



## THE NAXALITE MOVEMENT DEPICTED IN KIRAN DESAI'S *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

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### ABSTRACT



Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* abounds with themes that make it an interesting social reading. Desai's themes are of human deprivation, trauma, identity and indifference. *The Inheritance of Loss* uses the Gorkhaland movement as a catalyst. It features the insurrection of the Gorkhas, the Nepali-speaking community of West Bengal calling for the creation of a separate state, in 1986. The Nepali Gorkha community living in India has been treated as minority and some cultural theorists consider that a nation's identity is constructed on the premise of majority. India is known as Hindustan due to the vast population of Hindus in India. Siddhartha Deb argues in his essay, "Fragments as a Folder" that the people of North-East India have never been granted justice as the citizens of secular nation. My article deals with these issues of insurgencies with special reference to Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss*.

**Keywords:** *Diasporic, Naxalite Movement, GNLFF Movement, Insurgency.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Diasporic writing has become a major concern of the contemporary Indian novelists and they have perfectly delineated the themes of estrangement, isolation and alienation as general phenomenon of their writings. I would like to consider Kiran Desai's "The Inheritance of Loss" as this novel is widely popular and critically acclaimed for representing the Naxalite movement. This novel presents the global scenario and multiculturalism and vividly represents the homelessness or social exclusion of displaced or disgraced people of the contemporary World.

In the book "The Inheritance of Loss" fifty three chapters are exclusively devoted to describe the insurgency rising in the North-East of India i.e. GNLf Movement (Gorkhaland National Liberation Front) , poverty, unemployment, socio-economic backwardness, xenophobia and discriminatory policies that are deeply rooted in India. The genesis of GNLf movement is narrated by a man clambered upon the bench.

"In 1947, brothers and sisters, the British left granting India her freedom, granting the Muslims Pakistan, granting special provisions for the schedule castes and tribes, living everything taken care of, brothers and sisters – Except us, Except us. The Nepalis of India. At that time, in April of 1947, the Communist Party of India demanded a Gorkhaland, but request was ignored....we are labourers of tea plantation, coolies dragging heavy loads, soldiers. And are we allowed to become doctors and Government workers, owners of tea plantations? No! We are kept at the level of servants. (Inheritance of Loss, 158).

**THE GORKHALAND MOVEMENT**

The Gorkhaland Movement had its roots in the demands of Gorkha's living in Darjeeling District and Duras of West Bengal and the Gorkhas in India and abroad wanted a separate state for themselves. The ethnic identity of Gorkha comes from district of Gorkha within Nepal. The Gorkhaland National Liberation Front led the movement disrupting the district with massive violence between 1986 and 1989. Kukri sickles, axes, kitchen knives, spades and

many kinds of firearms were made use by the activists forcing the government to grant statehood. Socio-cultural and political identity and quest for autonomy further kindled the fire of agitation by shouting their motto "Gorkhaland for Gorkhas." Arson, looting, strike and violent reactions were common everywhere. Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram and Punjab were on fire with the assassination of Indra Gandhi and Sikhs were demanding Khalistan. Consequently, Indian Nepalese were fed up being treated like the minority in a place where they were the majority. They wanted their own country or at least their own state in which to manage their own affairs. ( Critics of Inheritance of Loss 9).

**POVERTY IS THE ROOT CAUSE OF GNLf MOVEMENT**

The handsome Nepali Gyan's involvement in this movement and frustration was caused by the extreme polarities between the poor and the rich. In 1899 Gyan's ancestors left their village in Nepal and arrived at Darjeeling, lured by promises of work in the tea plantation. Gyan's great grandfather was attracted by the comfort and money provided by the Imperial army. The family had invested their money in school teaching in a tea plantation school beyond Darjeeling. In the process of academic learning in convent school Gyan, as the Maths tutor meets sixteen year old Sai. Mutual attraction strikes them and the lesson of Physics turns into session of cajoling and caressing. Love blossoms, they play a game of courtship, retreating, teasing, feeling how delicious the pretence of objective study, miraculous how it could eat up the hours. But soon their loves become bitter, shrouded by the protest of the Nepali populace demanding their own state and ethnic recognition. The progress of human heart is torn between their yearning and passion for each other and they quarrel over their different social class and culture. Sai becomes the foreigner for Gyan who feels disgusted at his own inferior existence, living a life of exile in their own nation. Richocheting between the Schism existent within two different stratus of society, Kiran Desai interweaves the torn sensibilities, the trauma and tribulations of hyphenated selves.

When Gyan sees his friends marching with the protesters fighting for separate Gorkhaland, he no longer sees himself as Sai's lover and protector.



He feels sullied by romance. Love has been Sai's sole inheritance against her prolonged loveless life in her grandfather's house in Kalimpong. The inevitable reaction of Gyan caught up by GNLF movement makes her realize that for Gyan she was not the centre of their romance...she was only the centre to herself and small player paying her part in someone else's story. Tragedy strikes when Sai comes to know that Gyan only leaked the information that the judge had some guns in his house as a result of which the Gorkha agitators break into the judge's house and take away all the guns along with the other things as well. The accusation makes Gyan furious and administers a sound beating to her. The romance has a primitive ending.

### THE NOVEL OPENS AND ENDS WITH INSURGENCY

In the opening chapter, Jemu's house is besieged and plundered, chapter fifty two ends with Bijou robbed by Gorkha mercenaries and chased by dogs in the jungle. Sai romantically decides that love must surely reside in the gap between desire and fulfillment, in the lack, not in contentment, love was ache, the anticipation, retreat, everything around it but the emotions itself. Sai's eco friendliness in looking at the golden peaks of Kanchenjunga makes her find out a solution to disbalanced human life.

Kiran Desai captures the Isthmian Puran- type delineation of North-East India, how ethno-racial relationship affects personal human relations. Gyan and Sai are exiled in love. Edward Said in "Reflections on Exile and other Literary and Cultural Essays" remarks – Exile is unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home; its essential sadness can never be surmounted... our age is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration.

In the present time exile is not always a banishment but often choice exercised in the hope of better prospects in life. Hence the novel ends with illuminating optimistic note that the absurdity of Gyan and pure feeling of Sai, we look beyond past into the future standing steady in the present.

### CONCLUSION

In her Booker awardee novel "The Inheritance of Loss" Kiran Desai address the crux of minority assimilation regarding the Gorkha people of

North-East India. The novel peers into dislocation of some characters and elaborates their alienation within their home. There are some Westernized characters who are native diasporans and live in Kalimpong estranged from their roots. Kalimpong is a hilly area situated in the North-Eastern part of India. From the historical perspective, the novel renders a fictional account of the Gorkha insurgency of mid 1980s in the North-East.

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