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The Clash of Class in *Inheritance Of Loss* by Kiran Desai

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ABSTRACT

One of the most popular novels of Kiran Desai is *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). The story is set in Kalimpong, which is situated at the foot of Mount Kanchenjunga in the North Eastern part of post -Independence India [Jetir 2014]. The novel takes a look at the problems faced by immigrants on a personal as well as global level. It expands over India, United Kingdom and the United States of America. This novel explains the tussle between Indian traditional way of life and the richness of the west . The book has won many prestigious awards like the Man Booker Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award in 2006 and 2007 respectively. This novel explains the major issues in contemporary society that are related to rapid growth which sometimes rushes people into economic problems and race issues. Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* is a perfect example of class discrimination in the early twenty-first century. The study of this novel has different meaning and explanation. The author has

personally gone through the experiences of multicultural and cultural clash. In the current situation the characters are itinerant and they lead a lonely and isolated life. The objective of this article is to focus on 'The Inheritance of Loss' as a novel that brings forth problems of class.

KEYWORDS

lower-middle-class, discrimination, socio-economic system, upper class, dominance, emotional strain

INTRODUCTION

The novel was first published in 2006. In this novel the major characters are migrants, who are torn between two places. The novel examines the lives of those who are caught in India's class segregation and stuck between two classes, upper and lower. The novel conveys the faith and goals of the characters, along with their great thinking of migration to the US and at last able to leave behind the social inequality. He became a peripatetic Judge in India and the middle-class, somewhat separated from the nature of his home land. As man is having a restriction, he has to keep something to remember himself. A person should survive according to the expectations of society. This attempt can be disproved in particular cases, due to the inner reflection against him. It generates the disappointment in one's own country and its values. A complete reading of this novel gives us the feelings of compassion through various characters. The author is sympathetic towards all the characters. Basically a class differentiates other classes based on a person's economic position in a society. A person's status, social respect, the power and the popularity are the main reason to one's economic success.

ANALYSIS

Today, the basic idea of social class usually targets the three common categories: A very rich and strong upper people; a common people who are workers and small scale industry owners; and a lower class that depends on daily wages for their livelihood and they often live in poverty and economic hazardous. The common class people is the large group of people who fall both socially and economically between the lower and upper classes. The clash of Class means emotional strain between socially and economical uneven groups or different sets of people with different customs and beliefs.

The author could feel the clash of class in the minds of all the people and has exhibited their spirits in her literary works. In this novel, the author touches upon many different problems, such as globalization, class discrimination, cultural conflict, and things that touch even the love-life of her characters. The Inheritance of Loss is about class discrimination. India's strict class system is the main theme of the novel.

The novel opens with Jemubhai Patel, the Judge playing chess, Sai, his granddaughter, reads an article, and the dog, Mutt sleep on the porch but the old cook tries hard to make tea for them. Through this scene, Desai illustrates the happy moments of Sai and the Judge. She reads the novel that suggests a similarity in cognition and education to the west. The Judge and Sai are the representation of worldly upper-class people. The cook represents the powerless and lower-class servitude. The demarcation of servant and master is very clear between the cook and the Judge. With the difference in social standing between these two ,Desai brings out the social inequality. The Judge is the authoritative master, and the cook is the subservient individual doing his best to fulfill the tasks of the Judge. He is an important man, with not enough education to read and write. He has lived like an ant throughout his life and lives with the sole purpose of seeing his son, Biju settled.

The conflict between the Judge and the cook starts when the Judge's granddaughter, Sai comes to live with him .There as a permanent servant to the Judge, the cook's status is connected closely to the judge. As far as the cook is worried, a servant expects to his employers not just for money but also for a lift in their economic status. However, the Judge fails to meet the expectations of him, as he does not pay the proper money for the cook, nor does he grant him enough personal respect. The relationship between the Judge and the cook is restricted to only sharing the information and the instructions. When police arrive to investigate the robbery, the cook is also a part of the investigation. The Judge is irritated and he says: "Go sit In the kitchen. Bar bar karta rehta hai"[adhalyajournal 2019]

The inner emotion of the class discrimination is portrayed through the cook. People of the lower class accept disgrace and not fair treatment. When the cops come to investigate the robbery, they search the cook's place, exposing his poverty and seculution. He justifies his state because the cops need to search everything and it is the servant who usually steals: "Well, they have to search everything," he said. "Naturally. How are they to know that I am Innocent? Most of the time it is the servant that steals." [adhalyajournal 2019]

Thus the cook gets more upset for suspecting him even though he is innocent and the end of the novel the dog Mutt goes missing so the Judge suspects the cook without any investigation and tries to kill him. The cook is heartbroken for this kind of treatment so he gets drunk and comes home. Here we can clearly see the class discrimination because the judge suspects the cook without knowing the truth only because he is a lower class.

The life of the Judge has been distinguished with that cook. After his return to India he becomes a Judge and lives sophisticated life in Indian society. He travels around in his districts with luxurious facilities. The Judge's sophisticated way of life naturally needs the hardworking servants. He thinks that his economic and social stranded are essential to maintain his status which he has gained by work. Though money and the comfort of the judge may change in time his social status remains the same. This shows, the stability and strength of the classes and how hard it is to change one's basic position. The dissimilarities between the cook and the judge are much more complex than externally distinct. From the Judge's outlook, he thinks that the Cook represents everything he hates. The Judge dislikes the cook because he's an Indian, illiterate, acquiescent and is a member of the lower class. The Judge considers himself superior in all aspects and thinks it is a privilege to manipulate the situation.

We analyse the inequality among immigrants on the basis of Economic status. Biju, here is a representative of the poor class from the Third World. He tries to go to America with strong hopes of escaping from the poverty and making money and finally to rescue his father from slavery. But he leads a horrible life as an criminal immigrant, shifting from one non paid job to another in the kitchens as a cook, a waiter and delivery boy. He next joins Gandhi Café in New York. There, he slips on rotten spinach and breaks his leg. But his Indian employer, Harish-Harry, rejects him and he doesn't want to take him to the medical shop because it is expensive and also because Biju is a criminal immigrant. Instead, he tells Biju to go back to India and to get his treatment and then return to America. He is not allowed to exercise his basic rights as a worker. This makes him feel both miserable and depressed about his circumstances. He thinks there is no hope for him in America for the foreseeable future. Despite working hard, he is forced to live in poor living condition. Here, race is not a matter of issue but class overcomes race.

CONCLUSION

The discrimination of the upper class and the lower class are well portrayed in this novel.

The condition of the cook tells us about the poverty and how the low class people are ill treated by the upper class people. So Desai clearly exposes how rich people treat the poor in reality. Biju also tried to manage his situation in the U.S.A. but his culture and lower class system is the main reason for him to lose his opportunity every time. The prosperity level creates conflict as evident in the character of Biju and the cook in the novel. The conflict mostly arises out of mixing the cultures and characters as well as bringing together the same character in the same community having different mindsets.

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