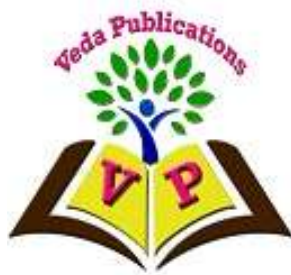


**POST-COLONIAL INDIAN SETTING IN KIRAN DESAI'S NOVELS**Prof. M.Suresh Kumar<sup>1</sup>, Mrs. Y. Sumithra<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>(Associate Professor of English, Department of English, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur.)<sup>2</sup>(Research Scholar, Department of English, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur.)**ABSTRACT**

Until the 1990's, Kiran Desai was known as the prominent Indian novelist, Anita Desai's daughter. Kiran Desai first came to literary attention when in 1997, her excerpts found an honourable mention in Salman Rushdie edited anthology *Mirror Work: Fifty Years of Indian Writing*. In 1998 came her celebrated debut '*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*'. In it she describes post-colonial Indian society. Eight years later with '*The Inheritance of Loss*' Kiran at thirty-five became the youngest ever woman writer to win the prestigious *Man Booker Prize*. '*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*', gentle comic satire offers a thoroughly funny, charming and occasionally touching insight into the absurdities of life in small town India. '*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*', she explains such complex issues as colonialism, racism, immigration, young love, regret, hope, the role of Indian family and the myths of Indian society..

It is important to know that colonialism as a term may refer to the past, but its unending presence is always presenting in the form of modernization. '*The Inheritance of Loss*' is a novel which addresses the themes of the historical impact of colonialism and its effects on the socio-political and cultural problems of the post-colonial Indian society. Kiran Desai's commendable effort – writing this novel took her eight years – shows us the present day problems of South-Asian society and it explores how the postcolonial social psyche is interlinked with the imperialist rule of colonialism. '*The Inheritance of Loss*' draws Desai's own experience of leaving India.

**Keywords:** *Colonialism, Imperialism, Absurdities, Immigration, Modernization*



Daughter of an eminent Indian English author Anita Desai, Kiran Desai has carved out a name for herself as a novelist by writing just two books. Published to a great international acclaim, her second novel, 'The Inheritance of Loss', won the prestigious Man Booker award in 2006 by eclipsing the works of five other short-listed authors. Until the 1990's, Kiran Desai was known as the prominent Indian novelist, Anita Desai's daughter. Kiran Desai first came to literary attention when in 1997, her excerpts found an honorable mention in Salman Rushdie's edited anthology *Mirrorwork: fifty years of Indian writing*. In 1998 came her celebrated debut 'Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard'. In it she describes post-colonial Indian society. Eight years later with 'The Inheritance of Loss' Kiran at thirty-five became the youngest ever woman writer to win the prestigious Man Booker Prize.

Born and brought up in a multi-cultural atmosphere, Kiran is a voracious reader who reads all different kinds of books. But her favourite authors are Ichiguro, Marquez, and R. K. Narayan. I also read a lot of poetry. Kiran is very close to her mother who supports, and greatly influences, her writing. In reply to a question: 'Was your mother a direct influence on your writing?', she has said: "I'm sure she did have a big influence, because all my life I've grown up hearing her talk about writing and literature and books. It was wonderful to have her around when I was writing this book, to talk to her through this whole process"<sup>1</sup>. Her father is also an ardent admirer of Kiran's writing.

Her first novel '*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*' is a whimsical tale that blends fable-esque magic with satiric comedy. Setting the fictitious village of Shahkot, the tale traces the chaotic progress of the monumentally unmotivated Sampath Chawla from a failed post office clerk to a guava tree inhabiting guru. In Kiran Desai's *Shahkot*, it seems that the atmosphere of Narayan's *Malgudi* has been delicately captured and given a more boisterous build up than Narayan's mildly Chekhovian humour is inclined to do. Kiran Desai, who is apparently familiar with Evelyn Waugh's decline and fall and a hand full of dust moving from a hilarious comedy to a macabre close, the confines of *Shahkot* get a better and more concentrated build up in the process and acquire a Narayanesque flavor of *Malgudi*.

Kiran Desai's *Shahkot* is a miniature replica, where for once all characters are being assembled in the Orchard to enact a crowd drama of action and atmosphere. Sampath the Godman surrounded by devotees, Kulfi with her boiling cauldron, the drunken monkeys raiding the orchard, Pinky and her new love, the ice cream vendor and the spy, hopping to detect some flaw in the entire set up. It is a mildly satirical portrait of the Indian cult of Godman modelled on Narayanswamy in '*The Guide*' or Mauni Baba of Allahabad.

This gentle comic satire offers a thoroughly funny, charming and occasionally touching insight into the absurdities of life in a small town of India. R. K. Narayan had stated that the incident of the reluctant holy man was based on a real event which he read about in a newspaper. Desai, too, says in an interview, talking of the process for writing this book- "I'd read a story in *The Times of India* and heard about a character from many people, a man who was a very famous hermit in India who really did climb up a tree, who lived in a tree for many years, until he died."<sup>2</sup>

From the sweet natured playfulness of her joyous novel, '*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*', she explains such complex issues as colonialism, racism, immigration, young love, regret, hope, the role of Indian family and the myths of Indian society. In an interview, Kiran Desai classifies- "It is a comedy and it is satiric in many ways, I think, and it's fantastic. It reads very much like a folktale or a fairy tale. Kiran Desai had stated that she wrote the novel, "Very much for myself...but I think anyone with a sense of humour would enjoy it." It is important to know that colonialism as a term may refer to the past, but its unending presence is always presenting in the form of modernization. '*The Inheritance of Loss*' is a novel which addresses the themes of the historical impact of colonialism and its effects on the socio-political and cultural problems of the post-colonial Indian society. Kiran Desai's commendable effort – writing this novel took her eight years – shows us the present day problems of South-Asian society and it explores how the postcolonial social psyche is interlinked with the imperialist rule of colonialism.



"*The Inheritance of Loss*" is a novel which narrates the life of a teenage Indian girl, an orphan called Sai, who is living with her Cambridge-educated Anglophile grandfather, a retired judge, in the town of Kalimpong, the Himalayas. Sai has fallen in love with her Maths tutor, Gyan, the descendant of a Nepali Gurkha mercenary, but he eventually recoils from her. In the sub plot, we are shown the life of Biju, the son of Sai's grandfather's cook, who belongs to the "shadow class" of illegal immigrants in New York and spends much of his time evading the authorities, moving from one ill-paid job to another.

Desai takes the concept of multiculturalism in her works. At such moments, Desai's works deal like the works of Salman Rushdie which deals with themes of "hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs." According to Desai, Globalization, modern Economics make one work against another one can observe this concept with regard to the character of Biju.

Arriving back in India in the climactic scenes of the novel, Biju is immediately engulfed by the local eruptions of rage and frustration from which he had been physically remote in New York. For him and the others, Desai suggests, withdrawal or escape are no longer possible. "Never again," Sai concludes, "could she think there was but one narrative and that this narrative belonged only to herself, that she might create her own mean little happiness and live safely within it." Apart from this abstraction, Desai offers her characters no possibility of growth or redemption. Though relieved by much humor, "*The Inheritance of Loss*" may strike many readers as offering an unrelentingly bitter view. This is the invisible emotional reality Desai uncovers as she describes the lives of people fated to experience modern life as a continuous affront to their notions of order, dignity and justice. We do not need to agree with this vision in order to marvel at Desai's artistic power in expressing it. Longing is perhaps the thing that the characters in this novel do best. They long for home, they long for love, and they long for acceptance-yet rarely are they skilled at locating any of the above. Desai's scope is broad, looking at the

consequences of large cultural and political forces for both people and individuals.

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