Chapter V
Man's World in Woman's Vision: Perceptions of Gender in Kiran Desai's Fiction
CHAPTER - V

MAN'S WORLD IN WOMAN'S VISION: PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER IN KIRAN DESAI'S FICTION

Kiran Desai is another noted writer of Indian diaspora who is settled in the United States of America (USA) and divides her time between India and USA. Kiran has received the talent for writing as a legacy from her mother Anita Desai, a distinguished and renowned Indian English writer. Kiran was born in India and was brought up in USA. The early migration in her young age makes her a second generation writer of diaspora in the postcolonial era. Kiran has also faced multiple migrations like Lahiri and Sunetra Gupta which marks her diasporic sensibility as a migrant in yet another different way. Born in New Delhi on 3rd September 1972, Kiran has spent her early childhood in Delhi and Kalimpong, where her maternal ancestors lived and these early memories are used as facts in her novel The Inheritance of Loss. Kiran migrated with her mother in her fourteenth year to England and after one year stay, they moved to USA where she finished her schooling in Massachusetts. She graduated with a B.A. from Bennington College in Vermont and joined a Creative Writing Program known as Hollins in Virginia. It is here she began her first novel Hullabaloo in Guava Orchard (1998), which she completed after two years with a break in her academic pursuit. In spite of the short span of her writing career with the publication of two novels so far, she has established herself as a most promising writer of Indian writing in English.
Kiran’s first novel *Hullabaloo in Guava Orchard* brought out her literary talent to the light. The novel appeared in the serialized form under the title *Strange Happenings in the Guava Orchard* in the Newyorker from 1997. It was much appreciated by the western readers and also attracted the attention of the critics and writers like Salman Rushdie who published the excerpts of the novel in his anthology *Vintage Book of Indian Writing*. It was also unanimously selected for Betty Trask Award by the “Society of Authors”, an award for the “best new novel written by a commonwealth citizen under the age of thirty five” (Hindustan Times.com), selected through the voting done in twenty one countries. Kiran has revealed in an interview that she has based her story of this book on an incident reported in Times of India about a hermit who lived on a tree for several years till his death:

I started with a very small idea really .... 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 (www.hindustantimes.com).

Her second novel *The Inheritance of Loss* was published in 2006 after a gap of eight years and instantly won the international recognition by winning the covetous Man Booker Award for the year 2006. Apart from several other Indian writers Kiran Desai is the youngest woman writer ever to win this prestigious literary award and the novel has also been the winner of the National Book Critics Fiction Award in the same year. On this occasion in her praise Rushdie remarked...
that, “It’s a welcome proof that India’s encounter with the English language continues to give birth to new children, endowed with lavish gifts” (Hindustan Times.com 2006).

The novel The Inheritance of Loss is set in the colonial and postcolonial India and draws its plot and characters from the personal life of the writer, especially her childhood experiences in India and adulthood experiences in USA respectively:

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

The other novel is entirely set in India with a popular theme of fake sainthood. Both these works are having diverse themes, plots and characters with a commonality that they are set in India of colonial and postcolonial times and are the delineations of postmodern literary devices. The story of the so called fake hermit spending his life on a Guava tree in the first novel is a magic realist text whereas The Inheritance of Loss is a story of postcolonial diaspora with social and historical realism of modern Indian nation after 1980s.

Desai’s first novel Hullabaloo in Guava Orchard is an experiment in magic realism. Influenced by her vast reading of postmodern writers like Gabriel
Garcia Marquez, Borges etc., Desai writes on the theme of fake mysticism of a fake hermit who fools people by living in Guava Orchard. Influenced by an incident reported in The Times of India she develops this novel. But Desai’s handling of the theme and its incidents, setting and characters are all different. She uses postmodern subversive technique in the novel. As much the product of imagination according to Desai “it is a comedy and it is satiric in many ways I think, and it’s fantastic. It reads very much like a folk tale or a fairy tale so I think it has different sides, different words can be used to describe it. It depends on how you read it, I suppose” (www.hindustantimes.com).

Sampathhh the protagonist of the novel is a lazy, idle and dull creature, who cannot complete his education. As such does not get a satisfactory job. Besides he does not stick to the one that his father procures for him. But like his strange natured mother, Kulfi, he is only interested in food and leisure. His father’s protest and scolding’s make him duller and insipid day by day. Finally he runs away from home and takes shelter on a guava tree in an old orchard at the outskirts of the town. When the family wants to bring him back he adamantly sticks to the tree and his helpless father has to acquiesce with his wish. But the father invents an opportunity to make his son famous and earn money. The family gets shifted to Guava orchard. Soon Sampathhh is raised to the status of a great hermit and this fake hermit lives with monkeys, eats strange food his mother is happy to prepare and speaks absurd words which are taken as ambiguous advice or wisdom passed on to the public. Desai infuses a great comic drama in this thin story line. By using magic realism a postmodern device she
also exposes the opportunist father’s greed for money; the sham and pretence of Sampathhh and also his ugly nature to live and enjoy without work and labour; his sister’s predicament to be out of this atmosphere and the desperate wish to get out of this drama; Kulfi, the mother’s obsession for strange food.

Sampathhh Chawla’s birth itself is delineated mysteriously by subverting the ways of birth of real great men. When Kulfi was pregnant, the writer describes her very comically: “Kulfi, in these months, was enormously large, she seemed to be claiming all the earth’s energy for herself, sapping it dry, leaving it withered, shriveled and yellow” (3). When she delivers the baby on a rainy day the father notices that there was: “a brown birth mark upon one cheek appeared to the cheers of his family, there was roaring overhead that almost split their eardrums followed by a vast crash in the street outside. What was that said Mr. Chawla nervously, as ground shuddered, could be that his son’s birth had coincided with the end of the world?” (11). As great men are born with good omen Sampathhh’s birth coincides with Red-cross supplies dropped by Swedish relief plane. Shahkot, Sampathhh’s town is benefited. Then in Kulfi’s strange obsession of food and Sampathhh’s liking for it also highlights the subversive element used by Desai to expose Sampathhh’s callous and greedy nature and also his foolishness. The mother is an obsessed and insane person from the beginning. The other details like Sampathhh’s strange living on the tree and his discourses delivered to the people; his befriending with monkeys which create a great horror in Shahkot are all delineated by Kiran in comic and ironical manner that
satirizes the gullible human faith in hermits and saints. It also exposes the emotional exploitation of such people.

The second novel *The Inheritance of Loss* could be read at various levels due to its multiple themes. But the main theme of the novel is diaspora and immigration in the postcolonial times. It reveals the uncanny perception of a woman writer who writes with multiple view points and boldly portrays the so-called man's world which is replete with war, riots, agitations, insurgency, administration, adventure, manipulation with their allied emotions of cruelty, gender bias, harshness that mark the reality of the lived experiences of human beings. Desai as a woman writer does not specifically deal with feminist issues like Lahiri, Gupta or Divakaruni but her woman's perception creates the male world as well as female. Her protagonists are both men and women. It is not the domesticity of woman's life that she deals with like the aspects of motherhood, patriarchal resistance and other specific gender issues but the world of insurgency, political unrest, social and economic unrest at a given point of time in her novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. The present chapter therefore analyses the perceptions of a woman writer in creating a point of view and the depiction of gender both male and female since both the novels focus on male perspectives and thereby deal with the inextricably interwoven world of females in the male dominated world. The major stress or the focus of the chapter however is on the second novel.
As discussed elaborately in the introductory chapter one of the major issues of postcolonial times and the new diasporas is the identity crisis. The focus of Desai's second novel is on the theme of identity crisis but with a difference. Desai deals with identity crisis of natives in the Indian sub-continent, to be precise, the postcolonial subject. As the title significantly suggests, the inheritance of all the characters is that of loss and one can term it that the novel is about loss, as the issue of identity shown is either lost one or regained one with transformation. It is with individual's cultural identity in clash with the diasporic identity that Kiran Desai deals with in her fiction. However, the crisis of individual identity occurs within one's own culture here and the novel speaks about the identity of those people who are strangers in their own country as the judge in the novel, who lives a solitary life in Kalimpong "being a foreigner in his own country" (IOL 29). Desai's characters, both men and women undergo this identity crisis and they inherit this due to their social and cultural background on the basis of class, race, gender, economic status and religion in the time of political crisis that runs in their lives.

The novel begins in the postcolonial India of 1980's when in the northeast states there was a cry for a separate state by the Goorkha National Liberation Front. The GNLF was making demands for a separated Goorkha state for the Indian Nepalese with the motto "Goorkha land for Goorkhas" (7). It turned out to be a violent movement fought in the universal guerilla fashion, by the Indian Nepalese. The nation was already facing a political turmoil which Desai
humorously puts in the words of Lola thus: “Assam, Nagaland, and Mizoram; Punjab on fire with Indira Gandhi dead and gone in October of last year; and those Sikhs with their Kanga, Kachha etc., still wishing to add a sixth K, Khalisthan, their own country in which to live with other five K” (108). Therefore in Kalimpong a separatist movement was in full swing influenced by Nehruvian socialism. There were agitations and rasta rookos and processions where the speakers and leaders of the movement were trying to convince the crowd saying that, Kalimpong was losing its three T’s; Tea, Timber and Tourism. Under such circumstances, all the people, especially the outsiders settled down in Kalimpong come under the net of identity crisis and loss as the circumstances of Goorkha agitations make them double check their own cultural identities in terms of their social standing. Most of the characters undergo a cultural loss and economic loss because the land in which they settle down and make their own, which defined them, gave them an identity and sense of belonging was at once robbed off from them by the forceful agitators and thus creating a sense of loss and identity crisis.

In spite of its beginning in the present India of postcolonial period and the advent of globalization, the novel includes India’s colonial past during the time of British Raj. The crisis of identity for the major character Jemubhai therefore begins in the past which can best be explained under the postcolonial theory and theory of diaspora. As the theory posits, the postcolonial individual identity is both ambivalent and hybrid, in a multicultural condition of the modern states, it includes of the questions of Edward Said’s the ‘other’, both in terms of race, class, and nationality; the mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity of Bhabha; and the
gendered 'other' of Spivak. The crisis of Desai's characters can be explained in terms of the racial others in diaspora; ambivalent and hybrid in their own country; and gendered victims or 'others' in their domestic space.

Judge Jemubhai Patel and his cook's son Biju both experience the racial discrimination in the diasporic space as both of them migrate from their own country for the purpose of education and earning respectively. If Jemubhai migrates to England for his ICS during the colonial rule in India, Biju goes to America for earning money and to become rich in the postcolonial times. But both become the victims of racial discrimination and undergo a sense of identity crisis, a loss in their psyche but the end result for both of them is contrastingly different.

Jemubhai is born to the peasant class in Piphit, a small village in Gujarat during the Raj. Due to the ardent wish and efforts of his father, Jemubhai becomes the first man of his community to go to England to do his ICS. Young Jemubhai as a colonized subject is victimized for his native accent, manners and appearance during his stay in England. The ICS service which was introduced for the Indian men by the colonial masters in order to indigenize the service so as to create the mimic men and the stereotypes for the efficient and smooth administration of their colonized land naturally had a powerful attraction for the colonized minds of the nation. Jemubhai's father who worked in the courts as a supplier of evidences naturally aspires for his son such a powerful position like the Justice of the court or the District Collector. With the help of debts borrowed and dowry collected by Jemu's marriage with a rich man's daughter he successfully sends his son to England. This new opportunity procured and dreamed beyond his class, race and
community naturally instills the superiority and negativity in the mind of Jemu who develops a deep reverence to his English masters. He becomes a colonial construct who finds his native identity hateful and inferior. His hypocrisy is exposed the moment he is aboard the ship S S Strathnaver which leaves the Indian shores for the English shores. Jemubhai notices that his mother has packed his dinner for him along with a banana. The poor woman out of love sends him her humble preparations lest he should remain hungry on board. But Jemu feels disgusted and insulted. He misunderstands that she has insulted his dignity by packing his Indian dinner of Chapati because he thinks that she has construed him to be uncomfortable with the English food, manners and etiquettes which is ironically true. This is a mockery of the situation according to Jemubhai for he thinks that his mother has done it purposely to show his inability to cope up with the new situation but in reality the mother does it out of concern. So, Jemu throws out the pack into the sea from the deck. Even the coconut offering his father gives him to throw into the sea for his safe journey, a tradition followed by his people, is also not followed by Jemu thinking that it is a superstition on the part of his father.

On his reaching England Jemu realizes with a shock that his subject position in that country is that of the ‘colonized other’. This not only creates horror in him but also a sense of loss and hatred because he becomes the butt of ridicule at every stage:

For entire days nobody spoke to him at all, his throat jammed with words unuttered, his heart and mind turned into blunt aching things, and elderly ladies,
even the hapless-blue-haired, spotted, faces like collapsing pumpkins-moved over when he sat next to them in the bus, so he knew that whenever they had, they were secure in their conviction that it wasn’t even remotely as bad as what he had. The young and beautiful were no kinder; girls held their noses and giggled, “Phew, he stinks of curry! (39).

This ‘othering’ makes him lonely and in his solitariness it is only ‘study’ that becomes his solace and comfort the “only skill he could carry from one country to another” (39). Besides he retreats “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). This explains even in later stage of life why he chooses to remain in the solitude of his home Cho Oyu in Kalimpong a place remote and unknown from his ancestral place. Jemubhai undergoes a metamorphic transformation of his personality and identity. On the one hand his admiration of his colonial masters makes him inferior and shadowed. On the other it creates in him hatred towards his humble cultural identity of being an Indian commoner. This polarity creates ambivalence in his mind. John McLeod describes this situation appropriately while attempting to analyze postcolonial identity in terms of Bhabha’s theory in his book Beginning Postcolonialism in the following words:

Colonialism attempts to domesticate colonised subjects
and abolish their radical ‘otherness’, bringing them inside western understanding through the Orientalist

259
project of constructing knowledge about them. The construction of ‘otherness’ is thus *split* by the contradictory positioning of the colonised simultaneously inside and outside Western knowledge. Hence, in Bhabha’s terms, ‘colonial discourse produces the colonised as a social reality which is at once an “other” and yet entirely knowable and visible’ (52-53).

The ambivalent position of Jemubhai is clear when Desai writes about the man he becomes once he clears his ICS exam:

The judge eventually took revenge on his early confusions, his embarrassments gloved in something called “keeping up standards”, his accent behind a mask of a quiet. He found he began to be mistaken for something he wasn’t a man of dignity. This accidental poise became more important than any other thing. He envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he could become he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians, both (119).

He returns as a mimic man and a stereotypical colonial subject. His new identity of being an Indian Sahib makes him more ruthless towards his own people. This
cruelty is not only towards his humble countrymen but also towards his family members including his father who was responsible for his education; his wife Bela renamed as Nimi who made it possible by her dowry for his departure to England that made him sahib, whom he victimizes inhumanly in the end. His experiences in England dehumanize him and insert such irony in his nature that he becomes human only in the company of his pet dog Mutt. The judge throughout his life remains a misanthropist in the novel. Desai thus shows in his portrayal the irony of colonial rule in framing the psyche of its subjects and its fractured identities.

In Biju we find another fractured identity which contrasts with judge’s identity by taking turn towards positive cultural identity in the end. Biju goes to America as an illegal immigrant to find employment since his father, the cook, Pannalal wishes him to earn big money in dollars that could make him rich so as to rid him from his poverty and humble position. The ill treatment by first world towards third world is authentically portrayed in the predicament of Biju and other Indian nationals. Kiran writes from her own experience of American treatment which has a common policy to refer all the south Asian immigrants as ‘pakis’ in a sweeping generalization. Biju’s dream of wealth and happiness evaporate after he arrives in America and gets subjected to the exploitation of the third world immigrants. He shuttles between one restaurant to the other from Baby Bistro to Harish Harry’s Gandhi Cafe in search of job and finds that “there was a whole world in the basement kitchens of New York”. On the top the posh restaurants worked under the US flag and below were crowded with all nationals especially the illegal immigrants from all countries. Biju though in awe of Americans still
possesses hatred towards them because they "arguably had done India great harm" (77), according to him. He in turn loves his motherland and hangs on to his cultural identity as Indian.

His love to his homeland becomes clear to him when he meets Saeed Saeed a Zanzibari who befriends Biju. The efforts of Biju to get the green card does not become successful where as Saeed Saeed uses his illegal relationship with prostitutes by marrying them to get him one. The authorities in American embassy give chance to other nationals barring Indians. When Biju becomes a delivery man for Indian girls in America, this love for his native country and his identity is seen in his insults hurled on the Indian girls by whistling at them, who pitifully want to marry an American man with a PhD. Biju feels helpless as he is unable to save money, get a green card and good job, and also unable to help the children of his father's friends to immigrate to America, as he himself is without shelter and safety. He also begins to hate his employers when he witnesses their cruelty to fellow Indians. Harish Harry his employer refuses to pay for his medical expenses when Biju slips and falls down on the kitchen floor and gets hurt while at work. This makes him more attached towards his own native identity, which comes with the fond memories of his native land. Lying down on his lovely Harlem basement bed he remembers his village, where he had lived with his grandmother on the money his father sent him each month. The beauty of the village, its scenic nature with its soft flowing river, the simple food-roti made of hand ground atta- the Divali festival and the serenity of its people, all these send happy memories to him. This finally settles his mind to return to his native home abandoning the wish to
settle in America with green card. This self realization and identity come with the recognition of his choice to return to his country:

Biju walked back to the Gandhi Café, thinking he was emptying out. Year by year, his life wasn’t amounting to anything at all; in the space that should have included family, friends, he was only one displacing the air and yet, another part of him had expended; his self confusions, his self-pity-Oh! the tediousness of it. Clumsy in America, a giant sized midget, a big fat sized helping of small.... Shouldn’t he return to a life where he might slice his own importance, to where he might relinquish his overrated control over his own destiny (268).

However it becomes ironical that he returns during the heightened state of GNLF agitation in Kalimpong. When he takes the help of GNLF men to travel from Calcutta airport to Kalimpong, he is being looted to the core by his own countryman. They do not even leave him his own clothes, his basic dignity and leave him with the helplessness that: “He could not stop thinking of all that he’d bought and lost. Of the money he’d hidden under fake souls in his shoes. Of his valet” (318). But this ultimately does not rob him of his sense of home coming and living in his own country with his beloved father without the necessity to run away from place to place for the fear of being caught, insecurity, hunger, desolation and begging. So Biju’s return marks his sense of belonging to his country and his own
cultural identity. Though there is poverty, there is peace here. Though there is hunger, there is affection and security here. This affinity of his own culture therefore marks Biju’s character. In the portrayal of Biju, Desai’s past memories of her own home and nativity, and her attachment to her Indian inheritance is reflected. She also gives an authentic picture of Indian diaspora in the west, especially the Indian dream of America and its subsequent delusion in the face of its racism and colonial treatment.

Apart from the two central characters Desai shows the conflict of identity in Sai the female protagonist of the novel. Unlike Biju Sai is an anglophile. The postcolonial hybrid identity of the persons in the globalised multicultural context is appropriately portrayed by Kiran Desai in the characters of Sai and other minor characters. Sai is the granddaughter of the judge who comes to live with him after the sad demise of her parents in Russia in a road accident. Sai’s father is also an orphan brought up under Zoroastrian upbringing and her mother is Gujarati. The judge disowns his daughter as he does with his wife. But after the death of his wife he pays for the expenses of his daughter at the convent where she is brought up by the nuns. Both the parents of Sai meet in a Delhi park, fall in love and get married. The father works as a pilot in Indian air force and gets selected on the mission to go into the space organized by Russia as an Indian representative. He goes to Russia with Sai’s mother and there the couple die. Sai is kept in her mother’s convent before they depart. When the parents die the convent decides to send her to the only relative mentioned in the records, the grandfather living in Kalimpong. They send her to Kalimpong accompanied by a sister in the convent. Though the
judge has sought a refuge from the whole world by sheltering himself in Kalimpong. He accepts the arrival of his granddaughter without enthusiasm, but with a consolation that, she may become an unpaid help to look after Mutt, his pet dog, keep a watch on the cook and his property. But his convent-bred granddaughter pleases him to some extent because the judge finds his own reflection in her in being an anglophile. Sai is belonging to that class of anglicized for whom, "cake was better than laddu, fork, spoon, knife better than hands, sipping the blood of Christ and consuming a wafer of his body was more civilized than garlanding a phallic symbol with Marigold. English was better than Hindi" (30). But still her grandfather finds fault with her English accent. He decides to give her tuition privately by appointing tutors. Thus sixteen year old Sai lives in her own solitariness at Cho Oyu without the exposure of the outside world and the company of youngsters of her age. It becomes natural for her to fall in love with her young mathematics tutor Gyan.

When her tender love affair begins with Gyan, GNLF movement rocks Kalimpong and its peaceful existence. This brings out the true nature of Gyan who betrays her by joining the agitators and help in looting the Guns of her grandfather. The objection to her celebrating Christmas made by Gyan not only pains Sai but also initiates her towards Gyan's true nature which finds proof when she sees him in the GNLF rally. Sai comes out of her delusion and confronts him. She also understands that the class divide that separates them into two divisions is also responsible for the break of their love. She realizes that, her higher social class makes her identity different than his and the twain shall never meet. The
subsequent event of disappearance of Mutt, judge’s insolence and injustice to
cook, the vitiated social and political atmosphere of Kalimpong finally lead her to
take a decision to leave Kalimpong to find a new future. The novel thus becomes a
buildungsroman in depicting the growth of Sai from an uncertain, helpless child to
self determinant young woman with an achievement of sense of selfhood:

She thought of her father and the space program. She
thought of all the National Geographics and the books
she had read. Of the judge’s journey, of the cook’s
journey, of Biju’s. Of the Globe twirling on its axis.
And she felt a glimmer of strength. Of resolve. She
must leave (323).

Her resolution comes with a realization that, “the five peaks of Kanchenjunga
turned golden with a kind of luminous light that made you feel if briefly, that truth
was apparent. All you needed to do was to reach out and pluck it” (324). Thus it is
Sai apart from Biju that realizes the truth of life in the middle of chaos and
confusion and finds a way out of it through the proper realization of the self.

Apart from the major characters, the question of identity of the minor
characters also becomes important in the novel. As Krishna Singh rightly observes
the impact of characterization in Desai’s novel, which:

“... is a brilliant study of Indian culture – the culture
in its transitional phase. Changes are brought out by
‘colonial neurosis’, for the western values, manners,
language and glamorous life style; impact of modernization, consumerism, globalization and deep rooted reaction to indigenous values which fail to sustain life. Characters feel inferior, bounded and defeated by their Indian heritage confronted with colonialism... there remains identity crisis which most of the Indians face despite postcolonial reactions in which endeavor is to revitalize indigenous culture and its values (55).

There is an overlapping of postcolonial and postmodern space which initiates the identity crisis among its citizens. Desai captures this predicament of an "in-between" state of the characters that define their identity. The novel not only speaks of the diasporic condition of judge, Sai and Biju, but all other minor characters are also the immigrants, who undergo this dual state of dislocation. Uncle Potty and father Booty are the settlers in Kalimpong since the colonial times. Father Booty, a Swiss citizen originally, is also an unlawful immigrant who comes to India and Kalimpong on two weeks visa but settles down here without its extension for 40 years. He almost becomes an Indian and owns the landed property in Kalimpong on which he runs the Dairy business. As Sai observes later, has done much for the development of Kalimpong than the Government, or GNLF by giving economic prosperity and making use of the land in a useful manner. Uncle Potty's origin is unknown but he too is a settler in Kalimpong and both these men become the outsider insiders of the citizenry of the place. Similarly the ladies Lola (Lalita)
and Noni (Nonita) the two sisters originally from Bengal have settled in Kalimpong as Joydeep Lola’s husband wanted to settle in this lush green peaceful place. Both the sisters along with their neighbour Mrs. Sen and the two orphaned Afghan princesses are anglophiles. Lola’s daughter Pixie and Mrs. Sen’s daughter Mun Mun are working in America and England. Lola visits her daughter every now and then. It is then her mixed cultural identity is very much at the display as she brings back her, “suitcases … stuffed with Marmite, Oxo bouillon cubes, Knorr soup packets, After Eights, daffodil bulbs, and renewed supplies of Boots’ cucumber lotion and Marks and Spencer underwear – the essence, quintessence, of Englishness as she understood it. Surely the queen donned this superior hosiery” (46-47).

Lola and Noni live in a rose covered cottage house called Mon Ami, which is situated on a large property that grows special kind of broccolis originally brought from England. Noni is a spinster who moves in with her sister Lola after Joydeep dies of heart attack. Their elite class is once again asserted in the description:

They lived on his pension, but still they needed more money, what with endless repairs being done to the house, the price of everything rising in the Bazaar and the wages of their maid, sweeper, watchman and gardener, so in order to make her contribution to household finances Noni had accepted the Judge’s request, that she tutor Sai(42).
The sisters pass their time by reading the English books borrowed from Library in Dehradun. They speak English with good accent and celebrate Christmas with ardent passion. These women belong thus to the elite social class of modern India where the cultural identity of a person is influenced by the postmodern, postcolonial events. But it is this identity that later puts them in a precarious position when GNLF boys take up the class issue as one of the priorities to get their demand of the new state. Gyan who is indigenous in his social manners finds this as an unsatisfactory condition. In his feeling of inferiority as an Indian Nepali he criticizes Sai along with the others for their English accent and anglicized habits of food along with their celebrations of festivals like Christmas. Since Sai herself is anglicized she does not find anything objectionable about these practices whereas the indigenous ways of Gyan make him at cross with Sai. Thus in showing this class distinction Desai highlights the hybrid identities of the people in India in the novel by creating her characters living in a multi-cultural state of Kalimpong.

Gyan on the other hand represents the native sensibility of an Indian citizen as against the eliteness of Sai, Judge and others. He is born in a poor Indian Nepali family and has been brought up under poor circumstances. Still he enjoys all the privileges of a male child in his family which wants him to be educated. After his college not finding any job due to his poor English accent and lesser class background with typical ethnicity, he gets frustrated. So:

While Jemubhai’s quest for identity is negotiated through adoption of normative parameters of the class
of the powerful, Gyan’s is negotiated through an apparent (though tentative) expression of “resistance and direction less vengeance; while Biju takes resort to subjugation, and his father seeks it in an imagined socio economic space achieved through his sons economic prosperity in a country much beyond his own reach”(Sen 104).

The GNLF movement brings out dissatisfaction in Gyan and instills in him a sense of purpose and also a false heroism. He joins the group and also aids them. By doing so he betrays Sai. His later visits to her house get him in confrontation with Sai which breaks their relationship. It also brings a sense of shame to Gyan as Sai exposes him to his family members and he realizes his mistake. As a native figure thus Gyan represents the dichotomy. As Sanghita Sen appropriately notes:

On several occasions and instincts Gyan is represented as a dichotomy of Jemubhai. Instinctive responses such as Misogyny, violence against their respective female counterparts, and identity crisis bind these two characters very closely. The narrative becomes a site for contests of identity issues mediated by individual perceptions of personal identity as well as the identity of the group (104).
In the final move however he tries to patch up with Sai by telling the message through the cook that he will help her to get the dog Mutt which is a false promise that Sai realizes. Thus in Gyan Sai tries to expose the sham of the insurgent spirit which is equally dangerous for the peaceful coexistence of the society. Thus the novel captures the multi cultural, multivalent postcolonial diasporic identities in the transitional period of a nation state in its myriad forms.

II

As in the case of other diasporic women writers Kiran Desai also uses the expressions of body and sexuality abundantly in her novels which function politically to delineate the personality of the character. This is evident in the language she uses to describe certain events and situations. Taboo words and obscene sexual expressions are candidly used by her in order to relate stark realities and harshness of characters. Sometimes these expressions appear to be crude and harsh but they speak about the sexual orientation of men and women in Indian society, the sexual politics and the gender constructs in the colonial and post colonial Indian context. On the one hand Desai handles the tender love and narcissism in young generation with delicate humour. On the other she juxtaposes it with violent and hard reality of biological essentialism of the adult world.

Narcissistic expressions of a young girl are very much present in Sai’s character. Sai a girl of sixteen suddenly falls in love with her twenty years old tutor Gyan. Even Gyan falls in love with this beautiful sophisticated convent educated
That night Sai sat and stared into the mirror. Sitting across from Gyan, she had felt so acutely aware of herself, she was certain it was because of his gaze on her. But every time she glanced up he was looking in another direction. She sometimes thought herself pretty but as she began to make a proper investigation she found it was a changeable thing, it was beauty.... She stuck her tongue out at herself and rolled her eyes, then smiled beguilingly. She transformed her expression from demon to queen (74).

Their tender love slowly begins to flourish day by day. Especially after an incident when Gyan has to stay in Judge’s house Cho Oyu due to the sudden rain and electricity failure. He is unable to walk five to six miles to reach his village and is offered to stay in the house overnight by the cook. The stay brings the two young lovers near to each other. It is then Sai suddenly gets interested in her physical appearance and the writer describes us the typical physical attraction present between the young lovers which is nothing short of infatuation.

_Gyan and Sai._ At subsequent pauses in the rain they measured ears, and the span of their rib cages. Collar bones, eye lashes, and chins. Knees, heels, arch of the
feet. Flexibility of fingers and toes. Cheekbones, necks, muscles of the upper arm, small complexities of the hinge bones. The green and purple of their veins.

The world’s most astonishing tongue display (125).

With more physical nearness their desire for each other goes on growing. Even in the first novel of Desai *The Hullabaloo in Guava Orchard*, Pinky the young adolescent sister of Sampath the protagonist of the novel is another example of adolescent picture of narcissism. When Pinky falls in love with the Hungry Hop boy who is an ice-cream vendor she too begins to feel restless and starts paying attention to her dress and makeup:

“Shall I wear this?” she would mutter to herself beforehand. No No I will wear that. No the colour is wrong. It is too dark for a young girl. Oh! The colour is wrong. The entire week before each day in town was spent deciding what to wear and she started on the apparel for the next trip as soon as she got home from the bus stop fussing with needle and thread washing soap and starch (81).

Her infatuation on the boy is so much so that she expresses it unabashedly by biting his ear in the market place. “Seeing him she was filled with a rush of elation and rage. How placid and smiling he was! For a minute she thought she might kiss him, but the vein of aggression pounded powerfully within her and she
bit him instead. She bit his ear so hard the Hungry Hop boy shouted out and his voice boomeranged about the town”(113). She even goes to the back lane of his house and throws a love letter with a piece of stone tied and her violent love is often expressed by assaulting him bodily which is indicative of specific sexual gesture in the common parlance.

Apart from the infatuation and tender sexual expressions of Sai and Gyan Desai also portrays men’s violent sexuality unleashed to commit gender atrocities in the novel. It invokes the idea of masculinity theory that helps to explain the sexist bias and gender treatment in the novel. It is interesting to know that apart from the studies in feminism studies in masculinity grew as a parallel process after 1970s which has helped in analyzing the concept of gender and sexuality in its various connotations and their roles in the society. Even in India studies reveal that the role of masculinity is an important gender aspect of Indian society. Theorists and social psychologists like Ashish Nandi and Sudhir Kakar have enquired into the socialization process in India, its institutions, the normative roles of gender and masculinity that shape the psyche of Indian men. They have also revealed that the matrix of masculinity is in different combinations and depending on the social backgrounds of the person’s which is also a determining factor in one’s own identity. As Bhabha rightly points out in his *The Location of Culture*, colonial culture produced mimic men in Indian society. In the patriarchal society men have certain normative roles and these include the role of protector, provider, and procreator. Failure in fulfilling these roles is considered as a case of failed masculinity. Similarly
Women’s deviation from their gender role may challenge the masculinity of men and may be manifested in violent behavior and sexual violence against women in men. The findings of INCLN 2000 study, which states that domestic or gender based violence is a pervasive problem in India that it cuts across, age, education, social class and religion, can be understood in the light of above mentioned phenomenon of failed masculinity (Chatterjee 172).

In view of these observations one can find an explanation in the aggressive and violent sexual behavior of Jemubhai towards his wife in Desai’s The Inheritance of Loss. When Jemubhai marries Nimi he is twenty and she is fourteen. The elder relatives, his uncles, in the house however expect that, the marriage should be consummated between young couple and men go on goading Jemu to use his masculine prowess to bend his wife. According to their belief one of the ways of man’s assertion is through his exercise of sexual power over his wife:

“chase her and pin her down”, the uncles ordered Jemubhai (92).

The women also wish that the new girl should be subjugated like them as they have internalized this aspect of patriarchy, “spoiled “, they said to Nimi “Putting on airs” (92), they said to each other but young Nimi did not understand all these matters as her secluded life in the haveli has made her shy and timid. In spite of the force of the relatives Jemu also cannot perform the sexual act since he is confused and worried about the cry of the girl but later when he returns from England after five years he is a different man altogether. He is one of the mimic men of the colonizer with the hegemonic notions of gender that women are inferior to men. He detests his wife as uncultured when she steels his powder puff. In the rage to punish her and control her he rapes her violently and brutally. This aggressive nature however gives him the power over her and he victimizes her again and again to the brutal act which is reported candidly by the omniscient narrator:

Ghoulishly sugared in sweet candy pigment, he clamped down on her to the floor, and as more of that perfect rose complexion, blasted in to a million motes, came filtering down, in a dense frustration of lust and fury- penis uncoiling, mottled purple-black as if with rage, blundering, uncovering the chute he had heard rumour of he stuffed his way ungracefully into her (169).
And the aging uncles and aunts watch it from the crack in the door, and approve this act which speaks about the internalised aspect of hegemonic masculinity in the Indian social context where a man overpowers woman through a forcible sexual act, which Desai exposes in the novel.

Nimi is subjugated into silence by this sexual assault of her husband and thus becomes a victim of rape in marriage. Due to her native identity she cannot rise to the expectation of her foreign returned husband and also fails in her domestic duties of a wife. She remains a kind of psychological patient throughout her life. By the time she becomes pregnant and realizes the prospect of her motherhood she loses all the sense of the world and enters into the state of neurosis being a passive and weak victim of man’s sexual prowess and thereby the false exercise of masculinity. Sanghita Sen appropriately comments on the situation in following words:

Finally Jemubhai’s relation and treatment to his wife appears to be a combination of both class and gender issue. Jemubhai looks down upon his wife not only because she is a woman and therefore is a subject to subjugation, but also because she represents the non-transformed Indian self Jemubhai is and which he despises so much. Her non-conformist defying presence in his house hold with her silent resistance to Jemubhai’s oppressive behavior appears as a constant
reminder of Jemubhai’s powerlessness/impotency (Sen 104).

Gyan in a way is a dichotomous self of Jemubhai who also uses his masculine power to hurt Sai by throwing her in a bush, when she exposes his sham and pretense and also his betrayal to her in front of his sister. Aggressive sexual behavior and violence towards women is also seen in the obscene treatment of Lola by the GNLF chief who insults her by calling her his mistress when she goes to complain against the people who illegally occupy her place in the orchard which is another aspect of masculinity internalized by men and women in Indian society.

He began to smile “in fact,” he said, “as you can see”, he gestured out, “I am the Raja of Kalimpong. A Raja must have many queens.” He jerked his head back to the sounds of the kitchen that came through the curtained door. “I have four, but would you”, he looked Lola up and down tipped his chair back, head at a comical angle a coy naughty expression catching his face, “Dear aunty, would you like to be the fifth?” (244).

He uses the obscene and filthy sexual innuendos and expressions to insult her fully as his subordinates laugh and encourage him “and you know, you won’t be bearing me any sons at your age so I will expect a big dowry. And you are not much to look at, “nothing up” – he patted the front of his Khaki shirt- “nothing
down" – he patted his behind, which he twisted out of the chair- “in fact, I have more of both!” (244).

This aggressive sexual behavior of the men makes Lola shocked and she becomes a nervous wreck for some time and behaves pathetically “she held on to her ridiculed old woman’s breasts and shook them” and she weeps remembering and calling her husband Joydeep “look at what you have done you bloody fool !!! look what you have left me to! do you know how I have suffered? Do you have any idea??? Where are you?! You and your piddling little life, and look what I have to deal with, just look. I don’t even have my decency” (245). This episode shows how being a woman she is being targeted publicly due to her sex – gender role. She is exploited economically and socially in a patriarchal society where the ideas of masculinity and prowess are deeply rooted in the matrix of gender and power relationships, which Desai handles boldly by using the crude and bold language expressions related to biological sexuality and gender. So also Sai becomes subjected to the male gaze when GNLF boys come to loot the guns of the judge at Cho Oyu. Their intense look from top to bottom makes Sai to feel “intensely fearfully female” (5) and Gyan subjects her to the humiliation of being a female. She realizes when she follows him that he may consider her to be a woman who doesn’t have her dignity. It is most often considered by the society dominated by males that if a woman shows interest in a man who is disinterested in her, such woman is considered to be of loose morals:

Sai began to follow brother and sister but then stopped.

Shame caught up with her. What had she done? It
would be her they would laugh at, a desperate girl who had walked all this way for unrequited love. Gyan would be slapped on the back and cheered for his conquest she would be humiliated. He had hit on the age old trick that remade him into a hero, “the desired male”... The more he insulted her behind her back—“oh, that crazy girl is following me ...”. The more the men would cheer, the more his status would grow... Sai would be remade behind her back into a lunatic female (262).

Thus the expressions of body and sexuality are satirically used by Desai to reveal the perceptions of female gender who often gets victimized due to her sex and gender in a society where the hierarchy of male gender prevails over female gender.

III

Another important aspect of Desai’s fiction is the description of human relationships. If common human relationships between men and women are portrayed positively the relationship of man-woman in marriage bonds and love affairs are one of the cynicism and often negatively portrayed and the women are the sufferers of these tragedies. The marriage bond between Jemubhai and Nimi is the most tragic example in the novel. Jemubhai treats his innocent, uneducated, non-English speaking wife with utter cruelty and violence. He commits several
atrocities on her and subjects her to marital rape as well as corporeal and psychological humiliation. The marriage of the two takes place in their early young age when she was fourteen and he twenty, because Nimi’s father wants to have a prestigious son in law the first to go to England in the community for ICS, and Jemu’s father wants the dowry which would help his son to go England. The marriage brings enormous money to Jemubhai and his dream is fulfilled. The girl Bela becomes Nimi.

The first few days of her marriage however are spent without much problem as Jemu is afraid and confused to consummate his marriage. The moment he sees his wife’s face and listens to her cry he becomes helpless. At the end of the week when he accompanies her to her father’s home on bicycle he finds his young wife to be beautiful and a tender feeling passes between the two. But the same beauty and peace does not attract him when he returns from England as his anglicized manners and transformed identity of an Indian Sahib makes him to loath his uneducated wife whom he begins to think is not suitable to him. The incident of her stealing his powder puff on the first day of his arrival and her unintended mischief done in ignorance and awe makes him hate her much more. He subjects her to rape in marriage. And continues to ill-treat her even after he takes her with him to the place of his posting. As far as Nimi is concerned, her secluded and restricted life in her father’s rich haveli which has no access to the outside world makes her ignorant about the ways of the society. This leads to her victimization. Jemubhai in Bonda tries to teach English manners to Nimi for which he hires an English tutor. But Nimi’s inability in learning the English language and the
English ways which westernized Indian women could adopt makes her case worse. Jemubhai thinks that she is adamant and defying his orders. This increases his wrath and his ill treatment becomes worse. His violence and atrocities on her, both sexual and psychological make her diffident day by day. Even the servants of the house defy her whereas she resigns herself to her fate. The example of this and her ill treatment by everyone in the house is shown in the incident when Jemubhai goes for inspection tour and like the wives of the other officers Jemu never takes his wife along with him. She is left alone at the mercy of the servants:

The sight of this scene, of history passing and continuing touched Nimi in a desolate way. She had fallen out of life altogether. Weeks went by and she spoke to nobody, the servants thumped their own left over’s on the table for her to eat. Stole the supplies without fear, allowed the house to grow filthy without guilt until the day before Jemubhai’s arrival. (172)

One day when Jemubhai finds the foot prints on the toilet seat he punishes Nimi in a very inhuman way by immersing her head in the toilet bowl. Finally when Pustules appear on her face he forbids her to go out of the house and orders the servants to clean everything she touches with dettol. During one such trip outside she is forcibly taken by the other officer’s wives to welcome Nehru which was arranged by the ladies group of Bonda. When the Commissioner threatens Jemubhai about holding his promotion on the charge of sedition Jemu becomes angry and unleashes his anger in the most violent manner by beating her black and
blue and sends her to her father’s house, never to see her face again. Nimi Pregnant, delirious and totally choked to silence returns to her father and gives birth to a daughter. When her parents die her uncle tries to patch up with Jemu by sending his father with whom Jemu cuts off his relation. The uncle drives her out of the house and she takes shelter for some time in her sister’s house where she dies in an accident of burning. The case is taken as suicide and closed. Jemu pays for his daughter in the convent and when she runs away with the Parsi officer he feels relieved. It is only when that Sai arrives he has to accept her, but at least his anglicized granddaughter raised by the nuns in the convent and educated with English manners makes him to accept her without much hesitation. Though he does not shower any affection on her he at least gives her the shelter needed. But Nimi becomes a terrible victim in the bond of marriage.

The relation of Gyan the tutor and Sai also ends in a tragedy. In the beginning when they discover their attraction to each other they feel themselves to be high in the air. They call each other ‘Momo’, ‘Kaju and Kishmish’ and try to explore each other’s bodies. Gyan even thinks of having a happy life with Sai after he gets a job for their living. But in a moment of masculine attraction and heroism Gyan joins the GNLF movement:

It was a masculine atmosphere and Gyan felt a moment of shame remembering his tea parties with Sai on the veranda, the cheese toast, queen cakes from the baker, and even worse, the small warm space they inhabited together, the nursery talk—it suddenly seemed
against the requirements of his adulthood. He voiced an adamant opinion that the Goorkha Movement takes the harshest root possible (161).

It is then he begins to realize the class difference between Sai and himself. Her anglicized manners and lifestyle begins to irritate him as he is aware that his poverty and background will render him inferior before her. So he ends up in criticizing her anglicized habits in a crude manner:

Sai was defining his hatred he thought. Through her he caught sight of it ... Don’t you have any pride? Trying to be so westernized. They don’t want you!!!! Go there and see if they will welcome you with open arms. You will be trying to clean their toilets and even then they don’t want you (174).

Gyan is an ethnic Nepali in India who hates hybrid culture of Sai and her acquaintances. Moreover his unsuccessful attempts to get job make him much more disappointed and negative. In a moment of weakness he betrays Sai and tells about the guns in her grand father’s house to the GNLF boys. This leads to the robbery and when Sai learns about this betrayal and also when she sees him in the rally where he avoids meeting her, she is brokenhearted. She prepares to leave him. Thus the love affair before it blooms fully gets nipped in the bud. It also highlights the differences in class, race, and gender, economic and political status of individuals. These conflicts in their lives are not only found in their lives but
also in the disturbed atmosphere of the surrounding society which is rocked by the insurgency.

The married relation of Lola and Joydeep on the other hand is a happier one. Joydeep as Lola’s memory reveals is a romantic kind of person who loves nature and also his wife Lola. He sells his property of Calcutta and decides to live in Kalimpong an idyllic place amid the nature’s beauty. The couple buys the property of Mon Ami and settle down for their peaceful retired life without anticipation of the future trouble and insurgency in Kalimpong. Their joyous love life is described in the words which Lola remembers sadly after she returns home being badly insulted by the GNLF chief.

Quite suddenly, she went weak. “Your eyes are lovely, dark and deep”. He used to kiss those glistening orbs when he departed to work on his files. “But I have promises to keep …”, First one eye then the other – “And miles to go before I sleep” She would make a duet …To the end, and even beyond, he could resurrect the wit that had fired her love when they were not much more than children, after all. “Drink to me only with thine eyes”, he had sung to her at their wedding reception, and then they had honeymooned in Europe (246).
After his demise due to heart attack Lola becomes lonely but her sister Noni comes to stay with her and both the women live on the pension of Joydeep. The insult that Lola receives from the Chief makes her for one instant to curse her husband for his decision to settle down in this place but later she recovers her sense and realizes that her love for him and his for her was much more precious and real. The insurgency was not able to knock it down to pieces.

Then Desai also writes about different social relationships in the novel including female bonding, the bonds of friendship, father-son relationship, master-servant relationship and finally the man-animal relationship. Father Booty the Swiss immigrant in Kalimpong and Uncle Potty share close friendship. They join together in the evening to drink, visit Dehradun to bring books, and dine and thereby share each other’s concerns. When father Booty’s Swiss Diary is confiscated by GNLF members and he is given ultimatum to leave the country, Uncle Potty is equally shocked and unhappy with father Booty. He offers to look after the cows in his absence giving him consolation that he might come back after the disturbance in Kalimpong settles down. He remains a lonely figure after father Booty leaves.

In son and father relationship Biju and cook Pannalal’s portrayals are heartening. Though the cook is poor and alone as his wife is dead he showers a lot of love and affection upon Biju. He keeps him in his parents’ house at the village where Biju grows up in the care of his grandmother and the happy surroundings of village life. Then the cook dreams big for his son and spurs him to go to America for earning huge money. For the sake, he makes his efforts to get an agent and
spends money. Though through illegal means finally when Biju gets there the cook’s happiness knows no bounds. In spite of Biju’s realization that his American dream is a failure since he is an illegal immigrant and could never get a green card, he does not blame his father for spurring him. He keeps on enquiring his father’s welfare and assures him about his well being and safety which is construed as real by Pannalal who tries to recommend the cases of his friends’ children to Biju for help. Since it is a costly affair as well as a scarcity to speak on phone they write letters to each other and for cook these letters are a great source of comfort and happiness in his loneliness and poverty.

It is a matter of great pride for the cook that his son is working in an American restaurant. This is hierarchically higher for him in his humble social circumstances. Biju writes to his father: “Respected Pitaj no need to worry. Everything is fine. The manager has offered me a full-time waiter position. 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). So also the son Biju rejoices his father’s letters when they arrive which give solace to him in his disheartening displacement. The father not only advises his son to take care of his health but also tells him: “make sure you are saving money. Don’t lend to anyone and be careful who you talk to. There are many people out there who will say one thing and do another. Liars and cheats. Remember also to rest. Make sure you eat enough. Health is wealth” (18). He also warns him of the imminent dangers from unknown people especially Pakistanis as: “Beware, Beware. Keep away Distrust” (22). When Biju comes to know about the insurgency in Kalimpong he begins to
worry about his father and he telephones him to know the status. But except the 
"hello, hello" on each side they cannot talk much and Biju senses that the situation 
is too bad in his native place. Already disillusioned Biju decides to return home. 
He is fed up with his alienated and bleak circumstances by running from one 
establishment to one another for the fear of being caught and without hope for 
future. Finally he arrives home. Even though being robbed by his own countrymen 
the native becomes close to Biju because he could reach his father and live with 
him. It is the only gain in the losses that these characters suffer in Kalimpong.

The relationship between the women in the novel is also friendly and 
affectionate. Sai and her first tutor in Kalimpong Noni and her sister Lola form this 
close relationship where as Mrs. Sen joins them occasionally as a sort of 
entertainer. Noni is a spinster who lives with Lola. She accepts to tutor Sai for the 
extra money needed for the upkeep of their house Mon-Ami. She is very much 
fond of this young girl Sai. She is not only a tutor for her but also acts as a mentor. 
Though Lola has seen life with Joydeep Noni had no such experiences:

Noni had never had love at all. She had never sat in 
hushed room and talked about such things as might 
make your soul tremble like a candle. She had never 
launched herself coquettishly at Calcutta parties, sari 
wrapped tightly over her hips, ice tonkling madly in 
her lime soda. She had never flown the brief glorious 
flag of romance, bright red over her existence ... what
did she have? Not even terrible hatreds; not even bitterness, grief (68).

When she sees Sai being alone in the house with elderly, uninterested and indifferent men, with lack of company and without any opportunity to learn and experience life, she feels pity for her and advises her:

Listen to me, Noni told Sai, “If you get a chance in life take it. Look at me; I should have thought about the future when I was young. Instead, only when it was too late did I realize what I should have done long ago. I used to dream about becoming an archeologist. ... but my parents were not the kind to understand ... you must do it on your own, Sai (69).

Sai spends time in their company though they are elderly, but they are affectionate towards her. Their wavelengths match as both the sisters are anglophiles and educated. They also belong to her own class. Their love for the English country, literature and books make them all a class common in spite of belonging to multicultural background. As Kiran Desai herself is from such a multicultural background – her parents and grand-parents of both the sides belong to diverse backgrounds, she capably portrays them in diverse settings and as Shyamala Narayan opines in her article: “The portions of the novel that deal with the life of Lola and Noni reveal Kiran Desai at her best. The beauty and
power of style ... is impressive. She goes into minute particularites of their life, and gets their all details right including the names” (JIWE 35).

Sai accompanies the ladies to Dehradun along with father Booty and uncle Potty to bring books from the library for which all of them subscribe. They make journey together. They all eat in top restaurants of Dehradun like Glenary’s, Windmari, Lungfung or from the Gymkhana kitchen. Mrs Sen tries to tease Sai with embarrassing questions like whether Sai has a boyfriend or not; or sometimes she takes her off guard with queer advice, “better do it now ... wait too long and craze will go. That’s what I told Mun Mun”. Then it is Noni who sides Sai and saves her from other ladies, “Let her be. She is a good girl” (132). They all celebrate Christmas together and these moments are unforgettable for Sai who finds them entertaining as well as fulfilling. It also gives her the sense of belonging to a social class and living in a human world. Thus in spite of disparity in age and in the absence of any blood relationship the bonding of three women is portrayed lively by Desai. Finally as Noni advises, Sai learns the truth of her life and takes the decision to leave Kalimpong in search of a promising new life and proves that the bond between these women was of much more value than her relation with her grandfather.

Finally the master-servant relationship between the cook and the judge is more pathetic and honest. The judge does not pay much salary to Pannalal who joins in his young age as a cook for twenty five rupees. His salary is not hiked over the years. Even in the declining state of judge’s economic conditions, the faith and loyalty of the cook is far more commendable. It is the imaginary and
exaggerated stories of cook that create an honor and respect for the judge in Kalimpong and Cho Oyu society. He goes on telling the stories of judge's heroism as an ICS officer. He even creates reverence about his wife Nimi in the minds of people who do not know the background of the judge. The judge in reality owes everything to his servant where as he treats him totally opposite and often with very much cruelty. The cook looks after the judge, his dog Mutt and also his granddaughter Sai. The master's love for dog Mutt is higher than that of his servant, a human being. It is ironical that the cook prepares the stew, broth and all the tasty dishes for Mutt but for him the dog is ultimately an animal. For the judge the human servant who does everything for him is worse than an animal and the dog Mutt is everything. When Mutt disappears the judge holds the cook responsible and he initiates a terrible violence against him by beating him black and blue. But still the cook remains loyal thinking that his master is just in punishing him for he was responsible for the loss of the dog. However as Desai admits in an interview that the portrayal of master and servant in her novel are drawn from real life models. The character of judge is based on her paternal grandfather, who was a Gujarati and also an ICS in colonial times. The cook is drawn on the model of her maternal grandfather’s Bengali cook. Hence the portrayals are both convincing and appear real.

IV

As a young generation immigrant writer, Desai's novel reads on various levels. Her fiction dismisses the charge leveled against most women writers that they portray only domesticity as their world view is limited to the household.
experiences. In both of her novels Desai proves these assumptions false. If her first novel deals with false Indian mysticism of fake hermits, the second novel combines multiple themes like postcolonial insurgency and diasporic experiences. Most of these themes are from the world of man:

Writers of diaspora often rewrite history, and frame new narratives of family, society and nation with desire to revisit the past. It is here that memory and nostalgia play an important role. The diasporic writer occupies a kind of space which is a kind of exile and solitude ... The discourse of wandering people of diaspora marks a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of modern nation (Pulugurtha 190).

This is very much true in case of Kiran Desai who writes out of memory and extends the boundary of nation through her writing. As Arpita Chattarjee points out “the postmodern and postcolonial attitudes towards spatiality overlap to provide a critical vantage and insight into the processes of ideological redefinition of identity, culture and nationalism” (255), we find the convergence of these elements in The Inheritance of Loss. The present section intends to examine these elements and their treatment in Desai’s fiction.

The novel The Inheritance of Loss takes into account the temporality and spatiality of Indian nation in the 1980’s. It deals with the postcolonial diasporic identities and immigrant life from different perspectives. Though identity is a
crucial theme in the theory of diaspora here Desai presents the other side of diaspora experience by writing about the “shadow class”. The phrase shadow class refers to illegal immigrants who enter a country without visa and struggle for their living as they have to escape authorities till they are legalized. Biju as illegal immigrant undergoes the ill treatment of his employers and hardships of illegal migration. His attempts to legalize himself fail. He becomes an embodiment of postcolonial expatriate dream of young generation Indians who immigrate to America for wealth and prosperity. Desai bluntly exposes this American dream in the following words:

Biju watched ... standing there, feeling the enormous measure of just how despised he was, he would have to reply in a smart yet humble manner. If he bumbled, tried too hard, seemed too cocky, became confused, if they didn’t get what they wanted quickly and easily, he would be out. In his room it was a fact accepted by all that Indians were willing to undergo any kind of humiliation to get into the States. You could heap rubbish on their heads and yet they would be begging to come crawling in… (184).

Thus in Biju’s experiences Desai presents the stark realities of illegal immigration.

The postcolonial historicity and social realism is another important aspect of the novel. The Nehruvian socialism that affected the class structure and the
linguistic division of nation states, the cultural divides that affected the nation and initiated the incident of Indira Gandhi’s assassination, introduction to globalised way of life in the late nineties are some of the incidents prominently portrayed in the novel. Lola is very critical of Nehru’s policy of division of states which is clear reason for the insurgency in Kalimpong,

This state making, Lola continued, that fool Nehru made. Under his rule any group of idiots can stand up demanding new state and get, it too ... the neps played such a dirty trick and began to get grand ideas ... have been encouraged by the Sikhs and their Khalistan, ULFA, NEFA, PLA; Jarkhand, Bodoland, Goorkhaland; Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Kashmir, Punjab, Assam ...( 128-29).

It is interesting to note that Desai gives these details of historical realism in the discussion of the ladies in Mon-Ami at the tea time. True to their prediction, Kalimpong becomes center of GNLF army and is completely rocked by the demand of insurgent Indian Nepalese with the slogan “Goorkha Land for Goorkhas. The life and existence of its people become miserable. By making use of this historical time Desai out of her memory of her ancestral home in Kalimpong and her childhood days in India constructs life and experiences of the Kalimpong society. As she mentioned in her interview when the idea occurred to her to write this novel she returned to India as her location was India and its people But the India that she found was changed from the time she migrated from
here to States. She could not locate the novel in modern times. She realized that her subject was India of 80’s and it took eight years to complete it. (www.hindustantimes.com).

Globalization in the cultural, social and economical aspects of Indian subcontinent began sweeping past the native cultures and creating a neocolonial economic ‘other’ in the late 80s and 90s. The novel deals with these aspects as well. The food habits, dressing, love for English and American dreams of becoming rich are authentically dealt within the novel. The multicultural society of Kalimpong is under the influence of globalization. Lola’s daughter Pixie and Mrs Sen’s daughter Mun Mun work in BBC and CNN and their mothers keep on competing with each other claiming the superiority of these news TV channels and try to emulate their life style. Lola’s return journey with suitcases full of Knorr soup packets and Mark Spencer underwear and their reference in the novel highlight the transitory cultural atmosphere of India. If America has substituted the cultural power of England, the earlier colonized minds of the Raj like Jemubhai still linger in the world of past glory, sulk in the dark and retreat to the hill sides like Kalimpong.

V

Stylistic nuances and linguistic experiments mark Kiran Desai’s prose which once again makes her different from other women writers. Both her novels show these features but the second novel is rich in these experiments. Her “use of popular slangs, dialectic words transliterations from regional languages introduces
an element of naturalism; Indian vocabulary Indian metaphor and imagery are highly supportive to flip the portrayal of picture and sensibility of India. Indian vocabulary creates a congenial atmosphere to transport a region in that realm where India resides” (Singh 61). Desai first of all provides multiple viewpoints in her narration though there is an omniscient narrator. The focus shifts from one angle to another. In the language experiments she includes short paragraphs and short sentences. This provides a sharp contrast or adds the stress upon the idea as in chapter five:

“Biju at Baby Bistro.

Above, the restaurant was French, but below in the kitchen it was Mexican and Indian. And, when a Paki was hired, it was Mexican, Indian, and Pakistani” (22).

Or it may be as in chapter twelve:

“Noni and Sai picked up the physics book again.

Then they put it down again” (69).

It may be a sentence like, “Desi’s against Paki’s” (23) or “in a country so full of relatives Sai suffered a dearth” (28). The chapters are small and as many as fifty three in numbers. The first word of the first line of every chapter carrying its title along with the thematic purpose of the chapter. For example chapter one “All day” introducing the major characters of the novel with the location or setting of the novel. Chapter three “All the way in America” speaks about immigrant
experience of Biju and other Indians. So most of the titles of the chapters are functional.

Then Desai uses the transliterations of Indian words in her vocabulary like Raja Rao. These are slang words, abuses, dialectic words, phrases and sentences. For instance the words like mithai, pitaji, bania, dhobi, saag, chapatti, ghas phoos, goonda, gadha, budhoo etc.; and the sentences like, ‘gas mar raha tha’, ‘rasta rook’, ‘soor ka bacha’, ‘sala, banchoot’ etc. Another feature of her style is sometime words are mixed up without punctuation in hyperbaton as in:

Muttoncurrymuttonpulao

or

bananafritterpineapplefritterapplefritterapplesurprise” (64).

This resembles the fast pronunciation of the waiters in the restaurants. The cook uses this when he has to give his interview for the job at Jemubhai’s house. So also Biju when he gives his interview to the agent who recruits him for the job of a waiter in USA. It is a common practice with the waiters and it highlights the language and practices of the characters belonging to that class. It also shows the feelings and emotions of the characters in the situation of tension and anxiety in proving themselves for the job. Then another practice of Desai is stressing the word by using letters of various sizes in increasing order or decreasing order like ‘paaaaWWW’ or capitalizing or italicizing them which not only gives a fare to the sight of the reader but also highlights the emotions attached with the situations of the characters. It gives the effect of onamatopia. Using crisp sentences with stress in meaning as in ‘she felt intensely female’ and using interjections and punctuation
marks as in ‘oooo’ and ‘!!!!’ etc. These features of language make Desai’s prose more stylistic yet functional. The art of Desai can be appropriately summed up in the following terms:

Putting all the threads together Kiran Desai’s attempt to weave gossamer of reality with a distinct touch of an artist thus impress the reader to enjoy her stylistic nuances; her paucity of effort in character development cannot be easily ignored but her attempt to provide them with a language to express themselves, their relationships and surrounding scenario does not fall short of the beauty simultaneously ethereal and lingering. In an attempt to display realistically, her over indulgence in certain tactics like using abuses, like explaining again same information already revealed through the characters make her a perfectly human writer, reserving places for peccadilloes”

(Devika 49).

Conclusion: In this chapter Kiran Desai’s fictional work is undertaken for analysis. Desai is another expatriate woman writer of Indian diaspora who has undergone multiple migrations. Being the daughter of Anita Desai, Ki-yan has inherited the legacy of writing fiction on the one hand and inheritance of diasporic strain on the other. In her multicultural background the paternal grandparents from Gujarat and maternal grandparents from Bengal and
Germany make her background more vivid. This has provided a rich terrain to her to create the background of the novel. Both of her fictional works have been acknowledged and received well in India and abroad. As a woman writer she is distinguished as she is androgynous writer in nature and writes from multiple viewpoints like Lahiri. However male perspective is more prominent in her novels. She creates the man’s world which is marked with serious worldly matters like politics, history, adventure and fight. As a woman writer her portrayals of gender are prominent in the description of food, violence on gender and depiction of patriarchal system. As the postcolonial writer she adopts and fuses both these elements in a very intricate manner. Multiple themes and plots run parallel in her novels. As in other diasporic writers memory plays an important role in her writing and most of her personal experiences provide authenticity to her portrayal of characters and situations. To sum up therefore, it can be said that Desai uses English language efficiently to delineate diasporic experiences of our highly globalized world.
WORKS CITED


