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The Inheritance of Loss

Kiran Desai's stylistic feat makes *The Inheritance of Loss* a great 'inheritance' to the genre of Modern Indian English writing because of its richness in characterization and multicultural ethos. The book arouses interest in its readers not only because it is a Man Booker Prize (2006) winner but also of its genre of diasporic literature.

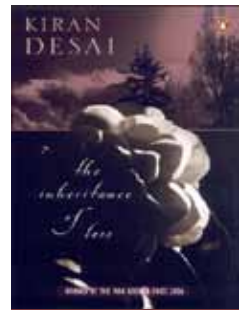
It can be compared with Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003), both exploring cross cultural references to North Bengal and America. Lahiri masterfully explores the complexities of the migrant experience and the conflict of tradition and modernity between the generations of a single family. On the other hand, Desai's novel builds a rich tapestry of characters from different backgrounds that are exiles at home as well as abroad. We see it in the case of Judge Jemibhai Patel, a Parsi who decides to settle in Darjeeling because of his sense of exile from his community and even abroad. On the other hand, the Swiss Priest, Father Potty feels more rooted in India as compared to his native land. Biju goes abroad as a cook to fulfill his 'American Dream' but ultimately returns to India because of exploitation. Moreover, the author also focuses on the inter-state migration as in the case of the anglophile Bengali sisters Lola and Noni. However, the peaceful multiculturalism in North Bengal is threatened by the uprising of the ethnic population of the Gorkhas. These issues broaden the scope of Desai's notion of insider/outsider dichotomy as

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against the limited scope of Lahiri's novel.

Desai's novel also has a unique dimension towards love as seen in Gyan and Sai relationship which parallels the history of the state. The tumultuous love between the Nepali tutor and his student juxtaposes with the tumult of the Gorkha insurgency of the 1980s.

Moreover, the use of pidgin English by Desai impresses me since it adds a dose of humour to the exiled status of the immigrants. We clearly see it in Biju's mode of expression 'Is this the Amriken embassy?' and in his letters 'Respected Pitaji, no need to worry. Angrezi khana only...' This reflects his struggle between the concepts of home and exile and he notices a similar situation in the status of his migrant co-workers too. This makes him conclude that 'every nationality confirmed its stereotype' especially in its resistance to cultural assimilation. These aspects reflect the author's keen eye for detail in analyzing the diversity of immigrant experiences and make the novel reading a pleasurable experience, engaging the attention of the readers at an intellectual and emotional level.



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