

# The exploration of cultural diversity in Kiran Desai's Book The Inheritance of Loss

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**Abstract** - All around the world, cultural variety has become the norm in large cities. Multiculturalism is the blending of multiple cultures or the practice of diverse cultures within a boundary. One of the most prevalent characteristics of the anthropogenic era is now its cultural diversity. Global metropolises such as New Delhi, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai, and others have embraced and successfully implemented multiculturalism. People in the world coexist and work together in different countries viz. England, France, and America. Paris, and New York. For a variety of reasons, people relocate from their home nation. Many strange atmospheres creep about them as soon as they arrive in a new country. They have a sense of rootlessness and loneliness. They are prone to feeling homesickness for their native land. They go through different sociocultural and psychological relocations in addition to the physical one. They are not a part of either their adoptive nation or their own country. The goal of this essay is to examine the multicultural themes in Kiran Desai's well-known book *The Inheritance of Loss*.

**Keywords:** Cultural diversity, colonial legacy, diaspora, globalization, Migration, etc.

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## INTRODUCTION

The phrase "multiculturalism" is relatively new. However, cultural diversity has long existed in many different communities. Nowadays, it is commonplace in many nations to have cultural plurality or diversity. There are nations where cultural variety is a widespread occurrence; individuals speak different languages, adhere to different religious beliefs, and maintain diverse cultures and practices. A culture is a unique way of living. Noble customs followed by numerous generations of people gave rise to great cultures. In the Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Sociology (V.3), the definition of culture is as follows:

... multiculturalism both celebrates and seeks to protect cultural variety (e.g. minority languages), while at the same time focusing on the often-unequal relationship of minorities to mainstream cultures. After decades of persecution, the prospects of indigenous or immigrant cultures are now helped somewhat by the support they receive from international public opinion and the international community (e.g. the United Nations). (537)

**Main Text:** India, is a multicultural country, with strong roots in its abundant diversity. It is a nation with several faiths, rich languages, diverse customs, and a wide range of civilisations. Canada is frequently praised for its superb multiculturalism practices.

Numerous Western nations have realized that diversity is becoming increasingly important.

As a result of colonialism and globalisation, multiculturalism emerged. Although the term "globalisation" is relatively new, people have been travelling across nations for economic, religious, and cultural purposes since ancient times. In addition to sending several monks to central Asia to propagate Buddhism, Emperor Ashoka also sent his daughter Sanghamitra and son Mahendra to Sri Lanka. Between 400 and 700 AD, a group of four Chinese explorers came to India to gather Buddhist texts. Many people traveled from the West to the East for commercial benefits and religious upgradation following the discovery of sea routes.

There was a great exchange of goods, ideas, culture, religion, philosophy, and other things in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Globalisation was first only associated with economic activity, but it rapidly expanded to include connections with the environment, politics, education, religion, culture, and migration. The following factors to the rise of multiculturalism are highlighted in the book 'Literature and Cultural Studies' by Mallikarjun Patel: "... political invasions, migrations, renaissance, industrial revolution, enlightenment, science and technology, colonialism, imperialism..." (74).

British crowns in different countries played a very significant role in the development of multiculturalism. From the late 16th to the early 18th centuries, the British increased the size of their colonies. They controlled twenty-four percent of the surface of the planet. In addition to trading, they disseminated their language, education, culture, and religion. The English language is credited to the English people for being given to their colonies. English is one of the most important instruments for advancing multiculturalism. The current situation demonstrates that a significant number of people travel to countries where English is spoken and understood, such as England, Australia, Canada, America, and Ireland. Multiculturalism gives rise to postcolonial literature. K. V. Dominic, in his critical book based on the fiction of R.K. Narayan, presents the following perspective on postcolonial literature: "Postcolonial writings are attempts at reviving the ethnic cultures, traditions, beliefs, languages, etc. The postcolonial literature inculcated pride in one's own ancient culture and traditions. It abounds in patriotic feelings. Postcolonialism aims at developing the national identity in the wake of colonial rule." (5)

The advancement and development of contemporary technologies have also contributed to the growth of multiculturalism. The introduction of the internet and the English language have made the world smaller than ever. The idea of the global village has continued to advance with the advent of social media. We have progressed so much that we can take a round of the world in one day, while it took eighty days in the past. We have come to a place where exchanges happen the quickest these days. People from the East have the great urge to migrate to the West countries where some people want to come to the Eastern nations for so many reasons. They quickly adapt to the target culture and its traits wherever they dwell on Earth because they are exposed to a variety of cultures. Except for a small number of Islamic nations, every other country welcomes people of all races, cultures, and religions with open arms.

In the research paper titled "Dynamics of Diasporic Writings in India and Abroad: A Panoramic View" Mr. Arvind M. Nawale and Mr. Reddy, throw light upon the feelings of the migrants: "A Diasporic person lives in two lives simultaneously; he/she lives in two cultures at the same time." (3)

Though the word "diaspora" originated to showcase the dispersion of Jews, its worldwide aspect has made it a widespread term used today everywhere. People traveling from one nation to another has become the norm. Individuals typically relocate or migrate for educational or professional purposes, or as a result of issues about their race or religion. The migrants at first had many difficulties and looked strange in their new home.

Many individuals nowadays have started to view migration favorably because of the multiculturalism that has fostered tolerance and acceptance among

people. Both of the above critics also present the following perspective on migration: "In recent years, the rate of migration has increased, in most cases, it is a willing and voluntary transfer in search of better livelihood and professional gain." (xii). In the sphere of literature, diasporic writing has gained fresh momentum and is now taught as a separate subject in many universities and colleges.

Many Asian and African writers from the diaspora have contributed to our collection; they hail from Australia, the US, the UK, Canada, and numerous other European nations.

The heterogeneous environment that the Indian diaspora writers experienced growing up is one of their main concerns. Many Indian-diasporic writers currently exist who have enhanced the diasporic writing genre and captured the attention of readers worldwide with their captivating and creative writing. Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee, C. B. Divakaruni, Sashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, and Kiran Desai are Indian writers who are residing in different countries where they have garnered praise for their outstanding literary contributions. American writer Kiran Desai is the daughter of Anita Desai and was born in India. She and her mother traveled to England and subsequently the USA after living in India for a few years.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard marked the beginning of her literary career. In 2006, *The Inheritance of Loss*, her second book, was awarded the Man Booker Prize. The work received a lot of praise for its superb integration of many modern themes, including terrorism, diversity, globalization, interpersonal problems, alienation, and identity loss.

Kiran Desai herself was born and brought up in a multicultural background. She has first-hand knowledge and expertise with intercultural aspects as she studied in England, the United States, and India. The majority of the events in the novel occur in Kalimpong, a small town in the Himalayas. However, the storyline travels to several nations, including the US, Russia, England, and so forth. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, the author emphasizes her notions to prove the multicultural status of the people:

"The book's twin strands straddle across continents, mapping the contours of the ethno-racial and historical relationships between people from different cultures and backgrounds." (9)

Kalimpong is a small town in the Piedmont of the Indian range of the mountains. It is situated in West Bengal on the border of Bhutan and Tibet so the people are mixed with the people of neighboring countries. It is situated at such a place that the neighbours including Boddha Bhikshuk in Tibet and China, have to pass through this town. The people of Nepal also claim this place and they used to fight for

a separate country as Gorkhaland. Their struggle required weapons like "kurkri sickles, kitchen knives, spades, any kind of firearm." Etc and for this purpose they intruded this town again and again. In the novel, an important character named Lola, rightly comments:

"Beijing had just named Kalimpong a hotbed of anti-Chinese activity" (45). One of their festivals is Hatt Day. People used to swarm the Kalimpong markets with their goods and food items, hailing from Nepal and Tibet. The majority of the items, they carried were contraband. The cultures of India, Nepal, and Tibet will be on display at this festival. The women of Tibet and Nepal are described in the book as "Tibetan women with braids and prayer beads and Nepali ladies with golden nose rings dangling." Kalimpong is therefore situated in a multicultural area.

With the help of the character Biju, the hardships of a runaway without a green card are depicted. Biju's father is a chef who prepares meals for Sai and the judge. Biju had big ambitions when he came to America. He was always hiding or on the run because he didn't have a green card. His career started out as a chicken fryer. The locals frequently mistreated and insulted him. He was constantly switching between jobs; he worked in a bakery, restaurant, delivery service, etc. One of the women said, glancing at Biju, "He smells. I believe I have an allergy to his hair oil. The cook grieved greatly, even though he believed his kid was enjoying himself in America.

He (Biju) had no choice except to leave his job and to survive without a job was very difficult for him so he had to reside in places below his standard. He named the places "the fuse box, behind the boiler, in the cubby holes, and in odd-shaped corners that once were pantries, maid's rooms laundry rooms... (51).

## CONCLUSION

The judge remembered his time at Cambridge University, Jemubhai. In England, he encountered many strange things as well. He was unable to eat with a fork and knife. Sai's parents also resided and passed away in Russia. Sai's parents were Mr. and Mrs. Mistry. Mr. Mistry was a Moscow-based space pilot. Sai's parents practiced different religions: her mother was Hindu, and her father was Zoroastrian. Sai was left an orphan after her parents perished in Moscow after being run over by a local bus. Numerous multicultural themes that we encounter in the book support the idea that multiculturalism has become essential to modern society.

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