perfect, but each culture has something novel to share. Multiculturalism not only supports cultural pluralism but also respects uniqueness and distinctiveness of each culture. Therefore, cultural clashes have no place on the agenda of multiculturalism. The present analytical research of this novel simply shows how multiculturalism functions in different forms to resolve some socio-cultural problems that create waves of friction and hostility in the world.

Chapter 3

The Multicultural Perspective in the Fiction of Kiran Desai

With the advent of Kiran Desai's writings, a new literary tradition was born. As might be expected from the rich output of her cultural background, Kiran Desai proved her literary legacy in formidable terms. With storytelling in her blood, Kiran Desai daughter of the prominent Indian origin writer Anita Desai, created literary history by being the youngest ever woman writer to win the prestigious Man Booker prize for Fiction (*The Inheritance of Loss*) at the age of thirty-five. Salman Rushdie's prestige prophetic lauding of Kiran Desai's writing powers proved absolutely right, when he says :

Kiran Desai is the daughter of Anita: Her arrival establishes the first dynasty of modern Indian fiction. But she is very much her own writer, the newest of all these voices, and welcome proof that India's encounter with the English language, far from proving abortive, continues to give birth to new children, endowed with lavish gifts (260).

Kiran Desai, first came to literary attention when in 1977, her excerpts found an honorable mention in Salman Rushdie's edited anthology *Mirrorwork: Fifty Years of Indian Writing*. In 1998, came her celebrated debut, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, which was published to unanimous acclaim in over twenty two countries and went on to win the Betty Trask award, a price given by the Society of Authors for the best (new) novels by Commonwealth citizens of nations under the age of 35.. In 2006, eight years later, with *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai achieved a victory which had repeatedly alluded her mother Anita Desai, teaching Creative Writing at Massachusetts

Institute of Technology, who had been thrice shortlisted for The Booker prize: in 1980 for *Clear Lights of Day*, in 1984 *In Custody*, and in 1999 for *Fasting Feasting*. Kiran Desai also won the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award for *The Inheritance of Loss*. It was also shortlisted for Kiriya Pacific Rim Book Prize, The British Book Awards - Decibel Writer of the Year and the Orange Prize for Fiction. Chair of the Judges, Hermione Lee, one of the judges for the Man Booker Prize 2006 had announced her reason for the selection of Kiran Desai's novel as follows:

The Inheritance of Loss is a magnificent novel of humane breadth and wisdom, comic tenderness and powerful political acuteness. The winner was chosen, after a long, passionate and generous debate, from a shortlist of five other strong and original voices. (*The Tribune*).

Being received with extraordinary acclaim, *The Inheritance of Loss* heralds Kiran Desai as one of the most insightful novelists. With this gem of a novel (a prodigious feat of almost eight years) Kiran Desai has joined the ranks of literary stars like Vikram Seth, Jhumpa Lahiri, Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy, , to name a few. The early and enormous success bestowed upon her caught the glaze of readers, scholars and critics, she was both exalted and denigrated in their reviews and critical assessment. The varied response to her works and her instant success inevitably arouse interest and curiosity.

From the mother to the daughter, a literary tradition can be seen being built, starting from the Anita Desai's psychological explorations in her fiction, to Kiran Desai's experiment in the making of a comic fable with her first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and her insightful and often humorous commentary on globalization, multiculturalism and postcolonial society in *The Inheritance of Loss*. After being declared a winner, Desai was inevitably asked about her

mother's influence on her work, to which she said, that she owed a lot to her mother and that her prize-winning novel, was as much "hers as it is mine".

The past of her literary ascent, can be traced back to 1977, with the publication of her excerpt in the anthology *Mirror work: Fifty Years of Indian Writing*, edited by Salman Rushdie. She further released her acclaimed debut novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, in 1998. It was followed by her masterpiece, Man Booker Prize winning novel *The Inheritance of Loss* in 2006. Her maturity and growth as a writer are clearly reflected in her extraordinary accomplishments and accolades. She has grown and matured from a diaspora writer in *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* to a multicultural writer in *The Inheritance of Loss*.

To state the biographical details factually, Kiran Desai was born in Chandigarh, India on September 3, 1971 to Anita and Ashvin Desai, who got married on December 13, 1958 and had four children, sons -- Rahul and Arjun, and daughters -- Tani and Kiran. Desai spent the early years of her life in Delhi, Pune and Mumbai. She briefly spent few months in Kalimpong before leaving for England at the tender age of fourteen. She lived in England for a year, after which her mother moved to the United States. In India, she studied in the Cathedral School, John Connon School and St. Joseph's Convent School. In USA, she studied creative writing at Bennington College, Hollins University. She is among the four Indian - Americans to get the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship (2013) and had also been awarded the Woolrich scholarship earlier. Her education at home deserves mention, being the daughter of the acclaimed novelist Anita Desai.

Another feature that characterizes Desai's writing is a very strong tinge of Diaspora and multicultural reflections. In her works, she nostalgically recalls her estranged nation which fondly continues to live in her memories, explores how forces like colonialism, globalization and

transmigration affect personal identity; her writings are clearly an attempt to bridge the distance between herself and her home to arrive at fulfilling sense of self-identity.

It can be explained as she has inherited multicultural roots and has moved across several locations on the globe. Desai has a multicultural parentage as her maternal grandmother, Toni Nime was a German and her maternal grandfather, D. N. Mazumdar was a Bengali. Her grandmother met Mazumdar in Germany and immigrated to India in the 1920's. Anita Desai's mother was a German Christian, she was dark and did not have the Teutonic fair looks. Kiran Desai's grandmother Antoinette Nime (Toni), could trace her origin to France, and her grandfather, Dhiren Mazumdar's native place was Dhaka (Bangladesh) but he has settled in New Delhi. He spoke German very well.

The mixed parentage of her complex origin gives Anita Desai the advantage of having a double perspective when writing about India as a nation comprising of Indians, Indian migrants living in India and Indian migrants who have immigrated to the West. Anita Desai has acknowledged that it was exposure to her mother's European core that allowed her to experience India as both as insider, and an outsider. Anita Desai was multilingual. Since 1950's, she has lived in many cities like Calcutta, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Pune and New Delhi which helped in giving a realistic description of the places, in her novels. As a child, she learnt to speak many languages as she spoke German at home and Hindi or Urdu with friends as well as English and Bengali at the school. She admits that "Christmas and Easter in Berlin were more real to me than Diwali in our house"("In Conversation: Kiran Desai Meets Anita Desai."). She ascribes some of the diversity of her fictional characters to having lived among a mix of Hindu, Christian and Muslim neighbors while growing up. This multicultural upbringing was further bestowed to Kiran Desai, by her mother. Moreover, her father Ashvin Desai is a Gujarati businessman from Pune. Her paternal

grandfather was also, educated in England. Desai thus has the intermingling of German, Bengali and Gujarati cultures in her blood apart from the fact that she has witnessed cultures of diverse cities, countries and continents.

Moreover, Desai experienced a multi-ethnic upbringing due to her movement across disparate locations on the globe. Her family shifted from different parts of India to England, before finally relocating to the United States of America. Anita Desai has had more than twenty three change of addresses in her life, as reported in an interview in *The Guardian*. Kiran's sense of a dispersed homeland is apparent in her works. Echoing the same sentiment of being torn away from homeland she further comments on her mother. Her work has, over the years, centered on forgotten, vanishing worlds, art and language that exist on the margins. The epigraphs to her novels (T.S. Eliot, Emily Dickinson, Borges..) often make reference to the persistence of memory. Thus, in the works of both mother and daughter exile from their homeland, as well as multicultural interplay, have played a very significant role in their writing.

Desai's bittersweet memories of India are reflected in her two novels, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss*. Dr. Bhattacharjee, Anita Desai's sister and the maternal aunt of Kiran Desai, and who lives in Kalimpong, reveals in an interview published in *The Outlook*:

My sister came to Kalimpong in 1983 to live here, and Kiran was admitted to St Joseph's Convent. But they left after a few months. My sister couldn't adjust. Had they remained, there might not have been this big divide between Desai's view of the town and that of its residents ("Worms in the Cottage Cheese").

It thus, seems that Kiran Desai and her family did not adjust too well into the Kalimpong locale and milieu as evident from the fact that they moved to England within few months. Kiran

was admitted to St. Joseph's Convent School, Kalimpong, the shadow of which manifests itself in the convent where Sai studies after her parents Mr. And Mrs. Mistry leave for Moscow. Kiran's memories of the school appear scornful as reflected through the following descriptions from *The Inheritance of Loss* :

Good-bye, said Sai, to the perversities of the convent, the sweet sweet pastel angels and the bloodied Christ, presented together in disturbing contrast. Good-bye to uniforms so heavy for a little girl, manly shouldered blazer and tie, black cow- hoof shoes (TIOL 29).

Similar sentiments of disgust for the school at Kalimpong are exhibited in the following lines from *The Inheritance of Loss*, " She hated the convent but there had never been anything else she could remember" (TIOL 27). It is clear from above that Kiran's memories from the convent are bitter and somewhat distorted. She is caught in a divide which is neither entirely Indian nor totally Western. She acknowledged that her work deals with "very broken people and half stories and stories full of fears and gaps and so much hypocrisy in the world" (*The Outlook*).

Desai's writings are thinly veiled with autobiographical elements. The name of the protagonist in *The Inheritance of Loss*, 'Sai' seems like a diminutive of 'Desai', her descriptions of the convent where Sai studies bear a close resemblance to the bittersweet memories of St. Joseph's Convent, Kalimpong, where Desai briefly studied. The character Jemubhai bears close resemblance to character Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain*, suggesting an autobiographical link. Desai's paternal grandfather has striking similarities to Sai's grandfather Jemu Bhai Popatlal Patel. He was a Gujarati like Jemu Bhai, had sailed to England and returned to India as a Judge.

She further divulged that despite living miles and years away from her grandfather, his memory continued to haunt her and she eventually decided to vent out her emotions through the character of Jemu Bhai Patel. However, writing for Desai is not merely a tool for self expression,

a medium to vent out her emotional underpinnings. She extensively researches for her books; she had taken two years off from Columbia University to write her maiden novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* while the second novel *The Inheritance of Loss* was written over a period of seven years. She had rented a cottage in Kalimpong to write the Indian bits. In an interview,

She had first caught literary attention in 1997, where she was published in *The New Yorker* and *The Mirrorwork*, an anthology of 50 years of Indian writing edited by Salman Rushdie. Her extract *Strange Happenings in the Guava Orchard* was its closing piece. In 1998, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* was published to good reviews. The book had undercurrents of diaspora writing as she captures India, her homeland, the way it lives in her memory and fortifies it with exquisite imagination. Kiran remarked about the book, "I think my first book was filled with all that I loved the most about India and knew I was in the inevitable process of losing. It was also very much a book that came from the happiness of realizing how much I loved to write" ("Bold Type; An Interview with Kiran Desai").

Her debut work, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* earned significant critical recognition for Kiran Desai by winning the Betty Trask awards in 1998. In sharp contrast to the charmingly humorous and fascinatingly funny narrative in *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, Desai has dwelled upon grave matters of international concerns in her second novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. The novel is a dense weave of intricately interwoven themes like multiculturalism, marginalization, action, modulation, exploitation, economic inequality, nationalism, immigration, insurgency, racial discrimination, hybridity and political violence. It took her steps up the ladder crowning her with the much coveted Man Booker prize and in 2006, National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award.

Often criticized for being her mother's daughter by those who prefer her mother's style and oeuvre, Desai has also been judged in isolation as writer who has begun rather well. Kiran Desai

may not have the same intensity that her mother weaves into her compelling tales but she does not disappoint in bringing forth supremely funny and engaging tale in her joyous debut, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*.

Although the publishers of *Hullabaloo* have compared the book to Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Kiran Desai had less in common with Roy or Salman Rushdie than with the older generation of Indian writers including R.K. Narayan and her mother Anita Desai.. As Narayan has done in his small Indian town poised midway between tradition and modernity and focused on the life of one of the anonymous inhabitants of that town -- a dreamy, introspective fellow torn between his familial obligation and his own desire to be alone.

It is a whimsical tale that blends fable-esque magic with satiric comedy. Set in the fictitious village of Shahkot, the tale traces the chaotic progress of the monumentally unmotivated Sampath Chawla from a failed post office clerk to a guava tree inhabiting Guru. In Kiran Desai's Shahkot, it seems that the atmosphere of Narayan's Malgudi has been delicately captured and given a more boisterous build-up than Narayan's mildly Chekhovian humor is inclined to do. Avoiding the outspread tentacles of Arundhati Roy's characters in *The God of Small Things*, Kiran Desai concentrates within the limited boundaries of Shahkot as against Arundhati's trapezing from Kerala to Assam, with scattered relatives in Britain and America as well. The confines of Shahkot get a better and more concentrated build-up in the process and acquire a Narayanesque flavor of Malgudi.

In Anita Desai's *Voices in the City*, goddess Kali is presented as the presiding deity of the city of Calcutta. Kiran Desai's Shahkot is a miniature replica, where for once all characters are being assembled in the orchard to enact a crowded drama of action and atmosphere -- the Brigadier with his marching orders to the subordinates; Sampath the godman, surrounded by devotees; Kulfi with her boiling cauldron; the drunken monkeys raiding the orchard; Pinky and her new love and

the ice cream vendor and the spy, hoping to detect some flaw in the entire setup. It is a mildly satirical portrait of the Indian cult of godman modelled on Narayan's Swami in *The Guide*. Through a series of gossipy asides and subplots, this gentle comic satire offers a thoroughly funny, charming and occasionally touching insight into the absurdities of life in small town India. R. K. Narayan had stated that the incident of the reluctant holy man was based on a real event which he had read about in a newspaper. Desai, too, says in an interview with Catherine McWeeney, talking of the process for writing this book:

I started with a very small idea, really. I'd read a story in The Times of India and heard about a character from many people, a man who was a very famous hermit in India who really did climb up a tree, who lived in a tree for many years, until he died. He died last year, I believe. So I began to wonder what it was about someone like this who would do something as extreme as to spend his life in a tree. So it started really with that character, and then the story built up around it (*Bold Type* 2000).

Hullabaloo is the story of Sampath, the ambitionless son of the middle-class family who wants to escape the burden of impending responsibility that he will have to fulfill as an adult. Thus, He resolves to climb into a guava tree and live there in a peaceful contemplation. The town's people start to venerate him as a holy man and seek his counsel for their problems. His perplexing responses only increase their reverence for him. His father reacts by looking at the commercial possibilities of having many pilgrims coming to see Sampath. His mother spends her entire days searching the countryside for some rare and unusual food to prepare. His sister struggle consistently to maintain her independence but hopelessly falls in love with the Hungry Hop Ice boy. Inefficient bureaucracy, a spy for the atheist society, bungling army officials, and a herd of monkeys (with a little taste for liquor) add to this hilariously irreverent story.

From his perch, Sampath becomes comically misconstrued as a great visionary, a religious guru of sorts. He proceeds to find fame, fortune and eventually chaos -- in the form of bumbling bureaucrats and a group of unruly, liquor - loving monkeys, who only Sampath can tame, by bestowing his wisdom upon the many people who make the pilgrimage to meet the Monkey Baba. The novel acquires the dimensions of a fable, when the drunken monkeys raise a hullabaloo in the guava orchard.

From the sweet-natured playfulness of her joyous novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* to the exploration of such complex issues as colonialism, racism, immigration, the myths of both India and America, young love, regret, hope, the role of family in *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai makes clear her intentions to expand her reach from the narrow boundaries of her first novel to the global arena where luminaries like Salman Rushdie and Zadie Smith have already performed. Unlike her first sprightly novel that ends in a raucous bang of comic eccentricity, the prevailing mood in *The Inheritance of Loss* is one of implacable bitterness and despair. Full of pathos and tenderness, the novel presents its characters as ultimately frail human beings struggling in a search for love and happiness.

When talking of her own life and the characters in *The Inheritance of Loss*, to McWeeney, she says:

The characters of my story are entirely fictional, but these journeys (of her grandparents) as well as my own provided insight into what it means to travel between East and West and it is this I wanted to capture. The fact that I live this particular life is no accident. It was my inheritance (*Bold Type* 2000).

It was this same feeling of being caught between two continents that infuses *The Inheritance of Loss* -- a story replete with sadness over globalization and with pleasure at the surviving intimacies of Indian village life. John Sutherland, chairman of Man Booker judges, for 2008 said:

Desai's novel registers the multicultural reverberations of the new millennium with the sensitive instrumentality of fiction, as Jhabvala and Rushdie did previous eras... It is a globalised novel for a globalised world (*The Guardian*).

Both Rushdie and Rohinton Mistry believe that, with her second novel, Desai has secured her place with the great contemporary Indian authors exploring life and society in India and elsewhere. Salman Rushdie had earlier described *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* "as lush and intensely imagined." Her second novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, too, has earned his complimentary blurb at the back of the new novel " Kiran Desai is a terrific writer." Whereas, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* was a "charming, lyrical, fable about destiny," a " festival of comic eccentricity, exuding charisma, poetry and joy in language and life". *The Inheritance of Loss*, is a more majestic novel, "illuminating the pain of exile, the ambiguities of post-colonialism and the blinding drive for 'better life'" when one person's wealth means another's poverty. It zips back and forth between Kalimpong, a tiny Himalayan burg, and the streets of New York City. Its primary setting in India, in this case the remote province of Kalimpong during the mid- 1980's.

In this comical and contemplative novel, Desai effectively illuminates the pain of exile, lingering effects of postcolonialism, the characters struggling as exiles to maintain their dignity and self respect in the encroaching morass of Westernization. Dealing with all levels of society and different cultures, Desai reveals life's humor and brutality, its delicate emotions and passionate commitments so convincingly that, her mother's remarks seem to be no exaggeration: "I think

Kiran's voice is extremely original, she brings something totally fresh and new to the writing scene" (*The Guardian*).

Desai takes us to the north eastern Himalayas, where a rising insurgency challenges the old way of life. It's a good tale with a globalization undercurrent connecting India's Nepal border with New York city. It spans continents, generations, religions, cultures and races. Desai has wonderfully presented the human face of globalization and showed how individuals living in a different parts of the planet often intersect in surprising ways. A father's love for his son, that son's ambition to succeed, the bitterness of a lonely man living out his days on the edge of civilization, two sisters' yearning for the past, all of these lives are presented by Desai as fully realized and ultimately frail human beings in recognizable search for love and happiness.

The Inheritance of Loss is not just a story, it is an inside look, a perspective into post-independent India, with its roots dug in colonialism, its branches embracing Americanisms, but its leaves all brown and dusty with the age-old prejudices that governs people minds; an India where a class of people squirm at the mention of their mother tongues and still speak only English and; where a mother is proud because her daughter married an Englishman; where a foreigner is treated skeptically in spite of his genuine efforts to lay foundations of indigenous industries; where thousands of Indians enter America to ultimately become illegal immigrants. But they are heroes in the eyes of their family. Whereas the reality being quite different for them; sleeping in dirty suburbs of big cities or with mice on kitchen floors of the restaurants .

Although the story has its backdrop, Kalimpong and the Gorkhaland agitation, it is actually about loss -- the loss of identity, nationality and loyalty, and the realization of this loss -- the Gorkhaland agitation is merely a catalyst for the loss. The loss in her title is chiefly the loss of faith in India felt among the legions of Indians who overstay their tourist visas and become illegal

immigrants in the US. Longing is perhaps the thing that the characters in this novel do best. They long for love, they long for home, and they long for acceptance. Yet rarely do they get any of the above. As the insurgency grows in strength, however, all the characters of the novel come to share Sai's suspicion that life is more often defined by loss than by fulfillment.

Desai wants us to experience the agony of the immigrant and the unfairness and injustice, "one side travels to be a servant, and the other side travels to be treated like a king" (91). Writing with perception and wit, Kiran Desai creates a thoughtful and elegant study of families, the losses that each member must face alone, and the lies each tells to make memories of the past more palatable. The Epigraph to the novel includes a line from Borges: "My humanity is in feeling we are all voices of the same poverty." But it isn't only physical poverty that Desai's characters seem to recognize. All of them seem to crave for a sense of belonging. What bind these seemingly disparate characters are a shared historical legacy and a common experience of impotence and humiliation.

Kiran Desai in her second novel, explores colonial neurosis, multiculturalism, modernity, immigrants' bitter experiences, insurgency, gender bias, racial discrimination, changing human relations, impact of globalization, postcolonial chaos and despair, between people from different backgrounds and cultures . . . The present research endeavors to analyze Kiran Desai's diasporic experiences and multiculturalism. Desai is an Indian citizen but a permanent resident of America. More than twenty years, she has spent in the West; however she still holds on to Indian passport, struggling to get American citizenship. Increasingly she, too, is unsure that she would really want to surrender her Indian citizenship. In an interview she reacted, "I feel less like doing it every year because I realize that I see everything through the lens of being Indian. It's not something that has gone away-it's something that has become stronger. As I've got older, I have realized that I can't

really write without that perspective” (Laura Barton). It was only when she began to writing about the immigrant experience in New York that she realized she would have to return to India. But she finds India has changed, it belongs to the Indian author living in India. The subjects belong to them. She goes back to India of the 1983. It is this feeling of being caught between two continents that creates "in-betweenness" which infuses the novel. At times it appears to be delighted in the intermingling of cultures and at other times, it seems to inspire a mournful melancholy. But, re-discovering her Indianness was vital to her,

Love of the country and country men, its culture, history, traditions, socio-political ramifications, identity crisis, loss of culture, exile, immigration problems, loneliness, alienation, nostalgic reminiscences, dislocation and disillusionment, longing for better life, better relations, and love are dealt with a cold eye and a warm heart which endorse Kiran Desai a post colonial “traditionalist” diasporan, struggling to maintain her original culture and identity. Consequently, she makes the novel an Indian treating subjects concerning Indian life in India as well as in abroad. She superbly elaborates all these in a highly experimental English --- uses of Indian slangs, dialectic words, abuses of various regions, vulgar and obscene expressions, colloquial vocabulary --- introducing an element of naturalism; highly congenial to portrait the image and sensibility of India.

Politically, India was hit by insurgency It imposed a big threat to law and order. Entire novel is set in the backdrop of insurgency-rising in the North East (GNLF movement) which disrupted the normal life, tourism, business and peace. Out of fifty-three chapters of the novel more than eighteen chapters are exclusively devoted to describe insurgency to highlight the dismal picture of the region. Poverty, unemployment, socio-economic backwardness, xenophobia, discriminatory policies and the government’s apathy to seek remedies are deeply rooted in the

separatist movements rampant in the whole country. Desai curtly blames the policymakers for these violent movements. "This state making, the biggest mistake that fool Nehru made. Under his rules any group of idiots can stand up demanding a new state and get it, too... it all started with Sikkim. The Neps played such a dirty trick and began to get grand ideas-now they think they can do the same thing again" (128). "Gorkhaland for Gorkhas" (7) is the motto of the movement; the activists work on universal guerilla fashion. Kukri, sickles, axes, kitchen knives, spade or any kind of firearm they look for to make the movement more and more violent to force the Government to grant statehood:

In 1947, brothers and sisters, the British left granting India her freedom, granting the Muslims Pakistan, granting special provisions for the scheduled castes and tribes, leaving everything taken care of brothers and sisters Except us. EXCEPT US. The Nepalis of India. At that time, in April of 1947, the Communist Party of India demanded a Gorkhaland, but the request was ignored... we are laborers on the tea plantations, coolies dragging heavy loads, soldiers. And are we allowed to become doctors and government workers, owners of tea plantations? No! We are kept at the level of servants (158).

Socio-cultural and political identity and quest for autonomy furthers and kindles the fire of agitation. Indian Nepalese were fed up of being treated like a minority in a place where they clearly had the majority. They wanted their own state (if not, their very own country), to manage their own affairs. Gyan's involvement in the separatist (or Gorkha) movement is the reflection of young Indians' deep rooted frustration, for which Gyan even sacrifices his love for Sai. Desai poignantly reacts in the novel about the partition of India and the emergence of Pakistan is indeed. "First heart attack to our country... that has never been healed" (129).

The novel portrays the Indian society as poverty stricken where illiteracy, unemployment, xenophobia, cultural conflicts, traditional values, customs, practices; and multiplicity of languages, religions, faiths constitute the very structure of the society in which the novelist is deeply interested. Though she draws a dismal picture of the Indian society, Desai treats her characters in a very candid and humane manner (i.e. Jemu, Sai, Gyan, Biju, Cook, Lola, Noni, Booty, Potty and Bela) who can't help but feel helpless and inferior by their subject position. Poverty is the root cause of GNLF movement and migrancy.

Gyan's involvement in GNLF movement and frustration caused by the extreme polarities he witnesses between the poor and the rich brings drastic changes in his attitude and love. He is upset to undertake long walk in the cold for the small amount of money the Judge paid him. It maddened him that: "People lived here (Cho Oyu) in this enormous house and property, taking hot baths, sleeping alone in spacious rooms... cutlets and peas dinner..." (162.). He is born of poverty and proudly Indian-his family's house still made of mud with a thatch roof. Cook and Biju epitomize the distress of common men. Biju migrates to America because he is badly hit by poverty; he bears every kind of exploitation for the sake of money. Cook renders yeoman services to Jemu. On the contrary, Jemu humiliates and kicks the Cook. It pained Sai's heart to see how poverty has worked on Cook:

A poverty stricken man growing into an ancient at fast-forward. Compressed childhood, lingering old age. There was age in his temperament, his kettle, his clothes, his kitchen, his voice, his face, in the undisturbed dirt, the undisturbed settled smell of a lifetime of cooking, smoke, and kerosene (19).

Cook advises Biju "Just make sure you are saving money" (18). So that they might overcome poverty. Sai's journey from Dehradun to Darjeeling notices a realistic panorama of village life and

an India looking as old as ever "Women walked by with firewood on their heads, too poor for blouses under their saris.... It was early in the morning and the railways tracks were lined with rows of bare bottoms... defecating onto the tracks, rinsing their bottoms with water from a can" (30). Chapatis, jalehis, samosa, fish, chips, pakora, tea, chhang, laddoos, chooran, srikhand, fresh milk, etc. figure in regular meals of the society gradually experiencing transition and replacing them with Angrezi khana. But all over Kalimpong modernity began to fail.

The novel is an excellent study of Indian culture-the culture still in its transitional phase. Changes are brought out by "colonial neurosis", craze for the Western values, manners, language and glamorous lifestyle; impact of modernization, consumerism, globalization and deep rooted reaction to indigenous values which failed to sustain life. Characters feel bounded and defeated by their Indian heritage when confronted with the lingering effects of colonialism. Therefore, they develop grotesque complexes which impair their mutuality and reciprocal relationship. Jemu, Lola, Pixie, Noni, Biju, Cook, Sai, Gyan all are generic, reflect the pain of transition.

Cultural slavery is directly exhibited through these characters. They are in a "to be or not to be" position failing to assimilate into the new culture and also unable to give up original culture in totality. There remains identity crisis which most of the Indians face despite postcolonial reactions in which endeavor is to resuscitate indigenous culture and its values. Jemu originally belongs to Piphit, goes to Cambridge for higher studies, gets selected in I.C.S.; becomes a judge. In this entire process of making, he goes on adopting the West as a model of excellence sacrificing his nativity. He even changes the name of his desi wife Bela to Nimi; condemns her for her socio-cultural practices; whereas, Sai, the grand daughter is commended because she is Westernized Indian brought up by English nuns. Jemu is the finest example of an Anglophile "being a foreigner in his own country..." (29).

Jemu and Sai are type of “estranged Indian living in India” (210). Gyan also satirizes: “You (Jemu and Sai) are like slaves, that’s what you are, running after the West, embarrassing yourself” (163). Biju stands for young crazy men of the Third World who dream a plan to go to the West for money making; unflinchingly, they sacrifice original culture and social conventions. When Biju gets full timer waiter’s position in New York, he sends reactions to his father: “Uniform and food will be given by them. Angrezi Khana only, no Indian food, and the owner is not from India. He is from America itself” (14). “He works for the Americans”, the Cook reports the contents of Biju’s letter to everyone as a thing of pride and high honor in the society. Gyan is also intimidated by Jemu’s affluence, his English accent and superior ways. Lola, Noni, Pixie and Mrs. Sen are also camouflaged by British ways. Lola advises her daughter Pixie to leave India because “India is a sinking ship... the doors won’t stay open forever...” (47).

Immigration is one of the most significant problem. Most of the Indians and Third World citizens face this issue in Europe and America. Desai herself has spent more than twenty years in America, she still holds on Indian passport: struggling to get American citizenship; increasingly, she, too is unsure that she would really want to surrender her citizenship. It was her own experience and intimate talks with immigrants in America she could highlight the problem so emphatically. Biju, Harish, Saeed, Harry, Jeev, Rishi, Mr. Lal kaka, Saeed and thousands of Africans, Latin Americans and Asians working in American and Europe exemplify the bitter experiences of the immigrants.

Father Booty is another example of illegal immigrant who lives in India for forty-five years, while he has the visa for two weeks only. Later he is forced to leave the country. Biju spends his early days working as waiter in New York soon but after the “green card check” (16) he's relieved by the manager, who advise him to "just disappear quietly..." (16). Saeed applied for the

immigration lottery every year, but Indians were not allowed to apply for it. Hence Biju continued to dodge authorities, moving from one ill paid job to another for thirty years. He is frightened to see the lot 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” (99). He is overwhelmed by fugitive role, nostalgic reminiscences and racial discrimination and soon he is disillusioned by the West. Immigrants’ painful experience is embittered by racial discrimination. Biju, whose hopes are very lofty; he feels ecstatic when selected to work in New York but when he encounters with the working conditions, racial discrimination and immigration laws; he is enlisted as the “shadow class” (102), He discovers authentic colonial experience about how Third World natives are exploited and humiliated in the West “They drew the lines at crucial junctures” (23) and “on the top, rich colonial, and down below, poor native; Colombian, Tunisian, Ecuadorian.... Above all the restaurant was French, but the below in the kitchen it was Mexican and Indian” (21). Even the glamorous image of the West changes into hatred: “There was a whole world in the basement kitchens in New York” (22) “...the habit of hate had accompanied Biju and he found that he possessed an awe of White people, who arguably had done India, great harm” (77). Jemu also experiences racial discrimination against Indians while he was studying in England and thereafter too. Gyan and GNLF activists find Delhi has adopted discriminatory policies against Gorkhaland.

Nature and landscape description occupies large canvas of the novel; though it extends from Manhattan to Himalayas, it is central to Kalimpong, Cho Oyu, Piphit and Darjeeling. Topography, scenic beauty, variety of vegetation, changing colors of the sky, patches of clouds, rain, mist, mountain tops, thick forests, cluster of houses, vapor, ice, zig zag roads and seasonal changes, etc. define Nature in the novel. It is sensuous beauty which delights the novelist very much, simultaneously, it is contrasted with rising insurgency and its violent outbreak disrupting

normal life. Her treatment of nature is highly poetic and Wordsworthian finding deeper import in it. Desai's observation is very keen, acute and specific; even the different parts of a tree embody sensuous beauty as well as represent the psychic conditions of the inhabitants "Kanchenjunga glowed macabre, trees stretched away on either side, trunks pale, leaves black, and beyond, between the pillars of the trees, a path led to the house" (19). Her involvement in nature and landscapes of India confirms her unending interest and diasporic articulation. Nature is, here, subservient to human emotions and actions; gives force and meaning and aesthetic beauty as well.

The novel is essentially a study of losses-loss of culture, loss of identity, loss of human relations, loss of emotional binding, loss of human values, loss of rationality, loss of peace and harmony, loss of human beings' faith in each other, etc. Sense of loss is an integral part of every character's life: they are insecure, and unmoored, struggling to cope up in the Modern world, unsure if they will ever see the benefits of globalization; characters unnecessarily feeling inferior due to their Indian heritage. Historical events have deep personal import that last people's lifetime and even beyond. Jemu who originally hails from Piphit, goes to Cambridge for higher Studies, gets selected in I.C.S. and becomes a judge. He is so much impressed and immersed in Western values, he loses his original Indian identity and feels "foreigner in his own country" (29).

He is one of those ridiculous Indians who can't rid themselves of what had broken their souls to learn. His Anglophilia can now, only turn into self-hatred. These Indians are also unwanted anachronism. In post colonial India where long-suppressed peoples have begun to awaken to their dereliction, to express their anger and despair and GNLFF movement is an outburst of that reaction and Gyan's xenophobia is rooted in it. Jemu can't free himself from "colonial neurosis" (46). He loathed Indians. He envied the English. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by almost everyone, English and Indians

both. Jemu loses peace by the arrival of Sai and Biju and GNLFF activities. Due to insurgency North East loses three Ts: “Tea! Timber! Tourism!” (225).

Sai also loses indigenous cultural values. In the process of academic learning in a convent school Western Christian values enter into her blood. Though she remains “full of contradictions” (30), she also suffers from identity crisis. The biggest loss she feels profoundly is the love of Gyan. Biju who goes to New York with bright hopes, soon discovers authentic colonial experience how Third World poor natives are exploited and humiliated in the West: “They drew the lines at crucial junctures” (23) and “on the top, rich colonial, and down below, poor native; Colombian, Tunisian, Ecuadorian... Above all the restaurant was French, but below in the kitchen it was Mexican and Indian” (21). White man also shout: “Uloo ka Patta, son of an owl, low down son-of-a-bitch Indian” (23). Even the glamorous picture of the West changes into hatred: “There was a whole world in the basement kitchens of New York” (22). He also faces tough and discriminatory Immigration laws in America, fails to procure green card and is listed “shadow class” (102) of illegal immigrants in New York and spends thirty years time dodging the authorities, moving from one ill paid job to another. His bitter experiences in America and homesickness compel him for homecoming. Even in his own country he finds total loss of peace, law and order.

Kiran Desai makes the novel Indian-both by content and form. Whether its topography, idyllic beauty or the elaborate description of insurgency, description of mountains, mist, changing seasons, Kalimpong, Cho Oyu, Darjeeling, Piphit, immigration problem, culture conflicts, the inhabitants or the inner mindscapes of characters. Desai frees herself from the stereotyped Euro-Centric models and honestly and independently depicts India. Her use of language is another powerful technique to create the manifest sense of Indianness. She prefers American English rather than English spoken by the British (also known as received pronunciation) and tries to make it

Indianized. She has encountered with American and British writers of English and studied creative writing at Columbia University.

Every chapter in the novel begins with topical line, italicized; thereafter, the novelist elaborates and illustrates the topic. Chapter One “All Day” introduces major characters secluded life in Kalimpong, Kanchenjunga, Judge, Sai, Gyan’ Biiu, Cook, Mutt, insurgency in North East and romance of Gyan and Sai. Chapter Three “All the Way in America” elaborates immigrants’ bitter experiences, disillusionment and racial discrimination. Chapter Seven “Oh, Grandfather more Lizard than Human” focuses on Jemu’s character - dehumanized and Anglophile. Chapter Nine “Oh my God” introduces Lola, Noni and their craze for the West and changing identity. Chapter Fifteen “In Kalimpong” topography and scenic beauty of the region is highlighted. Chapter Twenty “Gyan and Sai” deals with love and insurgency. Chapter Twenty-Seven “Moody and Restless” expresses the unrest of Gyan. Chapter Forty “The Incidents of Horror” grew portraits the increasing insurgency in Kalimpong.

Use of popular slangs, dialectic words, abuses of various regions, vulgar and obscene expressions are frequently used: *nakhara, pakora, huzoor chhang, mia-bibi, mithai, pitaji, Angrezi Khana, salwars, kamal ha!, Baap rel, laddoos, dhotis, jhora, pallu, Budhoo, choksee, Neps, Namste, aiyiye, baethiye, dhanayawad, shukuria, chapattis, jalebi, haveli, tika, chokera, murgamurgi, bania, dhobi, hubshi, baat, atta, srikhand, kundun, peepal, choolah, rasta roko, phataphat, bilkul bekar, goondas, jai Gorkha, Saag, Goras, ghas phoos, sukhtara, jamun, talli, roti-namak, bhai, gadhas, murdabad, paratbas, tamasha, chappals, desi*, etc. Even full length expressions figure significantly: “*Humara kya hoga, hai hai, humara kya hoga*” (8) “*Bar bar karta rahata bai*” (11) “*Yeh ladki zara si deewani lagti hai...*” (51) “*Angrez ki kaam. Angrez jaise.*” (105) “*rasta*

roko" (107) "*Jai Gorkba*" (7) etc. Indian metaphors and imagery are also used: "cheeks like two Simla apples" (262); the technical terms also get place--i.e. "24 k" (45).

Multiculturalism is an important characteristic of the novel. Desai takes a skeptical view of the West's consumer driven multiculturalism which is confined to the Western metropolis, doesn't begin to address the causes of violence and extremism in the modern world.. Nor economic globalization become a route to the prosperity of downtrodden. She even disagrees with the writers like Zadie Smith and Rari Kunzru, whose fiction is optimistic of hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combination of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies and songs. Even in the post colonial world-- colonial neurosis and racial discrimination continue. People from Asia, Africa, Latin America working in U.S.A. are treated as second rate laborer, enlisted as "shadow class" (102).

Biju who goes to New York with bright hopes, soon discovers authentic colonial experience how third world poor natives are exploited and humiliated in the West. White men also shout: "Uloo kc patta, son of an owl, lowdown son-of-a-bitch Indian" (23). Even the glamorous picture of the West changes into hatred: "There was a whole world in the basement kitchens in New York" (22) "the habit of hate had accompanied Biiu, and he found that he possessed an awe of White people, who arguably had done India great harm" (27). Even Jemu, while studying in England was hit by racial discrimination and cultural alienation. Multiculturalism is not confined to the metropolis of the West, India itself presents a glittering example of multicultural society which since ancient time had been a very secular, democratic, humane and cosmopolitan. It is characterized by two important features: universal acceptance and universal tolerance. It is here, where the people from every ethnic community and group not only get shelter but also love, honor

and recognition. Jemu, Biju, Sai, Cook, Gyan, Lola, Noni, Booty, Potty, Mr. and Mrs. Mistry belong to different cultural backgrounds. All live in peace and harmony.

Multiculturalism is the legacy Desai inherited from her parents and grandparents. Her maternal grandmother was a German; grandfather was a refugee from Bangladesh. Her paternal grandparents came from Gujarat; and her grandfather was educated in England. Both of her novels manifest her reactions to multiculturalism through characters and depiction of social milieu. Although she has not lived in India since 14, she returns to the family home in Delhi every year. She maintains convivial attitude to all cultures and mildly exposes the vanity and hypocrisy prevalent in them.

The Inheritance of Loss was the result of eight years' work, Writing of broken people, difficult lives; writing not just about India but Indian communities in the world. It was quite difficult, emotional experience for Desai, because she was devastated and sad by the end of the book where "loss" predominates. Binnie Kirshenbaum has rightly commented about the novel:

A nation's tragedies, great and small, are revealed through the hopes and the dreams, the innocence and the arrogance, the love betrayed and the all too human failings of a superbly realized cast of characters. Kiran Desai writes of Post colonial India, of its poor as well as its privileged, with a cold eye and a warm heart.

Rediff.com enlisted Kiran Desai one of the women writers of Indian diaspora who create big impact. Desai also illustrates B.K. das' proposition regarding the history and recent development in diasporic discourse --- with affiliation to, "postmodernism and postcolonialism. The choice for twenty-first century man is either he has to take the whole world as his home or else, he will become a homeless wanderer" (32). Desai is caught in three different worlds; moving from one country to another, articulating diasporic experiences --love, longing and losses as well

as multiculturalism which she has witnessed and assimilated from her familial relations and metropolis.

Mimicry in *The Inheritance of Loss*

Mimicry in colonial and postcolonial literature is illustrated when nationals of the host country like Indians or Africans, imitate the language, dress, mannerisms and other cultural aspects of the dominant culture like the British. It has been observed under colonialism and in the context of immigration. Under both situations, mimicry is seen as pattern of behavior where the person in power is imitated, in hopes of gaining the same power oneself. In this process, the imitator deliberately represses his own cultural identity. Bhabha has defined 'mimicry' as the process by which the colonized subject is reproduced as "almost the same, but not quite." (86).

Mimicry is often regarded as negative and disgraceful, and the typical image of a brown sahib imitating the West has been ridiculed by many such as Rudyard Kipling. In the words of Ashish Nandy mimicry is "the second form of colonization" which "colonizes minds in addition to bodies" (Nandy, ix) and alters cultural priorities. It is often associated with the "been-to" syndrome where those who have travelled to the West, undergo a complete transformation and come back „home," alienated. Many illustrations of cultural mimicry are dispersed across literature and cinema, especially in colonialisied nations. Mimicry can also be empowering if it involves the copying of illuminating Western ideas and practices. For instance, during Renaissance, the English literary writers borrowed the ideals of Equality, Liberty and Fraternity and incorporated them into their writings.

Though mimicry is usually used in postcolonial studies with reference to colonials and immigrant minorities imitating white cultural and linguistic norms; it can also be reversed. Reverse

mimicry or "going native" refers to the colonizers/ dominant cultures imitating the colonized cultures of immigrants. There are instances of this type of intermingling and imitation though they are less frequent than the former. For example, 'chicken tikka masala' is the most popular dish in British restaurants, as per a survey conducted in U.K.

Desai has painted a perfect portrait of colonial mimicry, through the persona of the Anglican judge Jemubhai and his granddaughter Sai Mistry. Jemubhai is at an extreme end of colonial mimicry, in contrast to Sai. Both Sai and Jemubhai emulate the West but while Sai can rationalize, Jemubhai is engaged in an act of imitation which is blind. He envied English people and loathed Indians. He worked at being English with such a passion of hatred that soon he came to be despised by both Indians and English people alike. He powders his face to make it white like the British, goes hunting using British guns and gorges on British food such as "scones, macaroons or cheese straws" (3). He gradually becomes ". . . a foreigner in his own country "(29). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have warned about the dangers of blind mimicry:

When the colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to 'mimic' the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer's cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather the result is a 'blurred copy' of the colonizer that can be quite threatening (139) .

Sai is portrayed as an example of cultural mimicry, though she does not lose her mind like her grandfather in blind imitation. "She was a westernized Indian brought up by English nuns, an estranged Indian living in India" (210). Sai is English in her tastes as can be gathered from facts like, she celebrated Christmas, could not eat her meals in the Indian manner using her hands, her tastes in literature included the Western literature such as *the National Geographic*, *Wuthering*

Heights etc. For her, fork spoon knife was better than hands, sipping the blood of Christ better than garlanding an idol with marigolds, cake better than laddoos, .English better than Hindi language.

Despite her English upbringing, Sai could appreciate and respect the views of other people as well as cultures. She was warm hearted towards the cook, who was not of her class and culture, unlike her grandfather. She feels pity for the cook and is hurt when the police suspects him for having links with the Nepali insurgents " How dare they behave like this to you", said Sai, trying to overcome the gap between them as they stood together surveying the mess the police had left in his hut" (19). Sai can adapt and is willing to adapt, she tries to make her relationship work with Cyan initially and notices the differences only after an adamant Gyan joins the GNLFF.

The characters like Lola and Noni too mimic the West, they thrive on British books"and watch B.B.C, They also buy Western consumer goods and "proudly invest in British jam and Marks and Spencer underpants". Though residing in India, they imagine themselves as a part of the Western world. Thus, cultural mimicry strikingly evident in most characters and across the chapters of the book. Not only is it evident, it is also a transforming and shaping force as in case of Jemu, his mimicry of the west ultimately turns out to be self destructive.

Hybridity in *The Inheritance of Loss*

Hybridity refers to intermingling of diverse cultures especially the Eastern and Western cultures. In the colonial and postcolonial context, it chiefly represents the colonial subjects from Asia or Africa who have reached an equilibrium between the Eastern and Western cultures. Hybridity thus defined rests on the term 'hybrid' from biology, which means an offspring resulting from crossbreeding. It should be noted that the degree or magnitude of hybridity, can differ depending upon situation and culture specific instances, they can range from mild to extremely

hybrid instances of cultural intermingling. Various types of hybridity include racial, linguistic, literary, cultural and religious.

The characters of *The Inheritance of Loss* live in a postcolonial world, which is a witness to the ongoing phenomenon of globalization and hence inevitably are products of cultural hybridity. The characters, Sai, Biju, Gyan, Jemubhai, Lola, Noni, Father Booty, Mrs. Sen: all at some point or the other exemplify the concept. Desai has accentuated both the potential and the pitfalls of the modern hybrid identity, making it quite clear, however, that no form of cultural hybridity is ever characterized by "an intransitive and immanent sense of *jouissance*" (Rhadhakrishnan 753).

Moreover, Desai brings people from diverse ethnic, national and international communities together on the soils of Kalimpong to generate a hybrid mix under situation of a cultural conflict. The judge, Jemubhai, is a Gujarati and hails from Piphit; Gyan's ancestors came and settled in Kalimpong from Nepal; Lola and Noni are Bengalis; Father Booty, a Christian missionary is from Switzerland, Sai has come from St. Augustine Convent in Dehradun: put together, these elements from a complex heterogeneous mixture, which in the presence of cultural catalysts is predictably a reaction of entering into a 'third space' (Bhabha's phrase) of loss.

Desai has used words from Hindi language reflecting provincial dialects by the characters and the narrator in the novel to depict cultural hybridity. Desai imparts a very Indian flavor to the narrative by introducing Hindi words and phrases like: "*Angrezi khana*" (14); "*pakora*" and "*Bar bar karta rehta hai*" (11); "*paise*", "*mia-bibi*" and "*mithai*" (13); "*raasta roko*" (107). At times she uses words from Hindi, in her sentences in English to emphasize the effect of the latter, for instance, "Calm down, *bhai*." ; "Go, will you?! *Bhago*" (316-17); here the use of the two languages together is producing a pronounced effect as well as conveying the presence of hybridity in the society depicted.

The Inheritance of Loss, is checkered with numerous instances of hybridity. However, to elucidate the core aspects, hybridity in the characters of Sai, Jemubhai and Biju, is discussed below. Hybridity in Gyan, Lola, Noni and Father Booty is also briefly outlined.

Jemubhai and his granddaughter Sai are hybrid variants produced as a result of the intermingling of the Indian culture with the colonial English culture. Sai was an orphan educated in an English convent, St. Augustine Convent, in DehraDun. Similarly, Jemubhai, though schooled in India, came face to face with the English culture when he received an ICS scholarship to study law at Cambridge.

However, though both Sai and Jemubhai are hybrid angelical Indians, Jemubhai is an instance of the destructive aspects of cultural intermingling as he encounters a foreign culture abruptly, receiving a cultural shock which fractures his identity. While Sai, is a more balanced she is introduced to a foreign culture gradually and at an early stage of her life. Sai, being the daughter of educated parents and the granddaughter of a Judge has certain social exposure right from her childhood, later her upbringing in the Convent acquaints and shapes her personality with the English culture dominating the Indian. However, Sai undergoes hybridization, gradually and completely and thus, emerges out as an 'individual in equilibrium', who can appreciate the views of the others like the cook and even Gyan to a great extent.

Despite the differences both Jemubhai and Sai have many similarities, which makes Jemu, spiteful of his wife, daughter and Indians, in general accept Sai with open arms "There was something familiar about her; she had the same accent and manners. She was a westernized Indian brought up by English nuns, an estranged Indian living in India. The journey he had started so long ago had continued in his descendants" (210).

Both could appreciate each other's English manners for instance, Sai read Jemubhai's National Geographic collection "bound in leather with the years in gold lettering"(7). They enjoyed high tea in a typical English style "something sweet and something salty" (3), and if this proves impossible, something of lesser sensory value, yet still harping back to trustworthy English 'class', such as "Marie and Delight biscuits" (3). Gyan speech on his evaluation of Sai's culture is like an 'English Hindi alliance' as she he could only speak English and pidgin Hindi. She couldn't converse with anyone outside her little social stratum. She could not eat with her hands; could not squat down on the ground on her haunches to wait for a bus. She felt happier with her so-called English vegetables, French beans, spring onions, snap peas and feared Indian vegetables such as tinda, kuthal, patrel, kaddu, loki and the local saag. It is apparent from the above that Sai, though had Indian blood in her veins, but was an anglicized Indian, a product of the influence of the British enterprise in India.

. Biju comes into contact of the American culture along with people from numerous Third world countries; while he lives in New York as an illegal migrant worker belonging to the "shadow class" (102). Biju colored with bias, initially fails to negotiate with the foreign cultures as evident in his brawl with a fellow Pakistani worker, "old war, best war" '(23). Despite the brawl's antiquated setting their "words flow with an ease that [comes] from centuries of practice" (23), and in the heat of the battle it is as though the "spirit of father, grandfather, rise from the dead" (23).

However, Biju undergoes a noticeable change and becoming a hybrid person befriends an African, Saeed Saeed though he earlier was prejudiced against them as evident from, "[he]remembered what they said about black people at home... Be careful of the hubshi. Ha ha, in their own country they live like monkeys in trees"(76). After meeting Saeed Saeed who is a

Zanzibari Muslim, he begins to rethink the social, racial and religious prejudices he had lugged with him all the way from India. These prejudices surface in the manner of "Freud's return of the repressed", as Biju becomes aware of them once he is faced with the problems they may cause in his friendship with Saeed. The charismatic Zanzibari soon becomes "the man [Biju] [admires] most in the United States of America" (53), and he finds himself overcome by the desire to be his friend, because Saeed Saeed "wasn't drowning, he was bobbing in the tides" (76).

Biju takes a spontaneous liking towards Saeed Saeed, despite his age old religious beliefs, and begins to dissolve his prejudices that were almost genetic. Biju finally comes to the awareness that a, "habit of hate had accompanied [him], and he found that he possessed an awe of white people, who arguably had done India great harm, and a lack of generosity regarding almost everyone else, who had never done a single harmful thing to India" (77). Thus, Biju clearly evolves as a culturally hybrid person. Biju remembers about "Colonial India, free India," , he finds "the tea was the same, but the romance was gone" (133); Biju and his friends drank tea and diligently they read the *New York Times* together, including the international news. They take Tikka masala, navrattan vegetable curry, tandoori grill, dal makhani, pappadu. Thus, his exposure to USA, though not completely fulfilling, certainly make Biju, a culturally hybrid person in a positive light. He dissolves the age old biases harbored against people of foreign nations to emerge as a more balanced individual, who return to his Indian roots retaining his values, but draining clear from cultural prejudices and fallacies, moving towards equilibrium.

The characters of Lola and Noni are culturally hybrid, as though Indian by birth, they are westernized in tastes and habits. Their kitchen is "stuffed with Marmite, Oxo bouillon cubes, Knorr soup packs, After Eights" (46), and they listen to BBC radio every night, "Pixie, Lola's daughter, [is] a BBC reporter" (46); their washing line [sags] under a load of Marks and Spencer panties"

(44). Thus, they are global citizens first and Indians later, which is reflected in their hybrid personalities.

Desai's characters like Judge, Sai, Father Booty, Uncle Potty, Mrs. Sen, Lola and Noni, at Cho Oyu and Mon Ami, are distinctive products of cultural hybridity. However, they do not live in an accommodating atmosphere, and are constantly under cultural conflicts, clashing ideologies, confusion and turmoil. To quote Bhabha, the "process of cultural hybridity", must give "rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (211).

Ambivalence in *The Inheritance of Loss*

Desai's characters are a mix of contradictions, parallel emotions and embody ambivalence in the true sense of the word: Sai and Gyan love and hate each other at the same time; Biju wants material benefits from America and simultaneously wants to retain his Indian identity. They live in a real, bittersweet world, replete with contradictions and differing.

Jemubhai displays "double consciousness" (W. E. B. Dubois's term) as his "identity is divided into several facets". He sways like a pendulum between the East and West; and between anger and repression. The contradictions butcher him into pieces devastating his self identity. Thus, in his case the ambivalent nature inherent in him turns out into a catastrophe.

His granddaughter Sai too lives in a state of mixed emotions, she is in love with her maths tutor Gyan but all the same detests his habits, family background and most importantly cultural milieu. Gyan, too is an instance of contradictions: while he loves Gorkhaland, he hesitates in fighting for the cause. While he loves Sai, he is also offended by her English ways.

Sai, walks up to Gyan's house and is disgusted to see the locale, where he lives and describes his house in the following words:

It was a small, slime slicked cube; the walls must have been made with cement corrupted by sand, because it came spilling forth from pocket marks as if from a punctured bag. Crow's nest of electric wiring hung from the corners of the structure, split into sections that disappeared into windows barred with thin jail grill. She could smell an open drain that told immediately of a sluggish plumbing system failing anew each day despite being so rudimentary (255) .

Sai's disgust of Gyan's 'house', also a symbol of his class and cultural identity is strikingly evident in the lines above. She is aghast at the first sight of it though later a mix of more humane feelings descends upon her and she observes, "Still; she could tell it was someone's precious home... just the kind of thing Lola and Noni would have made merciless fun of" (255). Thus, it is noticeable that while Sai is repulsed by the sight of the house yet, she can appreciate the fact that it is a loving home of its residents. Sai, displays the ambivalence in her nature here by wearing an attitude which is both condescending and kind at the same time.

When Gyan emerges out of his home, Sai feels "distaste" for herself, as she had loved him. Later, they argued and Sai, "...wished to claw him... wanted to pluck out his eyes and beat him black and blue." (Desai, 258). But soon after unleashing her fury she "began to laugh a bit", she also switched her voice to a pleading tone. Desai, deliberately presents these contradictions, so as to reflect a real ambivalent world where people are composed of conflicting propositions, she vividly captures this ideology through her characters; and explains it most accurately and beautifully by medium of Sai and Gyan:

Just ordinary humans. . . composite of contradictions. . . Cheese and chocolate they wanted, but also to kick all these bloody foreign things out. A wild daring love to bicycle them into the sky, but also a rice and dal love blessed by the unexciting feeling of everyday... Every single contradiction history or opportunity might make available to them, every contradiction they were heir to, they desired. But only as much, of course, as they desired purity and the lack of contradiction (259).

Conclusion

The statement of Uma Parameswaran, “Home is where your feet are” posits the theory that all immigrants get themselves conformed to the new land, uncritically accepting its protruding edges and glaring margins. However, the picture that emerges while reading immigrant literature is often different and disappointing. Pain, failure and nostalgia govern the life of immigrants. Only a few of them show their fortitude by integrating themselves with the new land, whereas many others fall a prey to frustration, anguish, despair and loneliness.

This research attempts to analyze the dilemma of the migrant, tracing his quest for inheritance. The study investigates whether the immigrant agrees with the paradigm, “Home is where your feet are, and may your heart be there too”, or not. It is also an attempt to explore how multiculturalism, a social theory/ideology, plays a vital role in literary studies. Multiculturalism challenges a monoculture society and celebrates cultural pluralism. The coexistence of numerous cultures and subcultures can develop a healthy human society characterized by co-operation, tolerance, respect and love. The idea of preserving all cultures is a way of recognizing different cultures and representing them as equals in the public arena. The preservation of different cultures leads towards the integrity and truthfulness of society. Multiculturalism opposes cultural hegemony and appreciates cultural diversity and respects the notion of multiple identities. It recognizes and respects minority cultures that have been suffering because of social injustice, exclusion, marginalization, dispossession, dislocation and social discrimination. It explores the possibilities of breaking down inter-ethnic, inter-racial discriminatory attitudes and cultural

jealousies and supports the maintenance of social harmony and mutual acceptance of all cultures. For a theoretical background different views and opinions of various social scientists, philosophers and political thinkers have been considered and discussed. The various facets of multiculturalism included in the research are harmonious coexistence of multiple cultures and subcultures, value of tolerance (non-discriminatory attitude), privileges and protection to minority cultures, importance of cultural, religious and ethnic diversities, significance of cultural, communal, ethnic and religious identities.

The manifestations of multiculturalism abroad and how they affect Indian immigrants are two ideas explored here with reference to Anita Desai's *Bye Bye Blackbird*. The Indian immigrants' problem of acculturation is an important theme of the novel. In the process of acculturation, there is a continuous dominance of the Occidental culture over the Oriental. That dominance leads to social disharmony, cultural shocks, unrest and friction. Desai presents blackbirds (Indian Immigrants) as marginalized, dislocated, rejected and unwanted foreigners staying in an alien land. The feelings of alienation, emptiness and barrenness perturb the immigrants. Throughout the novel, *Bye Bye Blackbird*, we see continuous shifts of ideas in the minds of different characters. Thus the analysis of the novel brings to focus Adit's fascination for and disregard to Occidental culture, Dev's disregard to Occidental culture, Europe's racial discrimination, cultural intolerance, problems of interracial marriage, identity crisis, social ostracization, marginalization, cultural rootlessness, socio-cultural conflicts, acceptance, rejection, adjustment and oscillation between Oriental and Occidental culture.

Adit's inter-racial marriage to Sarah, an English woman, invites clashes between two cultures, i.e. Occidental and Oriental. Dev, Adit's friend, is also disturbed by the British people's prejudiced manners and racial discrimination against the Asian immigrants. In the beginning, Adit

is fascinated by the British culture. His fascination for British culture reveals his colonial hangover which values and respects British culture. But his fascination for British culture remains fresh only till the middle of the novel. First of all, he enjoys the life of a bourgeois in England, which offers him a carefree living. For him, England is a symbol of refinement and sophistication. Adit's fascination for British culture is not so objectionable, but the way he looks at his 'home' culture is not acceptable in the light of the theory of multiculturalism, because multiculturalism acknowledges cultural equality and denounces the dominance of one culture over the other. Multiculturalism, a social doctrine, encourages cultural plurality and social heterogeneity but discourages cultural hegemony, governance and dominance. In the beginning, Adit appreciates and accepts the dominance of white culture and disregards his home culture. Actually adopting, valuing or respecting another culture is not against the principles of multiculturalism, but it is necessary to look at all the cultures, whether home or alien, from the perspectives of equality and mutual respect. Initially, he admires the history and poetry of the West and forgets the fact that the British have used them to play up their hegemony and maintain their central position at a global level. But in the end, his fascination for British culture is replaced by an intense dislike for it. When he realizes that British culture itself is discriminatory and biased, he shifts his conviction from Occidental to Oriental (home) culture.

Anita Desai does not wish to suggest that multiculturalism is impossible in England. The activities of Emma, an English lady, illustrate this fact. She respects the value of Indian spirituality and decides to form a little India club. Emma makes an attempt to recognize the value of another culture-the culture of a former colony of her own imperialist country. We come across different instances through which Anita Desai underscores the greatness of multiculturalism. She seems to assert that multiculturalism is possible only when the parties involved have the readiness to forget

and forgive. She believes that multiculturalism is breathing in India, because India has maintained, at least to some extent, the balance of cultures, religions, sects, beliefs and opinions. Shedding of ego, adjustment with unknown setups and respecting others' sentiments are the essential factors that have contributed to the continued existence of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism does not only support to the cultural pluralism but also respects uniqueness and distinctiveness of each culture. The cultural clashes have no place on the agenda of multiculturalism. Therefore, the analytical study of this novel shows how multiculturalism functions in different forms to resolve some socio-cultural problems that create waves of friction and hostility in the world.

Kiran Desai's Booker-winning novel *The Inheritance of Loss* analyze the immigrant experience and challenges that they face and tries to come in terms with the same heart wrenching question that haunt the immigrants: who am I? Where do I belong? Desai certainly wants us to explore the pain of the immigrant, and the unfairness of a world in which, as one character puts it, "one side travels to be a servant, and the other side travels to be treated like a king." The ambitious plunge at the riches of the new globalized world is one of the derivative problems of modern life and consequently concerned with the emigrating masses. Part of the narrative which explores the travails of immigrants reverberates with the first-hand experience of the struggles of Desai herself. Her plot unravels at around the time when the author first came with her mother to America. The novel while focusing on the fate of a few powerless individuals, adroitly tackles every contemporary international issue: globalization, multiculturalism, insurgency, terrorist violence and economic inequality, to name only a few. It captures the true emotions and feelings of an immigrant, and illuminates the pain of exile and the ambiguities of post colonialism across a tapestry of colorful characters.

Although history and literature have attempted to project exiles as heroic, romantic, glorious and even triumphant episodes, exile is synonymous with misery and estrangement. The most imminent denouement is the irreparable psychological chasm that bares into the individual's psyche. Edward W. Said observes that exile is "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home, its essential sadness can never be surmounted." Caught between conflicting cultures, immigrant writers often dwell upon the themes of dislocation, survival and loss of identity" (44). The feeling of nostalgia is heightened if the writer happens to be a colored immigrant in a predominantly white society.

The Inheritance of Loss weaves several interconnected stories into a composite whole. The stories are about the losses incurred by a group of uprooted and isolated characters. These characters trek across vast expanses of geography, and when they do nestle in niches in the lush mountains of northeastern India at the foot of the majestic Kanchenjunga, they remain as alien, and 'other' as temporary migrants, not only to their external surroundings but most troublingly to themselves,

In this world, ravaged by the colonial past and pulled by the deceptions of a globalized future, the poignant emptiness of the present is felt in the absence, the lack, of genuine feelings of love, of connections, of lasting bonds, of roots and of truth (Deshmukh 76).

The novel begins with a teenage Indian girl, an orphan called Sai, living with her Cambridge educated Anglophile grandfather, a retired judge, Jemubhai Patel in the town of Kalimpong, on the Indian side of the Himalayas. Sai is romantically involved with her mathematics tutor Gyan, the descendant of a Nepali Gorkha mercenary, but he recoils from her and falls in with a group of Nepali insurgents. There is Biju, the son of Sai's grandfather's cook, one of the numerous illegal immigrants in New York, serving in various restaurants, in the hope of securing a green card. All

these desperate characters have been stunted by their encounters with the West. They are the products of centuries of domination by the economic and cultural powers of the West, and abject humiliation seems to be their destined lot.

The saga of Jemubhai's humiliation and marginalization starts from the beginning of his journey from Piphit to Cambridge to get education. The cabin mate on the ship twitches his nose at Jemubhai's "lump of pickle wrapped in the bundle of puris; onions, green chillies and salt in a twist of newspaper, a banana that in the course of the journey had been slain by heat" (37). Irritated with his mother for having anticipated this humiliation, he throws the lovingly packed bundle of puris overboard. That the black immigrant is an outsider, and not worthy of respect is clear when the white porter does not pick up a brown person's bags. Jemubhai carries his own bags and stumbles on to a train, on his way to Cambridge. While searching for a room to rent, he gets a curt refusal from twenty-two houses, before Mrs. Rice accepts him as her tenant. Not that Mrs. Rice was different from her countrymen; the fear that she would not find a lodger because of the locational disadvantage of her house, and because she needed the money, made her offer room to Jemubhai. Non acceptance by the English society, which considered the Indian immigrant Jemubhai an outsider, forced him to live as an insular. "He retreated into a solitude that grew in weight day by day. The solitude became a habit, the habit became the man, and it crushed him into a shadow" (39).

In spite of clearing the entrance examination and securing admission at Fitzwilliam, there was no improvement in his condition. With each passing day no one spoke to him, and Jemubhai became more of an introvert. The elderly ladies moved away when he sat next to them in the bus, and the young and beautiful girls merely giggled and remarked bitterly, "Phew! He stinks of curry!" (39). This derogatory treatment meted out to him, makes him retract further into a cocoon.

His desire for cohesive integration with the Englishmen not being fulfilled, he suffers from alienation. He is shut away from other people by barriers of race, upbringing, sex and age. As a result Jemubhai is encompassed by acute misery, anguish and fear. He suffers from anxiety and restlessness, which is symptomatic of a psychological ailment. Bathing becomes an obsession with him, lest he should be accused of smelling. He does not dare to open his lips in a smile, because he does not want anyone to see his gums and teeth. After working for eighteen hours a day, he clears the written examination. But, as ill luck would have it, the examiners chuckle at his Indian Guirati accent and quaint pronunciation at the viva examination. He secures the lowest qualifying marks and almost faints. However, as a saving grace, when he finds his name at the bottom of the new list, which was conceived to Indianize the service, he cannot control the outburst of suppressed emotions, and cries incessantly for three days and nights, Desai's message comes across very clearly to the reader. A man from a colonized country, a native immigrant can only succeed in an alien land by suppressing his identity and smothering his voice.

Isolated in racist England, where he is treated as the "other" person, the future judge feels barely human at all. Yet on his return back to India, he finds himself abhorring his apparently backward Indian wife, whom he ultimately forces to leave his house. He does not even try to derive any information about the daughter that she bore him. It is only when Sai, his granddaughter returns to 'Cho Oyu' that he notices something familiar about her.

She was a Westernized Indian brought up by English nuns, an estranged Indian living in India. The journey he had started so long ago had continued in his descendants. Perhaps he had made a mistake in cutting off his daughter...he'd condemned her before he knew her. Despite himself, he felt in the back-waters of his unconscious, an imbalance in his deeds balancing itself out (210)..

He could neither hate her nor maltreat her, as he had earlier hated and maltreated her mother and grandmother. The novel depicts in Jemubhai, the dilemma of post colonialism. Though his manners are impeccable and his demeanor very British, still he cannot free himself from the shackles of traditional Gujrati and Indian mentality. He feels guilty of ill-treating his wife Nimmi, of shoving away the holy coconut-throwing-in-the-water custom. He appears to be a man caught between the past and the present, between his days in London and his slow and monotonous life in the crumbling house 'Cho Oyu', between his daughter and granddaughter Sai, between the Nepalis struggling for their land and freedom, and his own British world of massive volumes of English literature, of crones at tea-time and the choice of brown sauce and white sauce for dinner, and his lovely dog Mutt. He is one of those ridiculous Indians, whose Anglophilia can only turn into self hatred.

One can only comment that Indians like the embittered Jemubhai are undesirable elements in post colonial India, where long suppressed people have become conscious of their dereliction and are ever ready to express their wrath against such despicable treatment.

In an alternate narrative we are shown the life of Biju, the son of Sai's grandfather's cook, who is considered to be a part of the "shadow class" of illegal immigrants in New York. Kiran Desai has very graphically described the over eagerness of the Indians who want to migrate to America. At the visa counter of the American Embassy, the Indians were willing to undergo any kind of humiliation to procure a visa, to get into the United States of America. "You could heap rubbish on their heads and yet they would be begging to come crawling in " (184).

Even Biju, self contented and smiling, presented himself with the exquisite manners of a cat. "I'm civilized Sir, ready for the U.S. I'm civilized mam" (183). He too suffers racial discrimination at the hands of the Americans. The owner's wife at Pinocchio's Italian Restaurant

was allergic to the smell of his hair oil. She preferred Bulgarians, or Czechoslovakians who shared the same skin, color and religion, not Indians.

Biju manages to secure only the lowest position when he goes out job-hunting. Biju stands in awe of white skinned people who hate Indians. However, he dislikes Pakis because their religion is different and they eat beef. In spite of that he likes Saeed because he is not a Paki, and is kind, but at the same time hates the general lot of Muslims. Saeed also eats beef, but Biiu thinks that the cow in America is not holy as it is in India. "The cow was not an Indian cow; therefore it was not holy" (76).

Biiu hates South Africans because they are uncivilized and wish to impregnate every Indian girl they see, but he likes Saeed. Saeed too faces a similar dilemma regarding Biju; he knows that Indians are hated everywhere in Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, Nigeria, Japan, Germany, Italy, and Singapore. But Saeed loves Biiu and Biiu loves Saeed.

Biiu's initial euphoria soon started waning when he was struck by the grim realities of life in America. When he skidded on some rotten spinach in Harish-Harry's kitchen and hurt his knees, his violent outburst at the owner when he refused him medical help, was alarming, "...without us living like pigs", said Biju, "what business would you have. That is how you make your money, paying us nothing,...making us work day and night because we are illegal. Why don't you sponsor us for our green cards? (188). It is then that the futility of living in America dawns on him. The exploitation becomes unbearable and the American dream begins to fade into oblivion.

Biju is unsuccessful as an American because he remains rooted to his father's love, bound by his cultural origins. He sacrifices all to get to America, through the painful act of voluntary rootlessness performed by millions of immigrants, but once he gets there, he cannot refashion and recreate himself to become truly American, one's origins must be erased and forgotten. He cannot

choose his identity in the manner of his colorful friend, Saeed, the shape-shifter, who prospers because he leaves the past behind and pragmatically follows opportunity whenever and wherever it appears. The same Biju who had scrambled to reach the visa counter at the United States Embassy, loses all his enthusiasm after his traumatic experiences in New York. Poor and lonely, he eventually becomes “a man full to the brim, with a wish to live within a narrow purity” (268). For him the city’s endless possibilities for self invention become a source of pain. The awakening of self consciousness and self pity make him long to fade into insignificance, to return, “to where he might relinquish this overrated control over his own destiny” (268). Biju remains hopelessly bound by his father’s prolific letters, confused about how to be alien to himself and his father. Biju and the cook’s longing for each other, and their ultimate reunion presents the only glimmer of hope, of truth, in the whole novel.

Biju voluntarily abandons the promise of the New World, the glitz and grime of America, just for the sake of his father. When he hears about the Gurkha insurgency in Darjeeling, he is assailed by misgivings about his father’s safety and immediately decides to return, lest he should never be able to see his father again. On his return, the Gorkha movement does not even spare him and he is robbed of all his money and belongings. Yet the reader derives a strange satisfaction in the reunion of the father and son. Biju too, feels safe and at peace, compared to his lonely life as a waiter, thrown from one restaurant kitchen to another. As Sai looks at the joyful reunion, “the five peaks of Kanchenjunga turned golden with the kind of luminous light that made you feel, if briefly that truth was apparent” (324).

Sai’s sudden flash of wisdom at the end of the novel, is generated by the loss of her love, Gyan, whose name ironically means knowledge, and the return of the cook’s son Biju, whose name means light. It is then that she realizes that received knowledge, (Gyan) must be lost, for the light

(Biju) to appear. Equipped with this vision, she finally notices the great mountain Kanchenjunga and glimmering beneath it the unbreakable connection, the unusually sturdy and lasting bond between the cook and the light of his life, his son Biju. The brief glimpse of a flickering light in the darkness brought in at the very end of the novel rekindles our hopes that all is not lost in the sweeping panorama of a globalized world.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai is speaking of our inheritance as products of colonization and immigration. Most of Desai's characters, too, display a constant obsession with western thought. Jemubhai Patel, a living artifact of colonialism, his granddaughter Sai, middle class and westernized, a foreigner in ways to her own culture and country of origin. She is the English speaking, boarding school abandoned offspring of a scientist couple, "both educated with an eye to the West", who subsequently die in Moscow, leaving her in the care of a hateful grandfather. Two middle class anglophilic women, Lola and Noni, who condemn Naipaul for suffering from colonial neurosis, whereas Lola's own clothesline sags "under a load of Marks and Spencer panties". Uncle Potty and Father Booty, the naive and ridiculed cook, his immigrant son Biiu, and the confused and craven Gorkha- Gyan, together complete the group of uprooted and isolated characters in this novel.

Desai herself moved over to India at the age of fifteen, but could not fit herself into a purely American mould, as she felt that she had a strong relationship with being Indian. It is precisely these complications of colonization and immigration that she has explored in the book. Immigrants naturally want, to talk about their journey in the best light possible, as being happy and successful. But herein lies the dilemma--there's a darker side as well.

The life of the immigrant may be rich but is not without its accompanying burdens. The most obvious burden is the amplification of self consciousness through immigration. It is Desai's

firm view that being conscious of one's individuality, and of one's freedom from being trapped by a community is both a wonderful and an overpowering experience. There's a certain sense of relief and a certain sense of peace and calm to just packing yourself down to a small size, into a smaller person and being part of a community that moves you along, just moved by the momentum of that community. It is precisely this intermingling, in the novel, of sadness over globalization, with pleasure at the surviving intimacies of Indian life that brought the coveted award to Kiran Desai.

Anita Desai and Kiran Desai-mother and daughter-the two generations of story weaving Desai's touch on the same raw social nerves, and wield them skillfully into literary art. Both write about the Indian experience of migration, of expatriation of striving-to succeed abroad yet yearning for an increasingly imaginary homeland. Their overlapping themes and their charm of the Himalayas makes them similar though both have distinct traits. The daughter is passionate, the mother austere and stringent in her writing, the former conveys a leaping, propelling energy, the latter, watchful stillness and restraint. Yet both capture the sorrow that underlines the migrant's restless transit. Both are prose poets in modern disenchantment, portraying very succinctly and in a compact way, the various shades of multiculturalism through the lens of their novels.

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