Chapter IV

THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS: NEW IDENTITIES OF HYBRIDITY

The Inheritance of Loss is a novel with wide canvas – explores two continents and several cultures. The exploration is localized in post colonial India and in the United States which is the new power centre of globalization. Specifically the locale shuttles between Kalimpong in the north – eastern Himalayas close the Indian border with Nepal, Bhutan and China. Desai also focuses on basic human emotions like love, sex, conflict, struggle, marriage, adjustments and physical abuse.

The Inheritance of Loss is set in crumbling isolated house called Cho Oyu at the fort of Mount Kanchanjunga in the Himalayas. For its backdrop the novel uses the insurgency in Kalimpong where the Nepalese were treated like the minority. The novelist details the socio-political scenario as:

Here where India blurred like Bhutan and Sikkim and the army did pull –ups and push-ups, maintaining their tanks with Kaki paint in case the Chinese grew hungry for more territory than Tibet it had always been messy map (9)

The novel has four major characters – Sai Mistry – a young girl whose education at an Indian convent comes to a close abruptly in the mid 1980s, when she is orphaned and sent to live with her grand father a retired judge, Jemubhai Patel. Jemubhai Patel, Sai’s grandfather a patidar by caste and ICS officer now a retiree as chief Justice living along with Sai, her pet dog Mutt and his cook Gyan the principal character of the novel who is introduced as a lover
affected by the fervors of GNLF. Therefore he prioritises his identity as an ethnic Nepali and despises Sai and her bourgeois way of living Biju is a representative of these teeming millions who suffer due to continuing western hegemony in the last 20th century.

The story of the novel is spread over period of about four decades from 1943 when Jemubhai Popatlaal patel was wedded lot Bela, who later become Nimi in 1986, After retirement, Jemubhai retreats from society to live on a large bungalow named Cho Oyu, built by scotwen during their passion for virgin landscape. The site offered a magnificent view of the Himalayan ranges “That could raise the human hearts to spiritual heights (12). Impressed by its seclusion –

“The judge could live here in this shell, this skull with the solace of being a foreigner on his own country for this time he would not learn the language. He never went back to court (29)

Jemubhai spent his time within the confines of his house playing chess against himself. His life prior to his arrival to Kalimpong is narrated in bits thoughout the novel. Born in 1919 to a family of peasants in Piphit into a thriving business family, his father made easy money through supply of false witness to the court of law. In subverting justice –

He was proud of his ability to influence and corrupt the path of justice exchange right for wrong or wrong for right, he felt no guilt. (57)

His affluence made him dream big for his son Jemu. When old enough to go to school, Jemu was sent to for English education as a result he developed a profound respect for the English.
In the entrance to the school building was a portrait of Queen Victoria in a dress like a flounce curtain a fringed cape and a peculiar hat with feathery arrows shooting out each morning as Jemubhai passed under, he found her foggy expression coming and deeply impressed that a woman so plain could also have been so powerful. The more he pondered over this oddity the more his respect for her and the English grew (58)

With Jemu’s excellence in school learning, the father’s ambition soared sky high. Jemu was provided the best of everything whereas his sisters were made to suffer deprivation and callousness. On the completion of the school learning with the principal’s advice on the school leaving day directed his father to more new horizon for his son. He aimed for the I.C.S. Bishop’s college on a scholarship and then left for Cambridge. When he came back and a member of the ICS, he was posted in a remote district of Uttar Pradesh.

The Judge experienced the happiest period of his professional life as a civil servant in colonial India. Given to the best in life Jemubhai got into the habit of making his word an echo of law and order for others “…he would preside white powdered Wig using over white Powdered face hammer in hand” (62)

Jemubhai’s fate was moulded by his greedy father and later by his rich merchant and financier father-in-law Bomanbhai patel. Living in the posh area of Piphit, Bomanbhai along with the supply of horse feed to the cantonment, unauthorised women to the sex-starved British Soldiers. But Bomanbhai was cautious about the safety of his womenfolk. His wife and daughters were behind a
fortified haveli living an idle orthodox but affluent living. Through his execrable moves he hired a Brahmin cook to serve them in kitchen yet the hunt of prey continued:

Ambition still grawed at him, and Brahmin cook he might have but he knew that there was a wider world and only very rarely did history provide a chink allowing an acrobatic feast. (90)

When Bomanbhai patel learnt about Jemubhai mighty ambition he offered a huge away to cover all expense of his higher studies in England. Jemu left for England within a week a month of his meaning of convenience.

Jemubhai took his studies rigoursly once he reached England – “He left the books only to go to the lavatory for the daily trial of his digestion (119). Her isolated himself from his friends and Peer –mates as they realialed his imperfect pronunciation and his body odour. Nevertheless he worked very hard, almost eighteen hours a day to equip himself for the ICS examination “He measured out a reading calendar listed each book. Each chapter in a complex chart (111). His only companion was the land lady’s dog who shared his food nearly everyday. Jemubhai’s performance in the examination was as bad as his social relations. While most of the Indian candidates for the ICS ‘had crisped –ironed their speech’ (112) but Jemubhai’s English had the twang of ‘Gujarati’ (112). He passed the ICS examination by scoring the lowest qualifying marks which made him cry for three days and three nights. On the other hand father exploded with ‘joy’ (118) and distributed sweets among neighbours an acquaintances.

To escape from the discomfort around he moved to a new and and expensive lodging where he met a Bengali ICS – Bose. Later
they become so thick in friendship that Bose betters his pronunciation and correct his syntax. In addition Bose is an swerving optimist and Jemubhai patel imbibes much of it. Having aped English, he started loathing the Indians. His anglo-philia resettled in obsession to such a limit that he developed self-hatred. With strong ill will “…he envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become he would be despised by absolutely everyone. English and Indians, both” (119), Because of his self-conscious inferiority Jemu lived an isolated life:

He worked twelve hours at a stretch, late into the night and in thus withdrawing, he failed to make a courageous gesture outward at a crucial moment and found instead, that his pusillanimity and his loneliness had found fertile soul. He retreated into a solitude that grew in weight day by day. The solitude becomes a habit, the habit becomes the man, and it crushed him into a shadow. (39)

His solitude made him seek refuge in the library, against giggling girls who laughed at his accent. Consequently, his self – loathing shame for his heritage made him obsessive about the colour of skin. His self hatred is accorded by the novelist as:

He began to wash obsessively, concerned he would be accused of smelling… To the end of his life, he would never be seen without socks and shoes and would prefer shadow to light faded days to sunny, for he was suspicious that sunlight might reveal him in his hideousness, all too clearly (40)
On his return his hatred was extended to his uneducated relatives and his unsophisticated wife Nimi. Cherishing the memory of their cycle ride together, Nimi awaited his return living in his father’s home. Fascinated by her husband’s new possessions, she rummaged his baggage to pick up a powder puff to make herself presentable to her foreign returned husband; she powdered her breasts and stuffed it inside her blouse. Noticing the loss Jemu created a pandemonium at home which finally subsided when he plucked forth his precious possession from between her sad breasts like “… a ridiculous flower, or else a bursting ruined heart his dandling puff” (168).

Jemu did not lesistate in putting his wife to ridicule by announcing her thieving act to the entire family.

Jemu lived a loveless life with his wife. Poor Nimi was subjected to brutish sex whereby: “his gutter act” (170) tought her “… the same lessons of loneliness and shame he had learned himself”. (170) He perpetrated psychological atrocity everytime with increasing measure of disgust. The poor woman accepted this as her bad fate:

She grew accustomed to his detached expression as he pushed into her that gaze off into middle distance, entirely involved with itself, the same blank look of a dog or monkey humping in the bazaar until of a sudden he seemed to skid from control and his expression slid right off his face. A moment later… he withdrew to spend a long fiddly time in the bathroom with soap hot water and Dettol. He followed his ablutions with a clinical measure of whisky, as if consuming a disinfectant (170).
This obsolete detachment destroyed Nimi’s lust for life and reduced her to the state of a Zombie.

Jemubhai because gradually a tyrant when they shifted to Bonda, Uttar Pradesh. To make Nimi presentable and a match to his social status he invited Miss Enid pott to teach her English language. Nimi in his last offer to maintain her dignity resisted her husband’s effort to Anglicize her Jemubhai in utter helplessness resorted to physical violence whereby her disorientation gained a rapid speed. Reduced to such a non entity she was now insulted by her servants who “… thumped their own leftovers on the table for her to eat” (172). As a psychological invalid – “She peered out at the world but could not focus on it” (173).

Finally the inevitable happed – the two were seprated for all times after a nasty incident. Nimi on the request of a passionate congresswoman participated half heartedly in a rally of the congress party to welcome Nehru at the railway station because Jemu was on a tour, Nimi took the decision independently of accepting the Persistent request of Mrs. Mohan. Jemu learnt about Nimi’s participation through the District commissioner’s warning:

I trust that no member of your family will do anything to compromise your career again. I’m warning you, patel”. (303)

Enraged at this, Jemu returned home fixed himself a drink and court-martialed Nimi. This was the first time that she broke her silence and retorted – “you one the one who is stupid” (304) consequently she was subjected to a merciless physical torture:

He emptied his glass on her head sent a jug of water swinging into the face he no longer found beautiful, filled her ears with leaping soda water.
Then when this wasn’t enough to assuage his rage he hammered down with his first rising his arms to bring them down on her again and again rhythmically, until his own hands were exhausted and his shoulders next day were strained sore as if from chopping wood. He even limped a bit his leg hurting from kicking her. “Stupid bitch dirty bitch! The more he swore the harder he found he could hit. (304-5)

Next day, he sent Nimi back to her family in Piphit severing all relations if any with her. No amount of request could coax Jemu to take her back. Six months later, Nimi’s father passed away leaving a desperate daughter on her family way. Each one hoped that the arrival of the baby ‘world bring the father back to their community’ (306). But this was in vain. Jemu’s father pleaded his son to take Nimi back in the name of family hour:

Our family honour is gone. We are lucky Bomanbhai is dead thank god. It’s the scandal of the town (306).

Jemubhai had no repressions at having shamed his family, shamed the family of his wife and ever abandoned their only child. His wife bad fate reduced her to further mishry when her uncle usurped her father’s property soon after his death. Her ill-fate closed her to an early painful and untimely dead when she succumbed to severe burns having caught fire over a store while living at her sister’s place. Desai narrates her death with noticeable sedate words:
Ashes have no weight, they tell no secrets they raise, too lightly for gravity, they float upward and thankfully disappear (308)

Jemubhai’s guiltless heart continued making emotion blunder. He refused to accept the parental responsibility of the girl who was now an orphan after the death of her mother. Jemubhai dumped her into a convent boarding school where she grew up as a loveless child. Later she fell in love with an air force pilot who was a Zorastrian. When the couple died in an accident in Russia, Sai their daughter appears at Jemubhai’s threshold as an orphan.

Sai arrives from Dehradun – a place where her mother had studied. Sai became a recluse because of his parents who lived in Russia. She had connection with them only through letters. It was nearly two years that Sai had not seen them when death carried both of them away. The school register had only one name to be contacted in case of emergency – Jemubhai Patel – her maternal grandmother.

Sai gets her first introduction of her grandfather when she reaches Kalimpong after her parents’ death. The judge instructs Sai to maintain silence and refrain from disturbing anyone. The lack of communication in the house and outside fills her with deep melancholy intensifying the vacuities of her life. Her heart ache is described as:

Could fulfillment ever be felt as deeply as loss? Romantically she decided that love must surely reside in the gap between desire and fulfillment, in the lack, not the contentment love was the ache, the anticipation, the retreat everything around but the emotion itself. (3)
Sai was an avid reader a sensitive person. Her grandfather first appointed Noni and later a Gyan as her tutor. Gyan who in on unemployed graduate form the local college is hired to give science tuitions to Sai. He appeared an at Cho Oyu on the recommendation of the principal to replace Nimi as Sai’s tutor. Gyan was serious in his teaching schedule and hard to climb upwill from his Poverty stricken basti. To the Judge’s imposing colonial bungalow. Sai found Gyan irresistibly attractive with his intent intelligence, curly hair and serious eyes (73). Gyan’s gaze made her obsessive about her looks. She stood hours before the mirror and like her mother desired an escape from the tediousness of life through romance. Jemubhai and the cook made her beauty appear lusterless whereby she worried:

But if she continued forever in the company of two bandy legged men in this house in the middle of nowhere, this beauty so brief she could barely hold it steady, would fade and expire unsuring unrescued and unresuable. (73)

Soon Sai’s involvement with Gyan caught the attention of the Judge. He cautioned Sai against any emotional involvement with Gyan:

I hope that tutor of yours doesn’t get any funny ideas. (93)

Nevertheless their loves blossomed with the passing weeks and soon the tutorial sessions become ‘the game of courtship, reaching retreating teasing and fleeing (1250. their love reaching shameful heights and one craved physically for the other. In the efforts to discover their love for each other they”... linked word object and affection in a rediscovery of childhood, a confirmation
of wholeness (126). The infatuation turned blind yet love remained unperturbed in the midst of growing unrest in the hills. They invented nicknames like “momo” kaju “kismis” and went to romantic excursions to Mong Pong Nature reserve, Delo Lake and the banks of Teestad and Relli Rivers. They rejoined in the idyllic backdrop of the sericulture institute and the Zang Dag palri Fo Brang Monastery. Such romantic sprees came to an abrupt halt where Gyan was drawn into the precession of GNLF demanding Gorkhaland. When Gyan found there some of his college friends like Padam, Jungi, Dawa and Dilip he was effortlessly affected by the enthusiasm of the agitations. He had “…a feeling of history being wrought its wheels churning under him, for the men were behaving as if they were being featured in documentary of war’ (157) while listening to the political harangue of the GNLF leader and felt pangs for his romantic sprees with Sai instead of fighting for freedom. Initially Gyan reared doubts about the authenticity of the protestors and debated self-interrogatively the cause of the protest:

Were these men committed to the importance of the procession or was there a disconnected quality what they did? Were they taking cues from old protest stories or from the hope. Of telling a new story? … Was the feeling authentic? Did they see themselves from a perspective beyond this moment, these unleashed Bruce Lee fans in their American T Shirts made – in – china coming – in – via-Kathmandu? (157)

The sight of the thinly GNLF supporters drawing blood from their thumbs with their sharp kukris to write a poster demanding a
separate Gorkhaland “… compelling pull of history and fond his pulse leaping to something that felt entirely authentic (160). The political fervour made him neglect Sai for his social identity. He critically examined everything that had Sai-connectivity. Sai’s affluent living and “taking hot baths, sleeping along in a spacious rooms (162) filled him with a long lasting distaste (162). He annoyingly recalled his grand fathers nasty remark “common sense seems to have evaded you, young man” (162). He even chastised Sai for colonial bent of mind –

You are like slaves, that’s why you are, running after west embarrassing yourself it’s because of people like you we never get anywhere (162).
Why do you celebrate Christmas? You’re Hindus and you don’t celebrate Id or Guru Nanak’s birthday or even Durga Puja or Dussehra or Tibetan New Year. (163)

“Slung by this unexpected Venom (163) She labelled it as her democratic right to enjoy life as she wanted to but Gyan despised her by calling her names – “it’s clear all you want to do is copy. Can’t think for yourself copy cat, copycat. Don’t you know these people you copy like a copy cat THEY DON’T WANT YOU!!!! (164) Sai bring insulted become equally insolent and railed at Gyan as –

... If you’re so clever, how come you can’t even find a proper job? Fail, fail, fail. Every single interview,(165)

These aspersions did a major damage by causing rift between them.
Gyan consciously and forcibly avoided Sai’s attraction. Brief reconciliations filled him with insincerity to political cause. His love-hate relationship reminded him to the “… centre of the Buddhist wheel of life clasped in a demon’s fangs and talons to indicate the hell that traps us: rooster snake pig. Lust – anger – foolishness (175). Sai also continued to retaliate at the insults hurled on her – “you bastard …my dignity is worth a thousand of you” (175). Gyan even, betrayed Sai by passing on her grandfather’s secret information like his possession in the form of guns ‘lack of phone’ and nobody to call for help to his comrades which consequently led to the gun-robbery at Cho Oyu. Further he had reasons to prove his betrayal morally right –

“why should he not betray Sai? She who could speak no language but English and Pidgin Hindi, she who could not converse with anyone artiside her tiny social stratum” (176).

The Nepalese insurgency continued to become more violent with the passage of time and threatened the times of the people in hills. Alongwith Gyan delved deep into it with determined loyalty and ousting Sai from his life for all times. Her expectations of repair in their love-bond receive a severe jolt when she is stamped on her toes by none other than Gyan in a procession. Her reaction at having spotted Sai is recorded as:

She opened her mouth to shout at him but at that moment he caught sight of her too, and the dismay on his face was followed by a slight ferocious gesture of his head and a cold narrow look in his eye that was a warning not to
approach. She shut her mouth like a fish, and astonishment flooded over her grills (215).

Finding it as a slur against her dignity, she could not bear Gyan anymore. She “could not believe she had loved something so despicable... her kiss had not turned him into a prince he had morphed into a bloody frog” (249). This is how love detoriated into violence.

Gyan betrays not only Sai and her grandfather but also Father Booty – a philatelic European Entrepreneur. He was living in India illegally without renewing his permit. An innocuous photograph of beautiful butterfly made him entangle with the local police who not only ransacked his home but made him leave Kalimpong – his forty five years old home, irrespective of the contribution he made to its economic upliftment through his model dairy.

He was compelled to sell his house at a throw away price leaving his cows at the mercy of his unreliable alcoholic friend uncle Potty. He assured him as – “I will look after the cows Booty ... No worries. And when the trouble is over, you return and take up where you left off (222). Whereas father Booty loathed himself for the loss and “.... Felt a lack in himself despised his conformity to the ideas of the world even as he disagreed with them” (223). Sai in her hearts of heart know that it was Gyan’s doing:

This was as Gyan’s doing she thought this is what he had done and what people like him were doing in the name of decency and education, in the name of hospitals, management positions. In the end Father Booty, lovable Father Booty, who frankly, hand done much more for development of hills than any of the locals and without screaming
or waving Kukris, father Booty was to be sacrificed. (223)

The GNLF activities disputed the normal life room after the expulsion of father Booty. Lola and other privileged neighbours faced acute scarcity of food. A rabble of Gorkha volunteers arrived from Tindhania and Mahanadi to attack the police station and even tear gas and lathi charge failed to scatter them away. Violence become then only tool for the fulfillment of their political objective – a separate Gorkhaland to be formed out of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong and parts of Jalpaigudi and Coch Behar districts. Quality of life continued to grew worse with no supply of fuel in the form of as and kerosene – people were compelled to cook on wood. The GNLF men occupied the Gymkhana club forcibly throwing out the librarian and the desk clerks.

The privileged class was much in fright for they feared being renounced by GNLF men of all Lola (Lalita) and Nimi (Namita) are the most vulnerable being all alone with no man to protect them. They lived in a rose coloured cattage named Mon Ami. Lola was a widow where as her sister was a spinster. The two survived on the sonall family pension of Joydeep (Lola’s husband) who died of a heart attack. To contribute her share of survival Noni gave tuition to Sai.

Lola’s only daughter Pixie (Piyali Banarjee) was a BBC reporter, who lived in England. Lola was proud of her daughter’s achievement which she eluded to quite often:

Her suitcases were stuffed with Marmite Oxo bonillon cubes. Knorr soup packets After Eights, daffodil bulbs and renewed supplies of Boots cucumber lotimn and Marks and Spencer
underwear—the essence, the quintessence of Englishness as she understood it. (46-47)

The two sisters are described as sycophants of Anglophile. They found the middle class distasteful and therefore lived a Sergreoted life to pose their life of Noni privilege and Lola felt sorry for Sai who was “the orphan child of India’s failing romance with the soviets” (42). They also had a privilege living (like that of the Judge.) Whereas the Judge had Mutt as his pet cat, the sisters had Mustafa.

Lola and Noni’s life were gravely disrupted by the series of strikes called by the GNLF when imposed or reign of terror. The demand for a separate Gokhaland which included the three subdivisions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseang along with parts of Jalpaiguri and cooch Behar districts lead to increasing violence to attain their political objective. The two sisters were shocked by the inflow of separatists and could foresee damage to India’s peace. Resigned to forceful confinement they started living a life of recluse. When the influx of basic necessities was disrupted, they had no water, no fuel and no electricity. Their plight grew worse when a group of GNLF men invaded their house with the attraction of poigment fragrance of multan on fire. They ate their food, slept soundly on their floor and stole three calendars and two cassettes of the GNLF movement. Lola was angry at this intrusion and audacious demand for contributions but Noni maintained her cool and handled the situation with care.

On leaving, the Gurkha activists carried away a measure of their eatables like rice and soup, “… the oil and the garden’s annual output of fine jars of tomato chutney’ (240) and the open space in their garden was mentally marked out for illegal intrusion. Within a
month their property was occupied under the cover of night. Their protest was assertively shrugged off:

They rushed out ‘This is out land’!

“It is not your land. It is free land.” They countered putting down the sentence flatly, rudely.

“It is unoccupied land”

Lola went to Pradhan – the chief of the GNLF’s Kalimpong wing, to complain about the illegal encroachment of their property by his followers. Pradhan grossly insulted and reviled at Lola instead of arranging for the retrieval of her property. He said to Lola:

I am the raja of Kalimpong. A raja must have many queens … I have four, but would you… dear Aunty would like to be the fifth?… And you know, you won’t be bearing me any sons at your age so I will expect a big dowry. And you’re not much to look at, nothing up … nothing down”

Humiliated to the level of death Lola cursed her dead husband who confined the lives of the two old sisters to country side living and her sister Noni who believed that the GNLF’s cause was partially justified. On returning home, she went straight into the bathroom and did not respond to her nervous sister’s importunate requests:

“Why don’t you open the door?

“Go away I tell you, go join the boys in the street whom you are always defending”

“Lola, open the door”
“No”
...

Well sister, in any such situation atrocities are committed under cover of a legitimate cause –“

“Bosh”

“But if we forget there is some truth to what they are saying the problems will keep coming, Gorkhas have been used -”

“cock and bull”, she saidcrudely. “These people aren’t good people Gorkhas are mercenaries, that’s what they are pay them and they are loyal to whatever. There’s no principal involved, Noni. And what is their with the GORKHA? It was always Gurkha”.

(246-47)

Lola believes that the GNLF movement is aimed at disintegrating the society – “Those Neps will be after all outsiders now, but especially us Bangs. They’ve been plotting this a long awhile dream come true. All kinds of atrocities will go on – then they can skip merrily over the border to hide in Nepal. Very convenient”. Lola holds Nehru responsible for having encouraged such fissiparous tendencies under the guise of re-organizing the states on the basis of languages she remarks –

This state – making biggest mistake that fool Nehru made. Under his rules any group of idiots can stand up demanding a new state and get it too. How many new ones keep appearing from fifteen we went to sixteen, sixteen to seventeen, seventeen to twenty two. (45)
If Lola represents prejudiced view-point, Noni holds unprejudiced sanity and commonsense. She is not much perturbed by the Nepalis strive for geo–ethnic identity in a separate state which will include the three subdivision of Darjeeling district, namely Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Karseong, as well as parts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts.

Their conflicting view-points may be noted in their conversation:

“But you have to take their point of view”, said Noni. “First the Neps were thrown out of Assam and then Meghalaya, then there’s the king of Bhutan growling against” –

“Illegal immigration”, said Lola… Obviously the Nepalis are worried”, said Noni “They’ve been here, most of them, several generations. Why shouldn’t Nepali be taught in schools? (128)

Soon the violent movement of GNLF affects business and disrupts normal life. The wide spread of violence shocks the rich and the privileged people not only Lola and Noni but also the old Judge are big losers in their own personal ways. In the midst of this bloody turmoil, sai suffers from a feel of embarrassment of having loved Gyan. She struggles to console herself-

There was a grace in forgetting and giving up … it was childish not to – everyone had to accept imperfection and loss in life. (252)

Her struggle ends in vain and she begins her search for Gyan, no sooner the curfew is lifted. In her effort to trace Gyan she
succeeds but to her abject despair. She is shocked at the sight of dismal poverty in Bong Busty where Gyan lives. –

There houses like this everywhere … common to those who had struggled to the far edge of the middle class – just of the middle class – just to the edge, only just, holding on desperately – but were at every moment being undone. The house slipping back into the picturesque poverty that tourist like to photograph but into something truly dismal – modernity proffered in its nearest form, brand new one day, in ruin the next” (256)

Because Sai appears as a mirror to him in which he sees his ugly and inhuman face, he becomes all the more uncontrollable in frustration. He throws her into a launtana bush and beats her vigorously with a stick. This insolence of Gyan shocks Sai who alongwith the pain of unrequited love retreats into her cocoon with self – embarrassment. Gyan and Sai confine themselves to their room nursing their guilt struck hearts. The remorse in their heats juxtaposed with the burning of indo –Nepal treaty of 1950 – which turns the picturesque heavenly hill into an ugly hell.

Like Gyan, Biju is also an integral link to the story. The fate of Biju is no worse than that of Gyan. Biju is compelled to lead the humiliating life of an illegal immigrant in his search for American affluence. While Biju was shuffling from one ill paid job to another the cook dreamt of his son making big in life. He dreamt of his sone coming back to India with a magic wand-

“He imagined sofa, T.V. bank account. Eventually Biju would make enough and the cook would retire. He would receive a daughter –in –law to
serve him food, crick –crack toes, grand children to swat like flies” (17)

As an ill-equipped foreigner Biju felt an out caste in his new world striving had for a bare existence. His first place of strive was an Italian restaurant where his presence was resented because of his body odour. He was provided with shampoo, soap and deodorant but nothing could kill his clumsy, appearance. Next he joined Freddy’s work where he served as a delivery boy. He carried ordered food to the customer’s doorstep and a bicycle, Which was another form of pain and agony:

Biju on a cycle with a delivery bag on his handle bars, a tremulous figure between heaving buses, regurgitating taxis – what growls, what sounds of flatulence come from his traffic Biju pounded at the pedals, heckled by taxi drivers direct from Punjab … They harassed[him] with such blows from their horns as could split the world into whey and solids. (49)

Soon Biju lost his job due to costomer’s frequent complaines of late delivery of their orders. This time he found work with Queen of Tarts bakery. For his shelter he lived in basement in Harlem and Here Biju met saeed who gave up his job at Banana republic because its owner was a gay and he kept “grabbing his ass” (121). Further saeed married a white American girl for a green card. This marriage of convenience took a till on Saeed for he could not pocket her costly dresses and expensive junk food. His parent – in-laws pitied him for his obvious dislike for their food. Yet he continued to sing praises for America and named it as “a wonderful country”. Learning about Saeed strategy to hoodwink the
immigration system, Biju tried to woo American women but unfortunately he was rejected.

Tapan K. Ghosh in his article estimates Biju’s problem as –

“Biju’s problem of identity seems to stem from his failure to forge a compromise between his ethnicity and demands of American urban modernity, and his search for an elusive home in the precarious anonymity of the glamorous new world.

(The Fiction of Kiran Desai: 135-36)

Biju was overwhelmed by a desire to befriend Saeed who taught him survival strategies in USA and earn his bread and butter. Saeed was a black African and a Muslim yet Biju devoloped a friendly bond with him. About Saeed, he said –

Saeed was kind and he was not paki. Therefore he was O.K.? The cow was not an Indian cow; therefore it was not holy? Therefore he liked Muslim and hated only pakis? Therefore he liked Saeed, but hated the general lot of Muslim? (76)

Biju was impressed by Saeed’s enormous capacity for dodging in the immigration society. Biju was impressed by every characteristic of Saeed. To him he was “... an endless talent with doors even though, two years ago during an INS raid, he had been unearthed and deported despite having been cheek to cheek, Kodan Proof, with the best of America (78). Though Saeed sabotaged the American immigration system yet he was committed emotionally to America – “The country recognized something in Saeed, he in it, and it was a mutual love affair. Up and downs sometimes more sour
than sweet maybe but nonetheless beyond anything the INs could imagine it was an old fashioned romance” (79).

Biju lived a deplorable life in USA but the cook boasted of Biju’s success to each one he caught of. He had his own version of richness in America – “Newyork. Very big vity. The cars ... and building are nothing like here. In that country, there is food for everybody (84). He desperately waited for his son’s arrival with the purpose to take him along to the wish fulfillment world. His confidence bettered when Biju assured him of searching India soon and for the same he had been saving money. The cook became hopeful that his son achieve all that Sai and his grandfather failed to achieve-

One day his son would accomplish all that Sai’s parents had failed to do, all the judge had failed to do”. (185)

Feeling like a privileged father, the cook dispensed his address and phone number to all those who waited in the queque to immigrate to the unknown world of Biju’s happiness. country to this Biju joined to the ‘Shadow Class’ of illegal immigrants who “… left for other jobs, towns, got deported, returned home, changed names. Sometimes someone came popping around a corner again or on the subway, then they varnished again. Addresses, phone numbers did not hold (102).

Apart from the Indian ‘majors’ and ‘foil’, Kiran Desai has projected same minor American Desi characters like Odessa, Harish Harry, Mrs. Shah and Mrs. Rice, Beta Ordessa is the owner of Brigtte’s restaurant full of mirrors in Newyork. The restaurant is named after Odessa’s pet. Biju used to work in her restaurent Odesse is known for cosmopolital style and her ready wit. Her
husband Bazz in proud of his wife’s fine grace and manners – “Bazz was proud of her cosmopolitan style loved the sight of her little wire –rimmed glasses. Once he had been shocked to overhear some of her friends say she was black-hearted but he had put it out of mind” (134). Odessa has been painted as a woman of conceited outlook too. She resented Indian eating beef in America.

Malini and her husband Harish-Harry make a pair of good business acumen. She is a true Indian immigrant both in mind and spirit. She retained her quitenetial indianness and believed in spare the rod and spoil the child. She felt two slaps would always put a child on right track of good values. She is distinctively identified as a woman who washed her hair on Sunday and visited her restaurant as “A horseail of sapping stresses bound loosely in golden ribbon from a Diwali fruit –and –nut box, dripped out the floor behind” (146). Instead of moisturizing cream or lotion she applied vegetable or on her arms and face and declared “No need for lotions potions babam this works just as well (146). Being pragmatic in business she made her staff live below in the kitchen so that she has the privilege of their availability at work round the clock.

Harish –Harry and Malini’s daughter (unnamed) is American to the core muc to her parents annoyance. Being on unruly child, she could not be mended by Malini’s slaps and Harish –Harry’s sarcasm. Her insolence was much embrrasing when she restarted things like – I didn’t ask to be born … you had me for your selfish reasons, wanted a servant, didn’t you? But in this contry, Dad nobody’s going to wipe your ass for free” (149). She is a symbol of one who is a product of conflicting values for the found “Nose ring… compatible with combat boots, and clothes in camouflage
print from the army-navy surplus” (148). Mrs. Shah is complementary to the daughter of Malini and Harish –Harry. A meek bride “Scrolled and Spalted with henna” (150) with loads of gold in her hair to make the metal detectors at the airport shriek loudly changes into an American in very way of life. Instead of Sari she now wears pant suit has bobbed hair, rigidiously carries her varity box and is adept at doing the Maccarena.

Mrs Rice, an English lady, lived on the Thorton Road in England. A warm loving and forthcoming lady she sincerely took care of Jemubjai when he was their paying guest during his studies. The young judge was lovingly called James and was served Mauritius food twice a day. A mean composing of boiled eggs, bread Jom bulter and milk was provided but finding it inconsistent to satisfy hunger he added baked beans on toast. When the judge passed his exam, Mrs. Rice was elated and took part in his success. She played as second mother to him.

Apart from these, there are three young Indian students who had shifted to Biju’s neighbourhood in America. Associated with poor people they wished to be gentry one day. They room reflected their mixed taste-more or less hybrid, with gold stung Kolhapuri chappals and a chunky Ganesha with heavy accounting books.

Alongwith there are characters like Bela patel and Nimi. Bela was married at the age of fourteen with Jemubhai patel. Her family was much prestigious in rank then that of Jemubhai although her caste was not high. Her good looks is additional attribute. Her beauty is detailed by the cook as –

Your could tell from her features which were delicate; her toes, nose, ear and fingers were all fine and small, and she was fair – just like milk
complexion—wise, they said, you could home mistaken her for a foreign. Her family only married among fifteen families, but on exception was made for your grandfather because he was in the ICS (88).

Bela Patel lived an idle life before and after marriage. As a maiden, she was confirmed to strict purdah along with her mothers and sisters and after marriage she was carefully “locked up behind the high walls of the haveli. She was a transferable commodity to her husband’s house and was treated unlike a human being. She brought a huge dowry in terms of cash, gold emeralds from Venezuela, rubies from Burma, uncut Kundan diamonds, length of woollen cloth for her husband’s suit in which he travelled to England. Valueless Bela became non-entity Nimi after her marriage. She is reared as one of those common Indian girls who her to accept unquestioningly the authority of her father and later husband to be sollowed by male issue after marriage. Nimmi is innocent enough to understand the sacredness of marriage leave side her role as a life-partner. She is made to live in the suffocating atmosphere of loveless marriage with only one happy memory of togetherness in the act of a cycle side. She was desolate with no ‘self’ and no identity, as a result. She never went to the mirror because she “ , and anyway she could’t bear to spend a moment in dressing and combing activities that were only for the happy and the loved. (173)

The futility of her marriage life soon separated her from her husband for all times Mrs. Mohan used her as butt to tarnish the judge’s image and when the judge become abusive and violently physical with her she opened to retort which was defeaning and
cruel to the judge – “you are the one who is stupid” (304) hitting her harshly, the judge packed her bags and sent her home. Even the birth of her daughter could not abridge the chasm that had developed in their relationship. She continued to live a humiliating life but never requested, bagged or groveled at her husband’s feet to accept her again. Towards the close of the novel Jumubhai wondered introspectively – “… if he had killed his wife for the sake of false ideals, stolen her dignity, shamed his family, shamed hers, turned into the embodiment of their humiliation” (308)

The Inheritance of Loss captures the loss of faith in India and in all those major characters who try to survive in the ‘conflicting world of East and west’ Her Desai analyses the painful efforts of her characters to adopt western habits in Indian scenario to escape to England and America where they are completely misfit. The four prominent characters Jemubhai Patel – the judge and his granddaughter – Sai Mistry, the cook and his son Biju have been drawn into a vortex dream for money, status and security which constitutently pulls them dawn into a dark pit where they struggle in vain to survive, consequently left with nothing but grim reality and loneliness. Desai also depicts their aspirations, their sham their desire for self – glorification with precision. She mocks at the very crisis of modern life – the loss of identity.

The Inheritance of Loss is actually an inheritance of fragmentation, a loss of human values, emotions, love and compassion. For e.g. Jemubhai loses his ability to feel, his emotions, family, wife, child and later even his pet dog; the cook loses his dignity as a human being, his self – respect son and his dreams; Biju loses his roots, his livelihood, dreams and even his hard – earned possessions. Sai loses her parents, Gyan her love, and
her self-worth; Lola and Noni loses their home, security of their privileged life while Kalimpong loses itself in insurgency. It is in this global framework Desai enlists the various losses.

The Inheritance of Loss is a also story of variations which leads to the cultural identities and cultural conflicts present in the human civilization across the globe. Desai exhibits the social construction of human experience, interaction and social realities to reveal a social meaning out of. It is an interesting journey from Sikkim to United States about how conflict is connected to the meaning, meaning to the knowledge and knowledge to the ‘Culture’. Dealing with all levels of society and many different cultures, Desai shows life’s humour and brutality and its delicate emotions and passionate commitments.

Desai’s novel describes human migration and shows that it has always been a part of the human experience. Biju’s narrative as an illegal immigrant, with no future in distant Newyork, is belonced by that of the other protagonist, seventeen year-old Sai whose life is ostensibly elitist but shabby nevertheless liquid boundaries have deceived not only Biju but Sai, Lola, Noni Jemubhai, Saeed and above all Gyan. In order to delineate the travails of people globally shuttling, Desai moves between first and third worlds illuminating the blinding desire for a better life.

In The Inheritance of Loss, people are afflicted by incurable poverty and privation. Their minds are filled with anguish and anger that result from non-fulfillment of their basic needs and that leads them to resort to terrorist violence. On the other hand there are people who want to leave the country because of poverty, mal-development and lack of opportunities. But many of them find it difficult to be happy and successful in the west. The cook’s son
Biju, is a representative of those Indians who live miserable both at home and abroad and whom happiness eludes forever. To people like Biju, who are eraptured by the west and blinded by the glare of American affluence, India is a backward space, on underdeveloped and uncivilized country. The backwardness of India which breeds discontentment and violence, the cringing habit of the people and their willingness “to undergo any kind of humiliation to get into the states” – (The Inheritance of Loss- 184). They seem to forget or try to ignore the other India which exists outside this marketable myth.

The advent of new era of freedom and modernity is symbolized by the marriage of Sai’s father – a Hindu Sai’s parents represent the era of bonhomie relationship between India and Soviet Union – the days of Russian ballerinas visiting india, troupes of Indian dancers performing in Moscow and when Russia and India collaborated and sent astronauts to space. Sai’s father was a space pilot selected from the Indian Air Force to travel to space with Russian astronauts. Sai’s parents were the progeny of this dream that went away, they both were ironically killed in a road accident in Moscow whreby the marriage between the two cultures resulted in aborted hybridity. Hence it can be rightly said that Sai is an orphan of a confluence that did not come through.

The novel projects the dark side of globalization – a great gulf of difference between the rich and the poor. It paints a shocking portrait of people with crumbling hopes nurtured on the western notion of rationality and superiority of the white race; the global secession and the bursting of the American bubble. For e.g. Biju after chasing and changing jobs after jobs is finally frustrated and decides to return to India. His journey back home is so pathetic and horrific that anyone reading about it would prefer to starve in
his own country then venture into greener pastures. Yet Biju’s mindset does not desist from going home in spite of the face that the proprietor of the newly opened Shangri-la travel – Mr. Kakkar reminds him of his (i.e. Kakkar’s) father’s advice to him: “My father, so long as he was alive he always told me, “Good, stay he away, don’t come back to this shitty place” (The Inheritance of Loss 269). Mr. Kakkar warns Biju that once he is back in India everyone will ask for dollars from Biju, as if “you shit and dollars come out. If they won’t, the robbers will. He adds further: “Some disease will; if not the heat, those mad Sardarji will bring down your plane before you even arrive” (269. Ultimately what happens to Biju happens to all of us. Biju is denuded of the things’ he had brought, missing his wallet, shoes, belt, jeans and T-shirt. He is made to stand in his white underpants.

Like Biju Jemubhai Popatlal is also a ruined life if Biju has the urge to earn dollars, Jemubhai, though educated, falls a prey to the spurious ideal of the white race, and consequently ruins his family life and status. Instead of being a good human being by not submitting to his false pride, and by bringing up his granddaughter with loving care and by treating his cook as a human being and consequently, earning love, dignity and fellowship, he would have possessed the cultural inheritance and could have attained happiness in life.
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