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ISSN (Online) : 2455 - 3662  
SJIF Impact Factor :3.967

EPRA International Journal of  
**Multidisciplinary  
Research**

Monthly Peer Reviewed & Indexed  
International Online Journal

**Volume: 3 Issue: 4 April 2017**



**Published By :**  
**EPRA Journals**

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## KIRAN DESAI'S GNLF MOVEMENT IN "THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS"

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### ABSTRACT

*Kiran Desai was the youngest winner of the coveted Booker prize for her second novel, The inheritance of loss. The novel depicts the effect the agitation has on Sais family in Kalimpong, which consists of her maternal grandfather Jemubhai Patel, a retired judge, his dog Mutt, and the cook. On a parallel track, the novel follows the journey of Biju, the cook's son, as an illegal immigrant in the United States and his eventual return home. The novel deals about the rigid class systems that exist in India and abroad among Indians, and the struggles that the people face within these classes after colonialism.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Inheritance of Loss is set against the backdrop Gorkhaland Movement in and around Darjeeling (1986-88). Gorkhaland is a proposed state in India demanded by the people of Darjeeling hills and the people of Gorkha(Nepali) origin in Dooars in northern West Bengal on the basis of ethno-linguistic rights. The movement for Gorkhaland has gained momentum in the line of ethno-linguistic-cultural sentiment of the people who desire to identify themselves as Indian Gorkhas. Two movements for Gorkhaland have so far taken place under the Gorkha National Liberation Front(1986-88) and Gorkha Janmuki Morcha (2007-till date). The inheritance of loss can be viewed as a diasporic novel. The various themes which are intertwined in the novel are globalization, multiculturalism, insurgency, poverty, isolation and the issues related to loss of identity.

The issues and conflicts mentioned in the novel are portrayed in a subtle and intriguing manner through the central characters. The novel is set in modern-day India, and the story is narrated to depict the collapse of established order due to insurgency. In The Inheritance of Loss, Desai portrays the issue of poverty and globalization not being an easy solution for the problems of trapped social middle classes.

### **GNLF(Gorkhaland National Liberation Front) Movement**

The family at the old, crumbling Cho Oyu at the foot of the Himalayas consists of the retired judge Jemubhai Patel, his pet dog Mutt, the cook, and his orphaned grand-daughter Sai. The families neighbours include a coterie of Anglophiles- the sisters Lola and Noni, the Swiss missionary Father Booty, the jovial drunk Uncle Potty, and the "break-nosed" Mrs.Sen. they all form a sort of guardian

group for the young and impressionable Sai when she arrives from St. Augustine's Convent in Dehra Dun to live with her grandfather. While the retired judge largely keeps to himself and Mutt, and their day-to-day needs are catered to by the old loyal cook, it is Sai who interacts with all these characters who are caught in a warp of time in the backdrop of the GNLf movement for a separate Gorkhaland.

### **Lola and Noni**

The widowed Lola and her spinster sister Noni still live in a colonial world, like the judge. It is Noni, Sai's private tutor before Gyan, who encourages Sai to discover love and her individual identity as she never has love "at all" in her life. The sisters struggle to live in a world of postcolonial chaos and disorder. There are, like the judge, an unwanted machronism in postcolonial India where long-suppressed peoples have begun to awaken to their dereliction, to express their anger and despair. For the judge as well as the sisters in Kalimpong, this comes as a distinct shock: "Just when Lola had thought it would continue, a hundred years like the one past-Trollope, BBC, a burst of hilarity at Christmas- all of a sudden, all that they had claimed innocent, fun, funny, not really to matter, was proven wrong."

Early in the novel, Desai sets these two Anglophilic women to discussing A Bend in The River, V.S.Naipaul's powerfully bleak novel about traditional Africa's encounter with the modern world, Lola, whose clothesline sags "under a load of Marks and Spencer's panties," thinks Naipaul is Strange. Stuck in the past...he has not progressed. Colonial neurosis, he's never freed from it". Lola goes on to accuse Naipaul of ignoring the fact that there is a "new England," a "completely cosmopolitan society" where "chicken tikka masala has replaced fish and chips as the NO.1 takeout dinner." As further evidence, she mentions her own daughter, Pixie (Piyali Banerjee), a newsreader for BBC radio, who "doesn't have a chip on her shoulder". The "sanitized elegance "Of Pixie's British-assented voice is "triumphant over any horrors the world might thrust upon others." The two sisters have a running feud with the "beak-nosed" Mrs.Sen whose daughter Mun Mun is in the US working for the CNN and whom the authorities keep begging to apply for and have a green card.

Their world comes crashing down when the GNLf agitators make themselves comfortable in Mon Ami and later squat on the terraced garden. Lola is shocked beyond belief when she goes to plead for help to the local GNLf who styles himself as the "raja of Kalimpong". The man insults and humiliates Lola by telling her that he already has four young and beautiful wives. If he ever needed a fifth wife, the old, widowed Lola has nothing to offer him by way

of sex or more sons; all that she can provide him is a big dowry in the shape of Mon Ami, where his people have put up huts and are living presently.

A shocked and horrified Lola returns home and locks herself in the bathroom, cursing her dead husband for choosing to spend his days of retirement in the countryside. Noni pleads with her to come out, but Lola would have none of it.

### **Father Booty and Uncle potty**

Father Booty is a Swiss missionary who has been living in Kalimpong for the past forty-five years. he wants to bring about a change in the local economy through dairying; he advocates the use of local cheese against the widely-advertised Amul. His property is in the name of his neighbour and friend, the jovial drunk uncle Potty. Both of them form a group with Lola, Noni and the young Sai, going together to the local market, exchanging books at the Gymkhana Club and meeting thereafter for lunch by which time Uncle Potty has bought his quota of Liquor till their next outing.

Tragedy strikes when the GNLf men come to father Booty's dairy one day and charge him with living in India all these years without valid papers. Father Booty has forgotten to apply for an Indian passport during his long stay in India; he is visitor who has never applied for Indian citizenship and even has forgotten to renew his working permit. Father Booty, the catholic priest who, in his pursuit of natural beauty snapped photograph of a fluttering butterfly, is charged with spying and ordered out of the country. Unfortunately for him the butterfly had landed near a military installation; and he is forcibly deported. His dairy premises is bought for a pittance by a Nepali doctor who wants to set up a private nursing home there. Everyone mourns the loss, most of all the young Sai:...each of them(Sai, Father Booty, and Uncle Booty) separately remembered how many evenings they'd spent like this...how unimaginable it was that it would soon come to an end. Here Sai had learned how music, alcohol, and friendship could create a grand civilization.

Their shared legacy, like the judge's is uprootedness and their all have to suffer in equal measure, we are told. Of them, it is only Sai who can look forward to a new life with a mixture of hope and despair under the trying circumstances that overtake them and bring disorder and chaos into their well-regulated, though outdated, life styles.

### **CONCLUSION**

Sai and Gyan have found natural love-something that is very uncommon especially between members of different classes. From gazing at each other and comparing their body parts, they start courting each other, hardly pausing attention to the events in Kalimpong. The people want to cede from

Bengal and demand a Gorkha state of their own. The radical youth wing of the Gorkhaland National Liberation Front (GNLF) has taken things in their own hands fighting for the creation of their homeland, which they call Gorkhaland. Insurgency has begun and Gyan gets sucked into it.

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