



ORIGINAL ARTICLE



SUBJUGATION OF WOMEN IN THE NOVELS OF KIRAN DESAI

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ABSTRACT

Kiran Desai, is the well -known writer in post-colonial period and winner of the prestigious Man Booker Prize, 2006. Her *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) are the gyno- texts which present socio-cultural and psychological study of women especially from Indian – centered, andocentric, and patriarchal society. Kiran Desai like her mother exposes the ugliness of a Indian Society, where woman is considered “Second Sex” and “Non-man”. Patriarchal dominance has prevented women from realizing their productive and creative possibility like french feminist writers she introduces a “woman’s language”. She indulges in linguistic experiments uses dialectic words, popular slangs vulgar and obscene expressions, loose clauses etc.

In ‘*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss* collectively seemed to be a battle ground where ideological conflicts, power relations and the struggle for identity have been projected with two fold purposes: first to expose bitter ugliness in the male dominant society reducing women to the “Second Sex” and secondly set forth remedial measures to overcome such disgusting conditions of women.

Ammaji, Kulfi, Pinky, Lakshmiji, Miss. Jyotsana, old crone (milk women), to be bride (for Sampath), old woman who sells illicit liquor ,Vermaji’s wife ,Aunties and Sisters in *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. Bela, Sai Lola, Noni, pixie, Mrs. Sen, Mrs. Mistri, Munmun and girl students pursuing research in America etc. women characters in ‘*The Inheritance of Loss*’. All are explained by Kiran Desai in varied but realistic manner. Some women consciously or unconsciously cooperate to perpetuate the masculine’s ideology. While Sai, Lola, Noni, Pixie, Mrs. Mistry and Pinky attempt to change the vicious cycle of patriarchy, they have to sacrifice a lot and find themselves however– very helpless, disappointed and defeated. There is a constant struggle for space. Both novels are highly relevant to discuss the feminine issue.

INTRODUCTION :

Post- colonial studies have been with us for the last forty years and at present they are foremost in any program of Literature in English. In a literal sense, “post-colonial” is that which has been preceded by colonization. The second college edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines it as, “of, relating to, or being the time following the establishment of independence in a colony”. Post colonialism is a subject of ongoing debate in contemporary literary and critical studies. It is a complex phenomenon and used in a variety of ways within the single discipline, between and across disciplines and differently in different parts of the world. The meanings embraced by the protean term range from an emphasis on the historical fact of imperialism to an incorporation of cultural difference and marginality into a form of synchronic post-modernism, post-colonial studies are particularly sensitive to language, feminism,

marginality, multiculturalism, and so on. Indian Postcolonial novels in English have started to get space in world literature after the Independence. The novels after 1980's are the best post-colonial novels which dealt with the variety of themes. Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Anita Rao Badami etc. are the best known among the novelists of 1980s and after wards.

Kiran Desai, the daughter of well-known Indian English Novelist Anita Desai, the winner of the Prestigious Man Booker Prize, 2006 for her second novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) is a young promising Indian writer who has written two novels so far, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). Her both the novels are 'gyno-texts' – present socio-cultural and psychological study of Indian women. The present paper Endeavour's to present an explicative study of gender bias and subjection of women in Indian male-centered orthodox society presented by Kiran Desai in her novels. Kiran Desai like her mother handled intellectual feminist problems in India in her novels. Since 1960 feminist criticism emerged as a powerful means in recognize the women's cultural roles and achievements and for women's social and political rights man Wollstonecraft, Margaret Fuller, J.S. Miller, Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millet, Alain Showalter etc. wrote texts which gave impetus to advance the feminist approach. But these all feminist critics have varied views and themes. Kiran Desai is well-acquainted with these diverse feminist ideologies and witnessed very closely, how deeply these patriarchal ideologies have brought havoc in Indian society. She finds similarities between western and Indian social structure and cultural practices.

Indian Society is mainly "andocentric", "phallogocentric," "patriarchal" and masculinist which has orthodox consideration about subjection of women. Kiran Desai not only exposes the bitter ugliness of Indian Society where woman is considered, "Second Sex", "other", "subject", "non-man" but also investigates the reasons behind this male tendency. Indian women are taught to internalize consciously or unconsciously the reigning male, patriarchal ideology patriarchal dominance has prevented women from realizing their productive and creative possibility. Because of male dominance, Indian woman experiences subalternity and marginal position not only in the society but their own family also. Desai boldly attempts to resist such dominance by creating different images of women traditional as well as modern. Like French feminist writers she introduces a "woman's language" and indulges in linguistic experiments. She uses dialectic words slangs, abuses of various regions, vulgar expressions, loose clauses etc she finds resemblance between Western and Indian social structure and cultural practices.

Kiran Desai in her both novels handled the theme of woman's identity. *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss* collectively seem to be a battle ground where ideological conflicts, power relations and the struggle for identity have been projected with two fold purpose. First, to expose ugliness in the society reducing women to the "Second Sex" and Secondly set forth remedial measures to overcome such dismal condition of women, Ammaji, Kulfu, Pinky, Lakshimiji, Miss. Jyotsna, old crone (milk women), to be bride (for sampath), old woman who (sells, illicit, liquor), wife of vcrmaji Aunties and sisters of Hungry Hop Boy figure in *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. Bela, Sai, Lola, Noni, Pixie, Mrs. Mistry, Mrs. Sen, MunMun and girl students pursuing research in America etc. figure in *The Inheritance of Loss* and complete the feminine world of Kiran Desai presents the different situations and behavior of women. Ammaji and Bela both characters stand for the Indian tradition of cooperating nature of women to men. They both are consciously or unconsciously, knowingly or unknowingly co-operating to perpetuate the predominant patriarchal ideology while Sai, Lola Noni, Pixie, Mrs. Mistry, and Pinky attempt to transcend the vicious and evil cycle of male-dominance, but culturally they are unmoored. Both type of characters stand for the feminism but their ways are different. The first type of women have to sacrifice a lot and find themselves however helpless and defeated. The spirit and courage of now women motivates them doubtlessly but they have no value in male dominant society one is naturalized to tolerate and the sexual discrimination on the other hand the 2nd type figures resist the "non-man" and "second sex" ideology. Kiran Desai portraits different rules and images of women. Though both the novels belong to 1980s and 1990s, they are highly relevant to discuss the feminine issue.

Kiran Desai's first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* is remarkable and notable to its comedy and fantasy. The central theme and the main plot of the novel is magical tale of a world gone

slightly mad and the *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* created by a local band of monkeys when it develops a taste for liquor. But at the same time the feminine study made in the novel is no less significant issue. The novels begins with the family of Mr. Chawla – B.A.Pass head clerk at Reserve Bank of Shahkot, his wife Kulfi, Mother Ammaji, Son Sampath and daughter Pinky living in Shahkot: experiencing scorching heat and drought. In fact Ammaji is the eldest member of the society but Mr. Chawla is head of the family and enjoys a commanding post. He is a major force of gender bias. And his mother Ammaji is victim of patriarchy she is suppressed under the male domination in the family. She is a traditional woman with long experience about pregnancy rearing of children and handling of domestic affairs, so when Kulfi is pregnant, she advised her to go to the temple say the right prayers for the good health of child.

In Shahkot there was no one who is waiting for the girl child. Everyone was in excitement and anxiety regarding the sex of the baby, if the baby is “boy” everyone became happy and if it wasn’t “boy” there was disappointment and resentment Ammaji loves Kulfi in her pregnancy but she hangs pictures of male babies on the wall and hopes that anyhow she will get grandsons. Even the birth of her own son Sampath was celebrated as on that day co-incidentally raining in drought hit Shahkot so he was given the name Sampath which means “good fortune” son with high hopes. At the time of lunch or dinner Ammaji and Pinky run up and down in the house to carry out Mr. Chawla’s demands that is food, shoes, socks, dress, tiffin etc. Mr. Chawla is always busy in giving commands and giving useful tips to Sampath regarding career building for long Ammaji knowing drawbacks in Sampaths personality also defends him all the time and says his stars are good. But Sampath who inherits lunacy from brother Kulfi wants freedom and in search of a life of peaceful contemplation climbs the guava tree. Ammaji requested him to come down and Mrs. Chawla and Pinky feel insulted. Ammaji calls upon the holy man, her every action, involvement and approvals justify her traditionalism, Kiran Desai criticizes this practice. She enlists the necessary qualifications of a bride to be, no condition for a groom to be. He can be lunatic, crazy unemployed living upon the tree like Sampath, ugly in looking, immoral and so on where a woman is used as a toy or please man!

----- *Girl who is to marry the son of the house must come from good family. Her character must be decent and not shameless and bold... keep her eyes lowered head bowed as well.... Fair complexional Proficiency in a variety of different field....voice must be honey sweet should not be fat.....*

HGO (57-58)

Kulfi, who inherited familial strain of lunacy Ammaji managed everything and proved her utilitarian and practical approach to life and accepted the huge dowry Kulfi represents the messed image of woman. The marriage of a girl especially in a male structure of Indian Society is a serious problem; it becomes more serious when the girl has lunatic stress. Kulfi’s father purchases a groom offering a big sum of money in dowry. Her parents were worried that if her marriage were delayed she would be left “on their hands forever, her sanity dissipating, the sense scattering from her like seeds from a poppy pod” Burden of own child shifted to the another one by giving money Mr. Chawala’s attitude towards Kulfi is very harsh and often threatens her to send mental asylum Kulfi is a helpless woman defeated first by her lunacy, secondly by her husband and the whole masculinist society. Sampath also not able to understand his mother’s feelings and this is the reality in the life of Indian mother.

Pinky is contrasted with Ammaji and has a strong urge for space she is young, educated romantic, aggressive and sensitive and in the process of modernization she is in search of autonomy in the form of her choice of love and so decides to elope with Hungry Hop boy, ignoring all the social taboos and conventions. In her love she is very aggressive and violent she meets her lover at his home without caring for family’s name. Another figure Laxhmiji, a Bengali teacher, acts as a marriage broker represents traditional image of woman Miss. Jyotsana, working in the local post office is somewhat crazy and comes forward to support Sampatha she is very sentimental but bold also. Mrs. Vermaji comes out of the domestic confinements to register her presence in the social matters and is an active member of the

monkey protection society old crone and old women represent the miseries of old women. Kiran Desai successfully represents the varied images of Indian women and uses experimental language.

The Inheritance of Loss is full of various post-colonial themes as, multiculturalism, modernity, immigrant's bitter experiences, racial discrimination, game of possession, impact of globalization, marginality etc. Despite these Kiran Desai brilliantly handles gender bias and sexual politics she deals with this anti-feministic approach of society with to portrait the sufferings of Indian women and to protest against it. The novel presents two sets of Indian women first represented by Bela (Nimi- Patel) socialized to tolerate sexual discrimination second by Sai, Lola, Noni, Pixie, Mrs. Sen, Mrs. Mistry and the girl students of India pursuing research in America – resist the “Second Sex” identity of women. Kiran Desai serves the reality of their life through the “lens of being Indian” she has tried to epitomize the image of traditional Indian women in the character of Bela, who is a village girl of a rich family, married at an early age of 14 Jemubhai. After marriage her name is changed as “Nimi Patel” Indian custom of changing identity of girl after marriage by changing name is satirized by Desai first night after marriage was terrific for her, and was similar to attempt to rape Jemubhai selected in I.C.S and becomes a judge and becomes an Anglophile whereas Bela remains what she was. Like Kulfi and Mr. Chawala, Jemubhai and Nima is also mismatched couple. Jemubhai went to England and returns from England after five years, but he, “*had forgotten he had a wife.*” (I.L. 166) and yet Bela is bound to follow Jemubhai, there was no emotional bonding between them only occasional instances of sexual intercourse between them are reported Kiran Desai wants to portrait the reality of Indian woman's married life. Jemu hates his wife's desineness, he feels disgusted and tries to keep her away from public gathering with continuous torture and apathy. She becomes a psychotic and speaks to none for weeks Gradually she made invalid by her misery, grew dull, began to fall asleep in heliographic sunshine and wake in the middle of night Jemubhai abused her in very vulgar way he hits her he emptied his glass on her head sent a jug of water swing into her face he no longer found beautiful, filled her ears with leaping soda water, (IL, 304)

His hatred for her never softened. He couldn't tolerate her face any longer he threatened her to kil. After some time he bought her a ticket and return her Gujrat. After six months Bela bore a child daughter still Jemubhai is reluctant to allow her to stay with him. Her uncle turned her from the door touching angrily “You are your husband's responsibility” (IL, 306) she starts to live with her sister but her brother-in-law was irritated by her presence. Bela being depressed catches fire over a stove and dies. After her death the daughter is sent to convent boarding schools.

Sai, is antitype of Nimi Patel/Bela a young girl fo 16, smart, educated, independent, sensitive, romantic, sympathetic and “*westernized Indian brought up by English runs, and estranged living in India*” (IL310). But still she is constant victim of the sense of Loss, created by alienation in her life. Loss of parents , Loss of Jemubhai's love, loss of peace and finally the loss of her love. She faces psychological torture and fails to overcome it. She inherited this loss from her mother Mrs. Mistry, who was sent to convent school and unattended by Jemubhai her grandfather. Jemu is the perennial source of torture. He condemns Bela his rural wife. Secondly sends his own daughter to boarding school and snaps the ties with Mrs. Mistry and finally Sai secluded from familial love and affection at an early age of 6. Her parents die in a bus accident and she becomes an orphan. In a country, so full of relatives Sai “*Suffered a dearth*” (IL-28) Gyan and Jemubhai intensify her sense of loss. There is no emotional bonding between Sai and Jemubhai. He only appreciates her for her English manners which his wife Bela lacks Jemubhai loves his dog most than Sai. Sai tries to find peace in love of Gyan but soon she comes to know about his hatred for her. He is a G.N.L.F activist poor and unemployed and involves in the robbery of Jemu's home. Sai like Pinky tries to attack Gyan and faces extreme physical toture and humiliation socio-cultural differences under the gap between them and he sacrificed her love, which was the biggest loss she ever experienced she lost the meaning of life; feels alone, helpless and alienated. Sai is marginalized in emotional relationship. But Sai decides to live independently/

Lola, Noni and Pixie all embody the role of Indian women in the modern world. They are ready to exploit every opportunity but sometimes feel helpless. They discuss on political, social, cultural and familial matters rationally like modern women. They are friendly to Sai. Uncle Potty, father Booty, Cook

and a cat Mustafa originally Lola and Nonita “Bongs” they sacrificed old names Lolita Fola, Nonita (Noni) and Piyali Mukhaerji (Pixie). They are also like Jemubhai Anglophile. Lola’s husband Joydeep is no more, so she has economical problem and accepted to teach Sai, Noni and Lola are suffered by insurgency and G.N.L. F. activities Noni thinks of herself as unlucky for having no love in life. That’s why she advises Sai to get a chance in life and take it. Almost all women characters in, *Inheritance of Loss*, are suffering from familial or individual problems.

Sai’s mother Mrs. Mistry despite her modernism and high education suffers from patriarchy and evil social customs and conventions. Her mother Bela also suffered a lot at the hands of Jemubhai. When Bela was pregnant Jemu expelled her due to hatred and utter frustration. Even her birth couldn’t change her father’s heart from birth. She is uncared, unattended and deprived of familial love and affection. After her mother’s death Jemubhai kept her in boarding school, he paid for that but never visited. When she was a college student she eloped with Mr. Mistry as Zoroastrian orphan and was bound to suffer, the bitter experience of expulsion from the family. She also suffers from the separation of Sai, who at an early age of 6 living at St Augustine Dehra Dun, while she was living with her husband in Moscow and at last died in bus accident with Mr. Misty Kiran Desai portrays in realistic manner the suffering of women in “*The Inheritance Loss*” Kiran Desai deals with varied problems of Indian life Jemubhai, Gyan, Pradhan and G.N.L.F activists etc. derogate the position of women hardly give opportunity to enjoy life and follow their ways. Physical attack and mental torture are common factors making feminine world miserable and leaving them helpless. The feminine world presented by Kiran Desai in her novels is rich varied and complex she successfully created wonderful women characters representing multiple images and roles in the life of Indian women.

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