

The Impact of Cultural Colonization in Kiran Desai's Post-Colonial Novel *The Inheritance of Loss*

Abstract

'Post-colonialism' is a multilayered and multidimensional term. In the recent years this term has broadened its scope by studying not only the political, social and economic effects of colonization but also cultural and psychological effects of colonial period. The novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, by Kiran Desai is called a global novel of Millennium era. The novel starts with the burning national issues and ends with the current international issues. She brings into light the problems like identity dilemma and double consciousness occur due to migration. This paper will be an attempt to go deep and study the psyche of colonizer and colonized.

Keywords: Post-colonialism, Multilayered, Multidimensional, Cultural colonization, Global, Identity dilemma, Double consciousness, Colonizer, Colonized

Introduction

English study has undergone a sea change in the closing decades of the 20th century. Rapid evolution in the field of theories has brought into light the hidden and locked perceptions of the human life. It has been a very well established and accepted fact that theory is a scientific approach to literature. Myriad theories have been expounded by the great theorists to create an easy understanding of a text. Under the influence of globalization, theories have enlarged and broadened their scope. On the one hand, it is so individualistic that it goes deep into the psyche of human being and reveals the secret of human behaviour, in the world of theory it is known as a psychoanalytical theory. On the other hand, theories have brought revolutionary changes in the field of texts that belong to social issues. We have Postmodernism, Post-colonialism, Orientalism, Hybridity, Historicity and many more. These theories have given a new vision to society and force the people to rethink on the established facts.

Post colonialism is one of the most frequently used words in the contemporary literature. It covers a vast area as it does not only cross the physical territory of a country but also touches the historical and cultural background of a country. Meenakshi Mukherjee very aptly remarks about the multidimensional term post-colonialism:

We use the term postcolonial to cover all the culture affected by Imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day this is because the historical process initiated by the European Imperial aggression.¹

Literature and culture are inseparable parts of the human life. The consequences of Colonial rule have forced us to believe that cultural colonization is very harmful for the country rather than political or economic colonization. Cultural colonization plays a very dominant role in the internal life of a person as it transfers from one generation to another generation. The colonial culture leaves the existing culture on the verge of confusion and brings disharmony, identity crisis and psychological trauma:

The colonial discourse had cast English literature in the role of a promethean hero, who had undertaken the mission of spreading light and sweetness to all the dark corners of the earth carrying thereby the message of Western Civilization to the people still living in a state of degeneration or ignorance. The postcolonial discourse now regards English literature as a sort of hypocritical villain or as an agent of the



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Western imperialism who under the pretext of civilizing the colonial people suppressed and to a great extent destroyed the native traditions and the cultures.²

Despite having achieved the political and the economic freedom, countries have not been able to bridge the gap which took place during the colonial period. Though there is no certain date of the post colonial period as the time of decolonization differs from country to country but as a theoretical literary movement it was originated in the mid 20th Century by the texts of the Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched Of The Earth*(1963), *A Dying Colonialism*,(1965) and *Black Skins White Masks*(1967).His works brought into light the psychological impact of the colonial period on human beings.

Post colonial period of Indian English fiction can be divided into two groups the first group of novelists include Mulk Raj Anand, R.K Narayan, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai. These novelists focus their attention on the social political and economic realities of India and female psyche was also brought into light by some eminent novelist of that period. In the second group of novelists we have V.S Naipaul, Arun Joshi , Bapsi Sidhva and Kiran Desai . They represented the problems of the modern India. Anita Desai, the mother of eminent novelist, Kiran Desai has focused her attention on psychological stress and mental trauma undergone by hyper-sensitive women ,who are in search for a meaningful life. Kiran Desai, an eminent novelist of New Millennium, earned a name for herself as a novelist at an international level by writing a global novel. *The Inheritance* of loss. She won the prestigious Man Booker award in 2006. Kiran Desai follows not only the footprints of her mother but also breaks a new ground by shifting psychological emphasis from female to male.

The novel chiefly deals with the impact of Colonial rule on Indians but she does not fail to raise various contemporary issues like political turmoil, racialism, immigrant experiences and regionalism in postcolonial India. she tries to bring into light the three important facts of postcolonial India; firstly, the influence of colonial world on the mindset and lifestyle of Indian people; secondly,it has increased the class conflict one who follows the western culture is considered as the higher class and rest are considered lower ,uneducated and uncivilized; thirdly, the mental trauma of migrators who could not fulfill their dreams and aspirations and became divided personalities.

The impact of cultural colonization has been analyzed through this paper Jemubhai, the judge ,belongs to higher class society and Biju, the son of the cook, belongs to lower class of the society.Both the characters carry the burden of their parental expectations on their shoulders and are considered as the key to fulfill the unfulfilled desires and hopes of their parents.

Jemubhai belongs to a peasant family and develops a profound love for English .Under the

influence of English language ,culture and education his father borrows money from the money lenders at an excessive rate of interest. The family becomes ready to pay any price for Jemubhai's education even daughters of his family are deprived of their basic needs. Jemubhai becomes the first boy of the community who goes to an English university. They search a rich bride to fulfill their aim. He leaves for England with in a month of his marriage. His first encounter with the west shatter his dreams. It brings before us a picture that there is no magical land on this earth where everything goes well. The novelist very dexterously brings into light the consequences of migration in quest for westernization. He was ridiculed and rejected by the English men for his color accent and smell.

He worked 12 hours at a stretch late into the night, and inthus 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 soil .He did retreated into a solitude that grew in weight in day by day.The Solitude became a habit the Habit became the man, and it crushed him into a shadow.³

The colonized countrymen adopt the western culture as an attempt to assimilate the new culture but the dominant group does not accept them as a part of their culture they consider them as an alien. It gives birth to strong dislike for their own culture and tradition and they become changed personality. Jemubhai asks a number of question to his wife Nimi, when she participates in a rally of the Congress party without his permission. He savagely attacks on her freedom. He takes the revenge from his wife of all wrong done against him by the English people. His dominating attitude reflects the approach of Englishmen for alien people.

For the first time he hit her, although he had wanted to before and fought the urge for sometime. He emptied his Glass on her head, sent a Jug of water swinging into the face he no longer found beautiful and filled her ears with leaping soda water. Then, when this wasn't enough to assuage his rage he Hammered down with his fist raising 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 sour as it from chopping wood .He even limped a bit, his legs hurting from kicking her. "Stupid bitch dirty Bitch!" The more he swore the harder he found he could hit.⁴

There are two aspects of this incident, on the surface level it appears the quarrel between husband and wife usually happens in traditional orthodox in Indian society but when we try to analyze the problem deeply, we find the incident is the result of Jemubhai's own psychological and mental dissatisfaction in an alien land. He never enjoys the dignity and self respect in his life. The dissatisfaction in his social life destroys his personal life completely. Through Jemubhai she represents the hollowness of modern materialistic Eurocentric world.

On his return to India, Jemubhai fails to cope up with his relatives and his unsophisticated Indian wife he comes completely under the grip of foreign lifestyle. He feels everything irrelevant related to his own culture in the process of rejection he becomes alienated and goes through the deep mental agony. His encounter with the west made him only a mimic man. Through the guiltridden heart of retired judge, the novelist examines the shallowness of materialistic world. He ruins his personal as well as social life under the influence of westernization.

Through the second character of the novel, Desai depicts the psyche of a migrant from the lower strata of society. Biju, the son of the judges Cook, Pannalal represents the struggle of those people who are in search for glittering western life lose their own identity and get humiliation. Even after hard work in difficult circumstances he faces rejection.

"He smells" said the owner's wife. "I think I'm allergic to his hair oil." She had hoped for men from the poor parts of Europe-Bulgarians perhaps or. At least they might have something in common with them like religion and skin color, grandfathers who ate cured sausages and looked like them too, but they weren't coming in numbers great enough or they weren't coming desperate enough, she wasn't sure....⁵

Biju feels emptiness due to his rejection in the western world. He fails to find a suitable job, so he painfully shifts himself from one restaurant to another to fulfill the dreams of his father. His unhealthy living condition presents a havoc picture of the Western land. The novelist shows the true picture of the impact of western culture on Indian psyche through Biju's father. Desai tries to break the myth about western land that is considered as a land of dreams. She gives a message through Biju's contemplation to respect your culture and tradition to get pleasure and peace. The dreamland changes into disastrous land, where in reality he destroys his identity in search for better life and money.

Biju's problem of identity seems to stem from his failure to forge compromise between his ethnicity and demands of American Urban modernity and his search for an elusive home in precarious anonymity of the glamorous new world.⁶

Biju alone battles with the host of issues in an alien land. The problem of language, feeling of homelessness, fear of an illegal migrator and financial issues. Biju's condition in America brings before us the value of culture and tradition of native land. He joins Harish Harry's restaurant because it gives him feel of his homeland but soon his hopes turn down when he finds identity crisis in his personality. Biju works hard to assimilate with new culture, but the western culture does not acknowledge him. He is told by Saeed the ways to survive in USA in difficult circumstances. Biju feels himself thrown away in a strange world, he becomes unable to cope up with the difficult circumstances and decides to leave the country. Biju is forced to lead the humiliating life of an illegal immigrant in search for a better life. This solitude reminds and reconnects him of his glorious heritage.

Colonizer makes no difference between the privilege and the less privileged class, the novel brings out the sad picture of educated colonized class who ignores, devalues and rejects his culture to embrace modernity. Judge carries with himself western ideology and ignores the native environment. Biju rejects the Western ideology and respects his own cultural traditions. Contemporary novels deal with contemporary problems, Desai very terrifically presents national and international contemporary issues. It has been revealed through the novel that colonizers deliberately use non violent method to deform the psyche of Colonized. In this process they used education as a powerful tool to demolish the age long tradition and culture of India. Gradually, it gives birth to broken identity, inner conflict and doubled consciousness.

Both the characters are torn between their native culture and western influence. The novel brings into light that privileged class too can face many problems in western environment, the acceptance of judge to the Western culture and rejection towards his own native roots and culture leads him to utmost miseries. He destroys his personal life completely, and at this level colonizer gets victory because his aim to demolish the culture as well as the identity of colonized becomes complete. This paper is an attempt to focus the colonial influence on Indian minds. She tries to reconnect the native people with their land and culture.

In her novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai very efficiently carries two different worlds the internal and the external. Through her native character, we are informed about Indian psyche in the homeland and the abroad. She presents the foreign psyche for Indians in an alien land. Her aim is to give a message to return to culture and tradition.

Objectives of the Study

Even after many decades of post colonial period, people are still under the influence of English culture and way of life. In adopting the eurocentric approach people ignore the worth of their culture and tradition. This paper aims to make the people aware about the importance of their culture and tradition in their personal and professional life. The paper also presents a true picture of over-ambitious parents of

the children who always see a bright future not in their own country but in an alien land. Two characters have been compared through the paper to bring out the reality of the foreign land.

Conclusion

In the fast changing world of science and technology we are getting materialistic day by day, but it has left the world with many problems. It has also been observed by great philosophers, scientists and psychologists that the 'world is too much with us' and there is an urgent need to reconnect with culture and traditions for the complete progress and to enter into a 'new brave world'. There is a need to cope up with the culture and tradition of the country.

End Notes

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