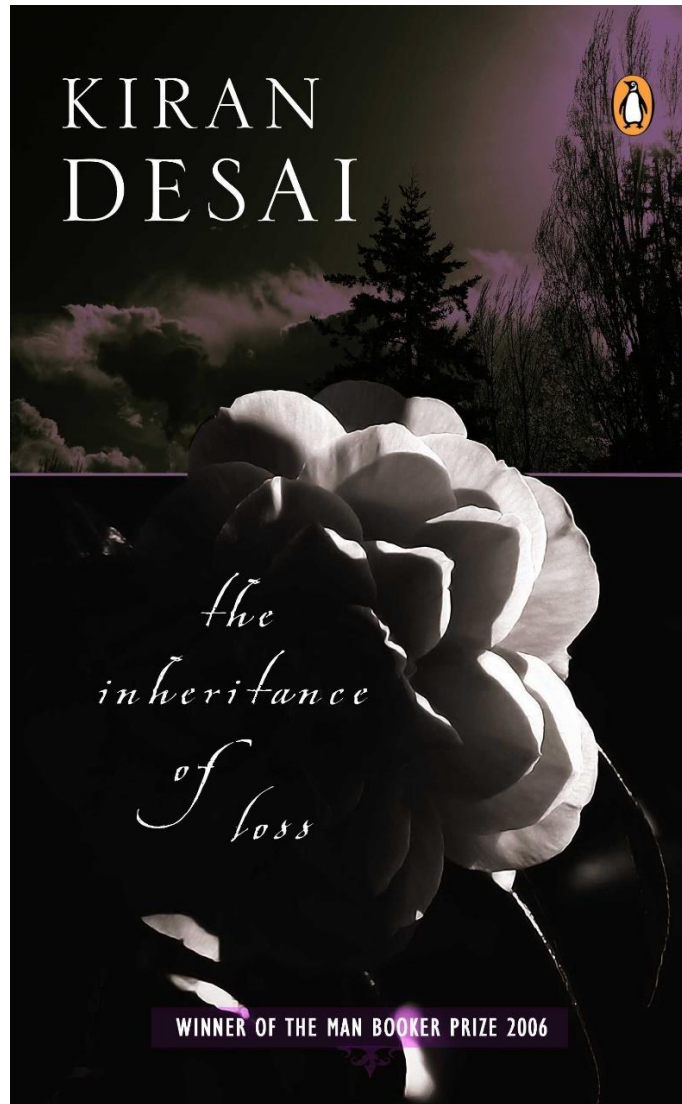


Indian Class System in Kiran Desai's Novel *The Inheritance of Loss*

M. Suganya, M.Phil. English



Abstract

The Inheritance of Loss is about class discrimination. Biju immigrates to America. He suffers a lot in that country. Americans show their class discrimination in it. This novel articulates Indian class system clearly.

The Inheritance of Loss

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* was published in early 2006. It won the 2006 Booker Prize. When talking of the characters in *The Inheritance of Loss*, and her own life, Kiran Desai says, "The characters of my story are entirely fictional, but these journeys as well as my own provided insight in to what it means to travel between East and West and it is this. I wanted to capture. The fact that I live this particular life is no accident. It was my Inheritance." ***The Inheritance of Loss*** examines the intricacies of relationships in post-colonial India, England and the US.

The *Inheritance of Loss* is a book about the rigid class systems that exist in India and abroad amongst Indians, and the struggles that the people face within these classes after colonialism. The book takes place in a town called Kalimpong, which is near Darjeeling in the north-western most point in India. It begins in the high north eastern Himalayas in Kalimpong. Sai, a seventeen-year old girl. Her life with a judge, his dog and his cook. It is turbulent time, filled with dissatisfaction among the population of Indian Nepalese, who want to separate and have their own country apart from India. There is an insurgency to draw new borders that will create peace in theory. They are robbed by members of the Gorkhaland National Liberation Front, who take their food, liquor and guns.

Sai's Grandfather

The judge is Sai's grandfather, who took her in after his daughter and her husband were killed in a car accident. He takes her in order to pay off the spiritual debts that he incurred from the immorality of his wife, and later killing her, as well as shaming his father. He fights with his guilt throughout the book, making it seem as though one day his rough exterior will change and learn to love again.

Sai falls in love with her tutor, whose name is Gyan, and they fight to accept the natural love they have created. Their love is doomed from the beginning because he is an ethnic Nepali, and she is an upper-class, western-educated Indian girl. The cook watches over them to make

sure that Gyan does not take advantage of Sai's good heart and at the same time worries about his own son in the US., whose name is Biju.

Biju

Biju is a typical Indian immigrant who gets a visa to U.S. and stays illegally, working for slave wages in the kitchen basements of New York City. There he is used and abused by his bosses and is run ragged by one in particular, who also happens to be an Indian. Upset with the way his life is turning out, and realizing how much he misses his father, he decides to leave the US. with his earnings and returns back to his home and his father.

Political Situation

Throughout the book, the political situation worsens, and each person deals with it in their own unique way. All of them are consumed with guilt for how they have lived their lives thus far and desire to change their existence. India's rigid class systems in the main theme of the novel. Every aspect of the characters' lives is dictated by their social class. Even when Biju immigrates to America, he cannot escape his class.

In India, it is practiced to some extent to treat others as inferiors if they are in a lower class. The two classes do not trust each other; the upper class always suspects the lower class, of stealing. They also believe that the lower classes do not experience emotions that are experienced by the "civilized".

Sai's Life

The Inheritance of Loss follows the life of Sai, an orphaned teenager living in a lonely old dilapidated mansion with her grandfather and cook. She is visited weekly by her tutor Gyan, with whom she is involved in a puppy love, while the cook worries about the whereabouts of his son Biju, who is working as an illegal migrant in New York.

Tensions

One of the main tensions underlying the novel is between the comfortable privacy this little family carved in their home up in the Himalayas and the encroachment of politics and unrest which threatens to break their idyllic Indian middle-class lives. Here, Sai and her aunties would rather discourse on the matter of highbrow literary taste than be buried in the mundane reality of worsening crisis, poverty and political upheavals around them. While asserting aversion to Orientale's depictions of their homeland, the west still represented the ideal they aspired for.

Break in the Artificial Peace

The first break in the artificial peace came in the form of a rough band of separatists to knocking on their doors, asking for food and confiscating the old rifle of the grandfather, a retired judge now living off his pension. When the police come to investigate the incident. Sai was compelled to accompany them and consequently reexamine her relationship with the people in the house. The lowly cook, a natural suspect in the hut Sai visited to confront firsthand the bottomless of class as reflected in language that separated her and the cook.

Sai's aunties, in accordance to received wisdom, have consciously enforced this class division between the cook and their niece despite their living in a single house. The cook, being of a lower class, should refrain from talking much to his benefactors and is expected taking orders.

The cook shows grumbling acceptance of his subaltern condition under the wings of the troublesome judge. The other incursion into Sai's self-contained world came in the form of his love affair with her young tutor Gyan -- the age-old tale of the romance between the rich girl and the poor boy. Sai's connections with Gyan would lead her to discover Gyan's real class origins and be introduced to a world entirely different from her own. Gyan, of course tried to erase his roots when walking miles to visit Sai mansion.

The novel involves Kiran Desai's literary interpretation of the lives of illegal migrant workers living in the urban centers of the advanced capitalist nations. Through Biju's experience Desai repeats how the problems in the impoverished developing world are intricately traceable to the race for super profits by the ruling classes in the first world metropolis.

References

Desai, Kiran . 2006 . The Inheritance of Loss , London : penguin Books.

[http://www. Book browse. Com](http://www.Bookbrowse.Com)> Kiran desai.

[www. Bookrags. Com](http://www.Bookrags.Com)> Characters.

[http://www. Enotes. Com](http://www.Enotes.Com) > topics > themes.

M. Suganya, M.Phil. English
Sri Adichunchanagiri Women's College
Cumbum 625516
Tamilnadu
India
suganya.m5513@gmail.com