



Cultural Aspects Of Kiran Desai's Novel

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Abstract:

The present study aims to study the cultural aspects of Kiran Desai's novel in the light of Indianness. Kiran Desai is a renowned Indian-English writer who won the Nobel Prize for her very famous novel "The Inheritance of Loss" in 2006. Kiran Desai is a rising star in Indian English literature and the daughter of renowned Indian English writer Anita Desai. She portrays the different cultures in her work. As we know, literature is a vast canvas that shows the new dimensions of different cultures. Literature and culture are inextricably linked. These are the two sides of the same coin. Her novel deals with different cultures and their effects on human lives. Kiran Desai very beautifully pen down the themes of alienation, marginalization, diaspora, globalization, and many more themes in her novels. Kiran Desai tells a very personal story of loss and remembrance that relies on her imagination but also responds to the time and place in which she sets it. The present study aims to examine the novels of Kiran Desai through the lens of cultural aspects of India reflected in the novels of Kiran Desai.

Keywords: Kiran Desai, Culture, indianness, dressing, cuisine, language.

Introduction

A society or group of people's culture is made up of the taught beliefs, attitudes, values, customs, and routines that are shared by them and handed down within that society from generation to generation. Our manner of thinking and understanding the world as well as art, ethics, knowledge, cultures, and values all are the part of our culture. Culture plays a significant role in shaping a person's identity. Every culture has a core set of values and a set of beliefs that act as its compass. This religious framework varies from culture to culture. Cultural inequalities occur when civilizations from two or more have different views or lifestyles. Place, gender, ethnicity, history, nationality, and religion all have an impact on our cultural identity. India is home to many ancient traditions and cultures.

The learned ideas, attitudes, values, conventions, and habits of a society or group of people that are shared by them and passed down from generation to generation within that society are referred to as its culture. Art, ethics, knowledge, cultures, values, and our way of thinking and perceiving the world are all included. In the creation of a person's identity, culture is a crucial factor. Every culture has a set of core values and a set of beliefs that serve as its guiding principles. From culture to culture, this system of beliefs is different. When two or more cultures disagree on their beliefs or ways of life, there are cultural disparities. Our cultural identity, which is influenced by place, gender, ethnicity, history,

nationality, and religious convictions, shapes how we see the world..

In many respects, culture is similar to a fragrance in that it is difficult to describe but simple to identify. You share this culture with every other Indian, whether they live in a big metropolis or a small village. You share it with all Indians, including those who have not yet been born and those who lived a thousand years ago. It resembles a river that stretches out both in front of and behind you.

Research Methodology: In present research cultural aspects of Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, the problem has been formulated after rationalizing and analyzing the problem. Analytical and descriptive methodologies are used for the present study. *Inheritance of loss* has been used as primary data, while secondary data has been obtained from journals, websites, periodicals, magazines, theses, and research papers. The MLA 8 style of referencing has been used for citing the references.

Objectives

1. To investigate Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss* from the point of view of Indian culture.
2. To examine cultural differences illustrated in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

Cultural aspects reflected in the *Inheritance of Loss*:

The book "*The Inheritance of Loss*" is a real-life examination of how exile and cross-cultural interactions affect human relationships. People who don't seem to be happy with their lives appear to follow their cultural impulses and have lost touch with their true selves. When these people were forced to live in a new environment and had to create their own universe based on their newly acquired culture and civilization, this had a negative affect on them throughout their entire life and led to cultural deformities.

She gained literary recognition for the book by winning the Betty Task Award. Desai, the youngest female recipient of the Man Booker Prize, took eight years to complete her second book, *The inheritance of loss*, which was published in 2006. Another fiction prize from the National Book Critics Circle was given to the book in 2007. She was just starting out in her career when she won the Man Booker Prize.

The narrative is set in the north-eastern hills of Darjeeling, close to the Nepali borderland, during the Gorkhaland agitation. Stories within stories are depicted in a number of miniatures. In a house in the northeastern Indian village of Kalimpong, characters like former judge Jemubhai Patel, his teenage granddaughter Saia, and their cook, Pannalal, reside. Aside from these individuals, there are also Biju, Gyan, the son of the chef, Saeed, Haresh Harry, and the two sisters Lolita and Nonita. In terms of geographic displacement, money, and advancement, all of these individuals are the inheritors of loss. They are all changed from their original identities as "natives" into something very different, a "westernised native." They are dealing with a state of non-identity.

The "Indian-ness" that we all talk about refers to a distinct perspective on life as well as unique ways of thinking and feeling. For example, regardless matter whether a girl is from the north, south, east or west of India, the emotions felt by her family when she marries and leaves home remain the same. The Indian family's religion, language or whether we

are discussing the present or a century ago have no bearing on this. A distinguished individual, an Indian son-in-law is treated with special consideration in India. Elders in India bless young people in the country's many regions and in their native tongues. These examples are not important in themselves; but because they are easy for you to recognize, they can help you to see that there really is such a thing as Indian-ness.

We are unable to answer oral questions in arithmetic by saying, "one, two, three," and checking off each of these characteristics one by one with our fingers. Similar to listing the components of the sky's blueness, describing a typical Indian is challenging. Indian culture has always been able to take new ideas and still be what it was, which is one of its most valuable characteristics. Foreigners have visited India throughout its history for a variety of purposes, including settlement, travel, education, looting, and conquest. The inhabitants of India did not reject the new lifestyles they brought with them; rather, they assimilated them and adopted them as their own.

Following are the distinctive features of Indian culture which has depicted in the novels of Kiran Desai

The Indian Scenario

India, that lovely country endowed with nature, is proud of its historic tradition, culture, and heritage as well as of her age-old profession, agriculture, which comes to life in the dynamic hands of both in-country and international Indian English writers.

The rural society is built against a backdrop of rivers, mountains, plain rural villagers' homes, and climatic circumstances. Kiran Desai's photos put this natural beauty in the spotlight, together with its green hills, coconut trees, and many seasons. Even just the word "Indianness" conjures up images of the customs, values, behaviours, attitudes, and way of life of the typical Indian.

The novels chosen for study have addressed all of these issues in a natural manner.

Dressing

The most defining feature of Indian appearance is dress.

There are several common Indian outfits, including the pyjama kurta (HITGO 16 & TIOL 299), dupattas (HITGO 41), salwars (HITGO 30 & TIOL 22), salwar kameez (TIOL 254), dhotis (TIOL 30), tartan (TIOL 30), and purdah (TIOL 90). Women wear saris (HITGO 41 & TIOL 141) and pyjama kurtas, while men wear dhotis. One can distinguish the traditional Hindu, Muslim, and European dress codes in this multi-cultural country. In Indian communities, the dhoti and the sari have long been symbols of tradition.

Public life:

The united family is the cornerstone of Indian society system, village community, and religion. The first thing that stands out about Indian family life is that it was based on a macro framework of familial hierarchy. It appears that the Indian family structure is seen as the institution through which the ideals and worth of an honest life have been passed down through generations. Depending on the geography, social standing, and financial situation, living arrangements might vary greatly. Joint families eventually broke up into

smaller groups as they grew larger, following a predictable cycle throughout time. However, this does not necessarily signify that the concept of the joint family has been abandoned. Instead, it is typically a reaction to a number of factors, such as the necessity for certain members to relocate from village to city or from one city to another in order to take advantage of economic opportunities. The combined family concept was preferred by Kiran Desai over ten years ago in her book *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. Sampath, the main character, was raised in the little village of Shahkot and learns how to be a man of skill and finesse early on.

Ascent of men

A major defining characteristic of Indian English writers is the portrayal of female characters who depend on males rather than strong and self-sufficient masculine characters. It is one of the distinctive qualities of being Indian). The underlying dependence on males is another theme in Kiran Desai's books. Her female protagonists try to be independent and self-sufficient, yet their quest for identity is obstructed at key moments. Her two works make clear that male dominance over women still exists in India.

In *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, Mr Chawla, the protagonist's father hardly admires Kulfi's deeds.

'What on earth is she doing?' shouted Mr Chawla as he watched his wife disappear down the road to the marketplace again and again.. 'What have you married me to, Amma?' (HITGO 5)

In the next room was the sound of Mr Chawla pacing up and down. 'What have we got ourselves into?' (HITGO 8)

Similarly, in *The Inheritance of Loss* Male domination gets worse especially when a fourteen-year-old new bride comes to her in-law's house. The bride's name, a few hours after marriage, is changed. This ordeal situation shows that a woman should obey the order of men. When she married, her name was changed into the one chosen by Jemubhai's family, and in a few hours, Bela became Nimi Patel. (TIOL 91)

Thus male chauvinism has been a traditional legacy, accounting for untold hardship of women in the Indian household.

Religious dogma

Superstitious notions play a significant role in Kiran Desai's fiction as well. Individuals are made fools by irrational thought. Even though the occurrences in Kiran Desai's novels are handled with a sense of humour, they serve as an eye-opener for the uninformed readers. A few situations from the novels will highlight this aspect:

'Treron phoenicoptera phoenicoptera,' he (Sampath)

murmured to himself like a mantra. (HITGO 138), The cook told the policeman of the drama. "I was not bitten, but mysteriously my body swelled up to ten times my size. I went to the temple and they told me that I must ask forgiveness of the snakes. So I made a clay cobra and put it behind the water tank, made the area around it clean with cow dung, and did puja

(TIOL 13)

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.Beliefs, Practices, and Customs

This essay also discusses administration, hero worship, food customs and practises, family events and issues, marriage and festivals, and family functions. In India, it is customary to decorate the home with mango leaves for celebrations or special occasions. Mango leaves that are green are viewed as a sign of fortune. The eating habits are also unique. Roti, chappati, paratha, and other similar foods are the staple diet, especially in North India.

Marriage

The importance of marriage is paramount in Indian culture. In India, marriages are arranged because it is such a significant social institution. With regard to planned marriages, the bride or the bridegroom has little control over this decision. Typically, the elders make the choice.

The most important factor in determining the marital ties is also dowry. The family's status becomes significant. Another deciding element when weighing the benefits and drawbacks of marriage is beauty.

The bride's instant loss of her identity and of her name is what irritates people. Indian rituals have a stranglehold on people, as Kiran Desai explains. While conventions ensure that one lives a life of order, morality, and a proper attitude towards one's duties, some harmful practises, like dowry, undermine the chastity of Indian culture. Unfortunately, in many Indian weddings, the amount of the dowry determines the outcome.

Festivals and Family Gatherings

India celebrates its festivals in a lavish way. Festivals are important to the villagers. Villagers visit the market and purchase a range of goods, from lovely garments to delectable sweets and savouries.

"It was haat day in Kalimpong and a festive crowd thronged to the market in a high pitch of excitement, everyone in their best clothes." (TIOL 83). Kiran Desai also depicts the ceremonies associated with Indian marriages. The houses are renovated, washed and decorated with mango leaves. Mr D. P. S. had disappeared on an errand to the jewellers.

(HITGO 33)

Soon after sunrise, as instructed by their boss, the entire post office staff was on hand to perform such necessary tasks as hanging marigolds and chillies in the doorways, procuring strings of party lights for the trees, fetching young and tender goats for the biryani. (HITGO36)

Family Perception

The birth of a kid is a big deal in an Indian family, and it's even funnier when it's a boy. For a number of reasons, the birth of a male is celebrated far more lavishly than the birth of a girl. According to Hindu spiritual customs, only a son should conduct his father's funeral in a respectful manner in order to ensure that the deceased's soul travels smoothly to the realm of the manes. Furthermore, the son maintains the lineage. Hence he becomes a great economic asset to his family. However, there are certain financial repercussions when a girl is born. A girl's family views her as a financial burden because of the high expense of the distant wedding and the dowry that goes with it. The birth of the baby boy is portrayed in her debut book as a cause for celebration and pride.

Food

Thick, flavorful gravies are what make Indian food special. People from the north of India particularly enjoy eating nuts, milk, yoghurt, cottage cheese, ghee (clarified butter), and peppers. They eat a lot of delicious food. Most of them have a pleasant, sluggish disposition and prefer to start their morning meals. In her two novels, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Desai discusses food, with the focus on Kulfi, the cook, and his son Biju. Due to the fact that these two novels are set in the Himalayan foothills, the food is extremely opulent and represents a unique combination that is frequently eaten in the northern region of India.

Illustrations from *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*: Scraggy chickens (3), Fish curries and fish kebabs (4), Rice and lentils (5), Plain parathas & Parathas with radish (24), Aloo bhaji (25), Parathas & Gulab jamun (25)

Illustrations from *The Inheritance of Loss*: Pakoras (6), Vinegar (7), Chicken tikka masala (46), Dadi's roti (50), Parathas (51), Chapatis (56), Cow peas and kingfish (96), Masala (119)

Conclusion

Above study states that the novels *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss* breathe out the novelist's thoughts about the Indian family system, the village community, and hierarchical behaviour, customs, rituals, and beliefs with pertinent examples which throws light on the cultural aspects of India with reference to the rich Indian Heritage and culture. In the creation of a person's identity, culture is a crucial factor. Every culture has a set of core values and a set of beliefs that serve as its guiding principles. From culture to culture, this system of beliefs is different. Our cultural identity, which is influenced by place, gender, ethnicity, history, nationality, and religious convictions shapes how we see the world.

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