

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA  
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND  
SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY OF AMMAR THELEDJI- LAGHOUAT  
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



**A post-colonial Viewing to Migration and Cultural Identity  
in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss (2006)**

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH IN PARTIAL  
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MASTER DEGREE IN CIVILIZATION  
AND LITERATURE

**By:**

**ZEROUALA Douaa**

**Board of Examiners:**

**Mr. MHAMDI Nadir..... University of Laghouat, Chairman**

**Dr. MOUISSA Fattoum.....University of Laghouat, Supervisor**

**Mrs. GUELLIL Asia..... University of Laghouat, Examiner**

**Academic Year 2022-2023**

## **Acknowledgments**

Above all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Mouissa, for her strong dedication and tireless commitment that have been instrumental in bringing this piece of work to fruition. Her invaluable guidance, expertise, and support have played a major role in shaping and refining this project.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the jury members for dedicating their valuable time to reviewing and evaluating this dissertation. Your expertise and insightful feedback are greatly appreciated.

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my precious parents, who have always supported and cared for me during the preparation of this dissertation, and I am glad that I have reached this point for them. Their constant belief in me, their words of encouragement, and their sacrifices have shaped me into the person I am today.

I also want to dedicate this work to my brother. His supportive, encouraging, and motivating comments have been invaluable throughout this journey. Whether it was lending an ear, offering advice, or simply being there to lift my spirits, he has always played a vital role in shaping my perspective and fostering personal growth.

For all my family members and friends, I thank Allah for having you in my life.

## **Abstract**

Migration has a profound impact on identity construction, where migrants often have their traditional cultures and identities disrupted. Kiran Desai is one of the most popular authors that tackled the issues of migration and identity based on her life experiences as a migrant herself. Her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2016) offers a comprehensive exploration of the challenges and trials experienced by migrants in the aftermath of colonialism, as it also provides the challenges of getting exposed to new cultures that play a role in reshaping people's identities. Thus, the dissertation raises a main question that explores the effects of migration that lead her protagonists to undergo identity crises. This research aims to provide descriptions and analysis concerning the trials they went through while figuring out their real identity, such as racism, marginalisation, psychological turmoil, and trauma, as they struggled to reconcile their original identities with the new cultural environments they were exposed to. Based on this explanation, this research uses cultural, historical, and psychoanalytical approaches in order to provide a clear explanation of the psychological effects of colonialism, in addition to the applied and descriptive methods that help in applying certain theories to describe the struggles faced by migrants in the west. In view of this, the final results show that getting exposed to a new environment can change migrants' identities as they adopt the practices and values of the host culture, leading to a gradual transformation in their perception of self, and aligning more closely with the norms of the host culture. Moreover, migrants may feel pressured to assimilate into the new culture as a means of coping with racism, which further triggers their identity crisis and reformation.

# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Dedication .....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>General Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b><u>Chapter One: Identity within Colonial and Postcolonial Framework</u></b>	
Introduction .....	7
I. The Binary Division between the East and the West.....	7
I.1. The Use of Media favour of the Binary Division.....	9
I.2. The Western Academic Writings .....	11
I.3. The Civilising Mission.....	12
I.4. The Contrapuntal Reading .....	13
II. Cultural Hybridity.....	15
II. 1. Assimilation, Third Space, Mimicry, and Ambivalence.....	16
III. Cultural Identity.....	18
III.1. Media’s Impact on Identity.....	18
III.2. The Duality of Identity .....	20
IV. Colonialism’s Impact on the Psyche .....	21
IV.1. Cultural Absorption and Identity Crisis .....	23
Conclusion .....	25
<b><u>Chapter Two: Trials of Migration and Displacement in The Inheritance of Loss</u></b>	
Introduction .....	29
I. Migration Experiences in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss.....	29
II. Reading the Novel from an Orientalist Perspective:	

A Critical Analysis .....	31
III. The Echoes of the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in <i>The Inheritance of Loss</i> .....	34
IV. Disillusionment Beyond Expectations .....	35
IV.1. The Judge's Experiences in England.....	36
IV.2. Biju's Experiences in America.....	38
IV.3. Barriers of Language .....	41
V. Media and Globalisation in <i>The Inheritance of Loss</i> .....	42
VI. Cultural Displacement.....	45
VI.1. Psychological Implications of Cultural Displacement and Migration .....	45
Conclusion .....	47
 <b><u>Chapter Three: Identity Construction in Kiran Desai's <i>The Inheritance of Loss</i></u></b>	
Introduction .....	48
I. Colonialism's Lingering Impact: The Influence of Western Narratives in Post- Colonial Societies .....	48
II. The Inherited Losses .....	51
III. Negotiating Mimicry and Hybridity: Formation Identity in the Intersection of Cultures   54	
III. 1. The judge as a Mimic Man.....	54
III.2. Sai and Her Quest for Establishing Her Identity .....	56
III.3. The Construction of Hybrid Identities in <i>The Inheritance of Loss</i> .....	58
III.4. The Role of Nostalgia in the Search for Identity.....	59
IV. The Psychological Influence of Colonialism on Identity Construction in The Inheritance of Loss .....	61

V. Dynamic and Shifting Identities in The Inheritance of Loss .....	64
Conclusion	66
<b>General Conclusion .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Résumé .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>ملخص .....</b>	<b>76</b>

## **General Introduction**

Colonialism has a profound impact compelling countless individuals to leave their homelands in search of new opportunities. Upon settling in their host countries, these individuals faced significant cultural disparities between their countries of origin and the new environment, prompting a deep sense of psychological and cultural displacements. Determined to preserve their cherished traditions and cultural heritage, they embarked on a remarkable journey of forging a new identity amidst unfamiliar surroundings.

The psychological and cultural displacements experienced by those who left their countries engender a profound sense of loss and unease within their selves. While endeavouring to assimilate and conform to the norms of the new culture, they simultaneously strive to preserve the cultural heritage instilled in them during their upbringing. The individuals who were affected by the western norms tried to build a bridge between both cultures in an attempt to reduce the differences between them, but to their surprise, they got hit by the reality that they are considered marginalised and outsiders, or in other terms, 'othered'. Despite their efforts to integrate and find common ground, they find themselves confronted with barriers of discrimination, prejudice, and exclusion.

The widening gap between westerners and the displaced individuals accentuates a number of emotions within the latter group, including discrimination, nostalgia for their homelands, isolation, alienation, and a profound sense of loss, especially concerning their identity. This emotional turmoil stems from the process of acculturation and the adoption of western lifestyles, while simultaneously feeling unwelcome within the new culture. And even if they return to their actual homes one day, they lose that feeling they had before displacement, and home does not sense the same anymore.

The pressure to conform and fit into new societal norms can be overwhelming, causing individuals to prioritise external validation over their own genuine expression. This constant striving to mimic others and meet an unattainable standard perpetuates feelings of inadequacy and creates a cycle of dissatisfaction. As a result, engaging in mimicry can drive non-western individuals towards cultural hybridity, as they embody a blend of their original culture and the new cultural influences. This process of imitation and conformity further distances individuals from their genuine sense of self, leading to a complex and ambiguous experience of identity formation.

This ambiguity and marginality motivated many post-colonial writers to emerge and scrutinise this issue by creating “post-colonial literature”, such as Stuart Hall, Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Homi Bhabha, who are known as the pioneers of the post-colonial theory and whose theories are solid references whenever analysing post-colonial works.

The case study that is going to be analysed is Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). It tackles many post-colonial concepts like Orientalism, Cultural Hybridity, Ambivalence, displacement, identity crisis, and discrimination that are experienced by all of the novel’s characters, mainly the four main characters who live in a small town in the North-East Himalayas in Kalimpong<sup>1</sup>.

The main problem of this research is: How do the experiences of migration and the lingering effects of post-colonialism affect the formation of identity in *The Inheritance of Loss*?

In order to answer the main question, it is important to answer the next sub-questions: What are the reasons the characters to migrate based on Kiran Desai’s novel? What happens when the characters reach their promised land? How do Desai’s characters

---

<sup>1</sup> Kalimpong is a town located in the Indian state of West Bengal.

deal with the fact of being marginalised and belittled in the west? And how do the effects of migration ultimately affect their psychological state and their identity?

To answer the previous questions, some hypotheses are suggested: Firstly, the long-held belief that the west provides a brighter life can be a huge motive to pursue opportunities in these regions. Secondly, the interactions between migrants and Westerners can foster a process of acculturation, leading to a desire to emulate Western practices and behaviours. Thirdly, the sense of inferiority that is developed by acculturation might make the migrant keen on the hosting culture and reject his or her original customs and traditions; hence, rejecting the original identity. Lastly, the idea of feeling inferior has a damaging effect on the psychological well-being of migrants, as the evident contrast between the western reality and their own cultural perceptions of the east becomes a profound cultural shock.

Some reviews of literature were made concerning the topic of migration and identity formation. A research entitled: **LIVING IN BETWEEN BEING ‘COLONIZED’ AND ‘POSTCOLONIZED’: A POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS** (2019) by Jannatulfarhana, provides a description of the character of the judge where he is depicted as someone deeply influenced by the belief in British superiority. This influence runs so deeply that it has instilled a subconscious sense of inferiority within him. As a result, he constantly harbours envy towards the British and holds a disdainful attitude towards his fellow Indians. Even after India achieves independence from the British colonial rule, he continues to be culturally and psychologically colonised, perpetuating the enduring effects of colonialism on his identity. This explains that the aftermaths of colonialism must have an impact on the psychology and identity of the ex-colonised inevitably.

Another research entitled: Postcolonial Dilemmas in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2017) by Prof. Abraham Panavelil Abraham, mentions that the feeling of nostalgia is evoked when migrating. The interaction with a new culture can generate provocative feelings that lead individuals to assimilate into the hosting culture. Additionally, being physically separated from their home country triggers a sense of nostalgia towards their homeland. This separation acts as a catalyst, evoking sentimental memories and a deep longing for the familiar aspects of their native culture, including traditions and connections. In explaining how "the formation of the human identity" works, Nagendra Bhandari (2021) explains that social interactions and personal awareness play pivotal roles in shaping human identity.

Notably, an individual's social interactions are shaped by both their past experiences and their present circumstances. Bhandari highlights that culture plays a significant role in shaping one's identity through interactions with people, whether from their own society or from a different society. These interactions contribute to the development of the individual's "personal awareness," influencing their perceptions of identity, particularly when adapting to a new environment and encountering unfamiliar customs and traditions. In such situations, individuals adapt to the new culture, which, in turn, provides fresh insights into their own identity.

The significance of the research lies in the significance of the novel and identity itself. The concept of identity is largely significant because it is the thing that makes a person recognised. When someone knows who he is and where to belong, he develops a sense of reconciliation with the self. The human identity is what gives him value and makes him feel like he belongs to people who share his culture, language, customs, traditions, religion, and so on. Kiran Desai's novel serves as a ground to undergo this research as it explores the psychological and emotional dimensions of migration, and

delves into the characters' internal struggles, their feelings of displacement, and the yearning for a sense of belonging, which eventually impact the construction of their identity. Overall, this dissertation's objective is to see the roles of Orientalism, Displacement, Cultural Hybridity, and psychology in shaping one's self and in unlocking deep thoughts about their identity throughout the novel.

Since the novel portrays many multicultural aspects, such as the conflict between the eastern and western cultures, race, and ethnicity, the cultural approach will be implemented. The use of the historical approach is also pivotal as it aligns with the novel's postcolonial aspects, adding depth and context to the exploration of the effects of colonialism, migration, and identity construction. Additionally, the psychoanalytical approach attempts to describe the characters' inner conflicts to establish a sense of their existence. In terms of methods, the applied method is going to be used to analyse the novel by applying theories like Orientalism, Cultural Hybridity, Cultural Identity, and Psychoanalysis to the novel to resolve the main question. Moreover, the exploratory and the descriptive methods will be adopted to explore and describe the physical and psychological trials the characters endured during their journeys in the west.

The dissertation is divided into three chapters: the first chapter provides a theoretical framework, where it attempts to analyse the concept of identity according to the theorists who are regarded as the core of post-colonialism: Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Frantz Fanon. The second chapter attempts to explore the concepts of displacement and migration in *The Inheritance of Loss* in the post-colonial framework through the application of the theories in the novel. The last chapter is about discussing the effects of migration and on identity construction in Kiran Desai's novel and attempts to provide an answer to the main question.

## **Chapter One:**

# **Identity in Colonial and Postcolonial Frameworks**

## **Introduction**

The Post-colonial period marked the emergence of Postcolonial literature that can be taken as writings and works produced by the colonised people and even by the colonisers, but with different aims: the reason behind writing literature from the perspective of the colonised is to expose the plans plotted against them that emphasise their inferiority, to save their identity, and to reclaim their past, for there is no present without a past. On the other hand, the colonisers' aim behind their literature is to justify their imposition of power by proving that the "other" is inferior, uncivilised, dark, and primitive. In other words, the coloniser had to create an image to link it to the colonised to make sense of their oppression for without these images, the actions of the colonisers would look despicable.

A central aspect that underpins the discourse of postcolonial literature is the exploration of identity. The colonised populations, recognising the need to reclaim their sense of self, have sought to re-establish and redefine their cultural, social, and historical identities. By engaging with their past and interrogating the narratives imposed upon them, postcolonial authors have endeavoured to subvert and challenge the constructs propagated by the west. Through their writings, these authors have aimed to expose the fallacies, biases, and oppressive mechanisms employed to justify the subjugation of the periphery.

### **I. The Binary Division between the East and the West**

The binary division between the east and the west is a concept that has shaped the understanding of the world for centuries. It represents a stark contrast between two

distinct regions, with the west being associated with power, progress, and modernity, while the east is often portrayed as exotic, backward, and inferior. This division is deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and geopolitical factors, including the era of colonialism and imperialism. One of the frameworks through which the binary division between the east and the west is perpetuated is Orientalism<sup>2</sup> that is coined by Edward Said, a pioneering scholar in the field of postcolonialism who was able to change people's views about the west and the east with his influential works, namely *Orientalism* (1978). He argues this book that colonialism has greatly shaped the world's views of the east and that it was not only for the sake of economic and political dominance. This book is also known for the establishment of the east/ west binary, where the author exposed the western attempts to deteriorate the image of the Orient<sup>3</sup>. According to Said, the idea of the "other" is initially created to deform the reputation of the easterners by spreading false stereotypes and faking facts about them, hence, creating a gap between the east and the west and remaining in power.

Said's critique of Orientalism can be seen as a counter-discourse to metanarratives<sup>4</sup> that constructed a dominant and homogenised understanding of the Orient. He posits that the world has been divided into two categories, the west and the east, where the west is perceived as the epitome of civilisation and evolution, whereas the east is the "other"<sup>5</sup> that needs to be tailored to conform to western principles. The existence of these representations is tied to the west's position of power and control, for

---

<sup>2</sup> Western ideas about the Middle east and about east and Southeast Asia, especially ideas that are too simple or not accurate about these societies being mysterious, never changing, or not able to develop in a modern way without Western help. (Cambridge Dictionary).

<sup>3</sup> The countries of east and Southeast Asia. (Cambridge Dictionary).

<sup>4</sup> Coined by the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard: comprehensive and universal stories or accounts that try to explain the nature of reality, history, society, or human experience in a grand and overarching manner. They claim to provide a complete and all-encompassing understanding of the world, such as the holy books

<sup>5</sup> Othering has the meaning of portraying the east as different, often in a negative and inferior way.

power is what enables the west to have such a huge influence over the world by spreading their “knowledge” and discourses that would justify their practices over the weaker side of the binary. For instance, in *Minutes Upon Indian Education*<sup>6</sup> (1835), the British historian and politician Thomas B. Macaulay explained why the Indians must replace Indian education with western education:

I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value [...] I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. (91).

Macaulay has entirely neglected and undermined the value and importance of the Sanskrit and Arabic works of literature and compared them to one single shelf of western literature only. This statement is of a person who is in a position of power that had enough attention to exclude these languages from the Indian institutions which clearly shows how power can control knowledge. Furthermore, this observation prompts an examination of the role of power in other realms, such as media and art, where similar mechanisms of control and influence are at play.

### 1. **The Use of Media in favour of the Binary Division**

The use of media often preserves and reinforces binary divisions, particularly in the portrayal of various social constructs such as race and class. Media narratives frequently adhere to traditional binary frameworks, which refer to the longstanding and deeply ingrained systems of categorisation that divide concepts like identities and

---

<sup>6</sup> A document that outlines the British government's policy towards education in India during the colonial period

experiences into two distinct and opposing categories and sort them into two groups, and presenting a limited and simplified view of complex identities and experiences. Said mentions in *Orientalism*:

One aspect of the electronic, postmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed. Television, the films, and all the media's resources have forced information into more and more standardized molds. So far as the Orient is concerned, standardization and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of "the mysterious Orient." (26).

Said's analysis of the media suggests that it has played a significant role in constructing and perpetuating the Orientalist discourse. This representation of the east in media contributes to negative stereotypes and perceptions of the Arab world in general, which in turn justifies western intervention and dominance in the region. For instance, newspapers and news agencies have often reported on the Arab world in a sensationalised and simplistic manner, emphasising violence, terrorism, and extremism, while ignoring the complexity and diversity of the region. Overall, representations of the east as exotic, feminine, weak, and vulnerable reflect and define how the west views itself as rational, masculine, and powerful in order to assert its identity. This concept resonates in the critique of Western academic writings, which are often influenced by colonial perspectives and Eurocentric<sup>7</sup> biases prevalent in Western academic discourse.

## 2. The Western Academic Writings

---

<sup>7</sup> Eurocentrism refers to a worldview or perspective that places European culture, history, and values at the center, often marginalising or disregarding the contributions and perspectives of other cultures and regions.

Based on the “Livingstone Online” website, it is mentioned in the introduction of the article “18th- and 19th-Century European Expeditions” that: “As in most nineteenth-century expeditions, science and medicine played a key role in geographic exploration. In fact, many expeditions deliberately set out to acquire new scientific knowledge.” To illustrate, Warren Hastings, a British statesman and the first Governor of India, transformed the country into a study field to gather data about the region. Scientists started compiling their studies and research concerning Indian literature, history, culture, archaeology, and language under what is called “Oriental studies” until these studies became authentic and a crucial part of western academia<sup>8</sup>.

Orientalists relied heavily on these compiled studies about the east and started spreading their own imagination without even visiting the east or exploring what it really is. These studies linked colonial power with colonial knowledge and were ratified and agreed upon by the Occidental institutions, eventually gaining approval and validity as the ultimate truth about the Orient. These ratified truths were promoted by the civilising mission, or as Said phrased it, “Orientalist ideas took a number of different forms during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. First of all, in Europe, there was a vast literature about the Orient inherited from the European past," suggesting that in Europe, there was already a significant body of literature about the Orient that had been passed down from the European past. (42). European scholars and intellectuals, drawing upon this literature, constructed narratives that reinforced the idea of western superiority and the need to civilise and transform the Orient.

---

<sup>8</sup> Western academia refers to the system of higher education and academic scholarship that is predominantly based in Western countries.

### 3. The Civilising Mission

Said argues that the western colonial power claims to be the saviour of what they refer to as undeveloped nations. In order to escape this darkness and backwardness, the east has to meet European standards of living. From the surface, this mission is a doctrine adopted by several imperial powers where they believe that the world needs to be rescued, enlightened, and that they are the chosen ones to bring good to it, but from an interior look, it is merely a tool to justify the unjust and oppression they practice upon these weak nations.

Spreading lies about the east was more than enough to justify their domination over it: the burden to colonise and the obligation to civilise the rest of the world were theirs and colonialism turned into a moral responsibility held on the white races' shoulders, as it is mentioned in Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" (1899), where he explains that conquering the non-white races is an unavoidable step toward the freedom from the chains of retardation that is only restricted to the whites: "Take up the White Man's burden—/Send forth the best ye breed—/Go bind your sons to exile/To serve your captives' need;/To wait in heavy harness,/On fluttered folk and wild—/Your new-caught sullen peoples,/Half devil and half child." (lines1-8)

To express it differently, the British Empire believed that it was their responsibility to bring civilisation to the barbarians in the territories they had occupied. However, this mindset led westerners to perceive non-westerners as inferior and in need of their guidance, fostering the belief that ruling, supervising, and imposing order upon them was indispensable. Western politicians effectively propagated stereotypes and

constructed the image of the colonised as the "other," limiting the knowledge and comprehension of the east within western societies.

The civilising mission that is originated from ignorance sustained a state of unawareness among the Occident<sup>9</sup>. This state of mind and the remnants of imperialism that is evident in the literature of that time serve as reliable measures for evaluating society. To fully understand the impact of imperialism on literature, it is necessary to adopt a contrapuntal reading approach that considers imperialism and literature together.

#### **4. The Contrapuntal Reading**

In addition to *Orientalism*, Edward wrote another book entitled *Culture and Imperialism* (1933), where he digs deep into the relationship between culture and imperialism from the eighteenth until the twentieth centuries, that is, the colonisers' inevitable effect on the culture and customs of the colonised and how western literature had a major role in the continuity of the western empire. He proposed a solution to debunk these fixed narratives and reveal the truth behind linking colonialism with academic writings by using the "contrapuntal reading method<sup>10</sup>". It is a counter-discourse that is used to reply to western narrations, as well as giving the natives the chance to represent the natives without concealing realities or speaking on their behalf. This method focuses on reading the colonial texts in their historical contexts to be critiqued and questioned:

As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but contrapuntally, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history

---

<sup>9</sup> The western side of the world.

<sup>10</sup> Contrapuntal reading is an approach to literary analysis that considers the historical and social context in which a text was written, while also paying attention to the impact of imperialism, colonialism, and other forms of power relations that may have influenced the text.

that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts [...] In practical terms, "contrapuntal reading" as I have called it means reading a text with an understanding of what is involved when an author shows, for instance, that a colonial sugar plantation is seen as important to the process of maintaining a particular style of life in England. (51-66).

Said explains here that contrapuntal reading involves considering multiple perspectives on an issue, including both the perspective of imperialism and the perspective of resistance. It seeks to understand and examine the relationship between these two perspectives in order to gain a deeper understanding of the text and its context. For instance, Chinua Achebe made a contrapuntal reading on *The Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad in his "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness" essay (1975) where he exposed how he tried to picture Africans as evil, retarded, and barbaric, as well as urging to critically read the famous productions of literature to expose the hidden prejudices and discriminations, saying:

The real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world. And the question is whether a novel which celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a great work of art. My answer is: No, it cannot. (21)

Achebe believed that literature has the power to shape our understanding of the world and that it is important to examine the messages of those texts. He also criticised Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* (1899) for perpetuating harmful stereotypes about

African people. He believed that a work of art that celebrates this kind of dehumanisation cannot be considered great because it fails to recognise the humanity of all people.

Overall, Said argues that the west's sense of superiority was constructed through the portrayal of the Orient in western academia and media. This construction, which Said calls "Orientalism," serves to support western power by othering the east as inferior. Said believes that Orientalism does not only shape western perceptions of the east, but also plays a role in controlling it and has a significant impact on the historical interaction between the west and the east.

## **II. Cultural Hybridity**

Homi Kharshedji Bhabha is another leading figure in the constitution of the postcolonial field and is very well known for his theory of Cultural Hybridity<sup>11</sup> which is hard to understand without knowing other theories such as Third Space, Ambivalence, and Mimicry. The concept of Cultural Hybridity describes the state in which two cultures collide, overlap, and affect each other. (i.e., the cultures of the coloniser and the colonised). It refers to the process of combining various cultural elements to create a new cultural identity that is different from the original one. This involves blending different practices, beliefs, and values to form cultural forms that are not entirely western or non-western.

Cultural Hybridity can arise through various mechanisms, including globalisation, colonialism, and cultural exchange. This integration between cultures creates a new perception of the self and the others, which means that there is no pure or decontaminated

---

<sup>11</sup> To produce something new from two other different things, that has features of both the things. (Cambridge Dictionary)

identity even in the west due to the different waves of immigration since the beginning of the nineteenth century. To phrase it differently, colonialism and globalisation have sustained a “cultural contact” between the binary, which has generated a liminal space<sup>12</sup> that threatens the ‘colonial authority’ over the colonised.

Bhabha highlights that the liminal space facilitates the “negotiation” and “transformation” of diverse cultural viewpoints and empowers marginalised groups to challenge dominant power structures, as well as creating their unique identities. Additionally, the liminal space shakes the westerners’ claim of having a pure and uninfected identity as an excuse for colonialism and imperialism. It is often viewed as a way to challenge and disrupt dominant cultural narratives<sup>13</sup>, creating new cultural identities that are more diverse and inclusive. Bhabha argues in the book *The Location of Culture* (1994) that: “Identity is never an a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality.” (51), where he attempts to deliver the idea that identity is never complete or fully formed from the start, but rather emerges through the continuous engagement and negotiation with various cultural, social, and historical influences.

### **1. Assimilation, Third Space, Mimicry, and Ambivalence**

The concepts of Assimilation, Third Space, Mimicry, and Ambivalence are crucial for understanding the complex and dynamic processes of cultural hybridity. Assimilation, closely linked to the notion of the Third Space, occurs when individuals leave their original cultural, social, and political environment and find themselves in a position where

---

<sup>12</sup> "Liminal space" refers to a transitional state or area where someone or a group is on the verge of moving into a new phase of existence or situation.

<sup>13</sup> These are the widely accepted beliefs, values, and stories that shape how people understand and interpret the world around them.

they neither fully belong to their initial culture nor assimilate completely into the new one. During this phase, individuals navigate their cultural identities, integrating elements of the dominant culture while preserving aspects of their original culture. In the context of cultural hybridity, Homi Bhabha introduces the concept of mimicry, which involves the colonised imitating the coloniser's culture and behaviour. Mimicry entails adopting external customs and practices while maintaining a sense of difference and subversion. It reflects the complex power dynamics and ambivalence present, as the colonised both aspire to emulate the coloniser and resist their dominance.

As individuals navigate the processes of Assimilation and Mimicry, Ambivalence naturally emerges. It captures the intricate relationship between the coloniser and the colonised and characterised by a simultaneous mixture of attraction and aversion. Both sides hold contradictory beliefs towards each other, viewing the other as simultaneously superior and unjust, inferior and exotic. For the colonised, there is a recognition that western culture and lifestyle offer comfort and prosperity. However, certain factors hinder full assimilation, such as differing morals, values, physical appearances, languages, or a history of oppression by the colonisers or their ancestors.

In general, the colonised individuals recognise the appeal and prosperity offered by western culture, yet encounter barriers to full assimilation due to differing morals, values, physical appearances, languages, or a history of colonisation and oppression. These factors evoke feelings of inferiority and a sense of being constrained from fully embracing the benefits of the coloniser's culture. The intricate interplay of these concepts provides insight into the multifaceted experiences within cultural hybridity.

### **III. Cultural Identity**

Another spearhead in the field of cultural studies is Stuart Henry McPhail Hall, who discussed the issues of migration and identity in his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* (1990), which is an essay found in a collection of other essays gathered in the book of *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (1990) by Rutherford Jonathan. It mainly speaks about the displacement of Africans and provided the Representation Theory that has a major impact on forming one's identity. The concept of cultural identity is explored through the lens of media and examined from distinct perspectives.

#### **1. Media's Impact on Identity**

Media has a huge impact on influencing one's identity, either by making him or her like it or dislike it. In his Representation Theory, Stuart Hall scrutinises how media messages are deciphered by the viewers; the producers "encode" those hidden messages while the audience "decodes" them. Media does not always deliver true information about certain people, places, or events, and most of the time it employs stereotypes based on several components, namely race, ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender, and appearance.

For instance, Blacks are often portrayed as drug dealers and criminals, Africans are portrayed as barbaric and retarded, and Muslims as terrorists who have a lot of oil and fortune. These false stereotypes are controlled by certain people who are in the position of authority and who belong to a dominant and influential group within a society. Due to this group that is in charge of the media business, more false conventional images will be produced which happens because of their lack of experience with those people who are being standardised.

Moreover, Stuart Hall proposes that the media is not merely a neutral channel of information, but a complex system that transmits several messages to its audience. These messages may be accepted in their entirety, partially accepted with criticism, or completely rejected. In essence, media is a tool through which the privileged attempt to propagate hidden ideologies and interpretations to the masses, and it is fully up to the audience to determine how they receive these messages. As a result, the media plays a crucial role in shaping people's perspectives of society and the world they live in.

In Stuart Hall's essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, he delves into the complex issue of cultural identity, exploring how it is perceived, interpreted, and the emergence of an innovative form of filmmaking known as the Third Cinema<sup>14</sup>. This new type of cinema focuses on the issue of the identity of the Blacks that portrays Afro-Caribbeans as postcolonial subjects. In the postcolonial framework, Hall raises the question of how these Black post-colonial subjects identify themselves; it is very common to define identity as something that is fixed and already decided in its full and complete product as the author argues in his essay that "The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (223). He explains that there is a group that conceives identity from an essentialist perspective; something that is shared among its members with a common history, culture, language, and appearance. The people who migrated should return to their past in order to find their real "cultural identity" because they cannot reclaim their present without reclaiming their past.

---

<sup>14</sup> Third Cinema is a term used to describe a movement in film-making that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to the dominance of Hollywood and European cinema.

## 2. The Duality of Identity

Hall suggests another definition of identity. Instead of saying that the identity is fixed and stable, it is better to say that it is in an ongoing process and change where he mentioned in the essay: “Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.” (329). This means that identity is related to the current location. i.e., the spatial identity that suggests that an individual or group's sense of self is closely dependent on the physical spaces and places they inhabit as well as the cultural and social contexts of the new environment. Spatial identity refers to the way in which individuals or groups develop a sense of belonging and attachment to a particular place or space. It is formed through the interactions and relationships between people, the physical characteristics of a place, and the activities and practices that are associated with that location.

Due to their differences in almost everything, migrant individuals or groups often find themselves questioning their identity and purpose in a foreign and estranged land. Stuart Hall's work aims to acknowledge and bring visibility to those who exist outside of their homeland. There is not only one particular identity for the entire migrants but rather multiple identities coming from different locations and cultures due to the sustainable mixing and hybridisation where the European presence became impossible to disentangle from their identity, culture, and history. Identity, according to Hall, is not about the current moment but more about what to become; belonging to the future more than belonging to the present. Identity is a forward-looking concept that involves aspiring toward a particular future self, rather than being solely limited in the past or present. In other words, identity is not just about who an individual is now, but also about whom s/he aims to be as Hall mentioned in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*:

Nevertheless, this idea of otherness as an inner compulsion changes our conception of 'cultural identity'. In this perspective, cultural identity is not a fixed essence at [...] It is not once-and-for-all. It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return.” (226).

In general, Stuart Hall's work emphasises the role of media in shaping identities and questions the idea of fixed cultural identity. He argues that media often perpetuates stereotypes and that identity is a dynamic process influenced by spatial contexts. Hall also highlights the forward-looking nature of identity and the importance of critically engaging with media representations. His ideas illuminate the complexities of identity formation in diasporic communities.

#### IV. Colonialism's Impact on the Psyche

From a psychological perspective, Frantz Omar Fanon, a psychiatrist and an influential postcolonial theorist, is renowned for *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) which had a profound impact on a range of movements such as the Anti-colonial Movement<sup>15</sup>, The Liberation Movement<sup>16</sup>, and Black Power Movements<sup>17</sup>. Another book that was designated to psychology is *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) which introduces the psychological pathologies that arise as a consequence of colonialism on both the coloniser and the colonised, arguing that the colonised are infected with their “inferiority”, whereas the colonisers are infected with their superiority, as he mentioned: “the Negro enslaved

---

<sup>15</sup> a broad range of political, social, and cultural efforts aimed at resisting and overthrowing colonial rule and achieving independence for colonised nations or territories.

<sup>16</sup> a collective struggle for freedom, justice, and self-determination by marginalised groups or nations facing various forms of oppression, such as racial discrimination, social inequality, or political subjugation.

<sup>17</sup> a response to ongoing racial discrimination and systemic oppression faced by African Americans. It advocated for self-determination, racial pride, and community empowerment.

by his inferiority [and] the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation” (60).

Fanon believes that psychoanalysis<sup>18</sup> is needed in order to comprehend what the blacks went through during colonialism so that compound psychological issues can be subverted. He attempted to understand what relates the blacks with the whites and came to the deduction that both of them are locked within the ways they perceive their identity. In different terms, identities of the blacks and whites are closely related and cannot be defined without each other. In his work, it is mentioned that:

Since the white man behaves in an offensive manner toward the Negro, he recognises that in the Negro’s place he would have no mercy on his oppressors. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that he identifies himself with the Negro [...] In the society of the Antilles, where the myths are identical with those of the society of Dijon or Nice, the young Negro, identifying himself with the civilizing power, will make the nigger the scapegoat of his moral life. (136-150).

Fanon argues that the white man, in order to justify their oppression of the black man, must create a false image of him as inferior and subhuman. This image is internalised by the black man, who begins to see himself as inferior and unworthy. As a result, he often develops a deep sense of self-hatred. The white man, on the other hand, may also identify with the black man. This is because the white man, in order to maintain their sense of superiority, must see him as inferior. As a result, the white man may project their own negative feelings about themselves onto the black man.

---

<sup>18</sup> Psychoanalysis is a therapeutic approach developed by Sigmund Freud in the late 19th century that aims to help individuals understand and resolve psychological conflicts and issues.

## 1. Cultural Absorption and Identity Crisis

Furthermore, Fanon delved into the concept of Assimilation, which is the desire of the colonised to become like whites in all aspects of life and culture. In other terms, the coloniser's culture and identity are copied and absorbed by the colonised which can deeply destroy their psyche. Assimilation might lead to mimicking the colonisers as it pushes the colonised to adopt their behaviours and practices, however, they come to the realisation that despite mimicking the westerners in almost every aspect of life, they still look the same and did not change, eventually asking themselves where they belong and why they get rejected despite all the efforts made to integrate in their society, and then confronted with alienation and shocking reality.

Assimilation is the key reason that allowed racist supremacy<sup>19</sup> to continue, as it obliged the colonial and post-colonial subjects to abandon their real identities and replace them with a different one. Only through this way did the colonised feel their existence's approval, or at least this is what they thought. An example that Fanon mentioned is the Antilleans<sup>20</sup> who moved to France where they adopted the white mentality by absorbing their culture and language, and when they returned to their mother country, they were dealt with as “whites”, provoking in them a sense of superiority and arrogance: “The black man speaks with a European language. He becomes proportionately whiter in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language; or indeed, any western language, nowadays most particularly English.” (15).

---

<sup>19</sup> The belief that one racial group is superior or has inherent qualities that make it superior to other racial groups.

<sup>20</sup> The islands of the West Indies except for the Bahamas, separating the Caribbean Sea from the Atlantic Ocean and divided into the Greater Antilles to the north and the Lesser Antilles to the east. (The Free Dictionary).

Although the colonised try to do their best to prove to the white race that they are smart and clever, all of their attempts go in vain as they will always be regarded as the opposite. For instance, if a white person speaks to a black person in a simplified form of language, this is an indication that the latter is automatically inferior, as he mentioned in the section of “Negro and Language”: “Oh, I know the blacks. They must be spoken to kindly; talk to them about their country; it’s all in knowing how to talk to them.” (19).

Here, Fanon tries to say that the use of simplified language is a way to assert dominance over the colonised people and that being spoken to in a simplified form of language reinforces the idea of black people being inferior and placed in a subordinate position in the colonial order. In other words, the “other” (the black) always tries to be like the coloniser while rejecting his own culture and customs. He tries to cover his blackness, but this will only create a sense of inferiority and psychological unrest because he can never match the white race and can never fit in a place that is not designed to them.

Fanon’s book inspects how identity, mainly the identity of the blacks, is built and manufactured by delving into how colonialism played a chief role in shaping it. Fanon uses a psychoanalytical approach to decipher the feelings of reliance and insufficiency that the blacks hold toward the whites who have hidden ways to sustain their dominance over them. No matter how they imitate their counterparts in their traditions and attitudes, they will be constantly reminded of how inferior and retarded they are. Fanon's psychological studies of the colonised can also be extended to post-colonial subjects, as many of them continue to be entranced by western societies and hold onto the belief that the west is more knowledgeable, civilised, and superior to other parts of the world. Overall, Frantz Fanon argues that colonialism strengthens the low self-esteem and

inferiority of the colonised which directs them to assimilate into the culture of the westerners, eventually leading them to deny their own identity.

### **Conclusion**

The concept of dividing the world into east and west has long influenced the understanding of the world, associating power and progress with the west, while portraying the east as exotic and inferior. This division, rooted in historical, cultural, and geopolitical factors, has been perpetuated through the idea of Orientalism. Critiques challenge the dominant narrative, revealing how colonialism shaped views and created a gap between regions. Media and academic writings further reinforce these divisions, relying on stereotypes and power dynamics, while the civilising mission justifies western intervention. Cultural hybridity, resulting from cultural collisions and exchanges, challenges dominant narratives and creates diverse and inclusive identities. Stuart Hall highlights the dynamic nature of cultural identity. Additionally, Frantz Fanon's psychoanalytic perspective provides insights into the psychological impacts of colonisation on individuals and societies, emphasising the need to dismantle oppressive systems and forge new identities. Moreover, Homi Bhabha's notions of Assimilation, Ambivalence, Mimicry, and Third Space enrich the understanding of cultural hybridity and identity formation .

## **Chapter Two:**

### **Trials of Migration and Displacement in *The Inheritance of Loss***

## Introduction

The issues of migration and displacement have become increasingly relevant in contemporary literature, reflecting the growing number of people who are living and working outside their countries of origin. Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* provides a poignant example of these phenomena, offering insights into the migrants' struggles and challenges. Through the experiences of characters like the judge Jemubhai Patel, his granddaughter Sai, and his cook's son Biju, Desai explores the complexities of migration, cultural displacement, and the tensions that can arise when individuals are caught between two cultures, which profoundly influence and shape the characters' sense of self and identity.

### I. Migration Experiences in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

Within the field of postcolonial literature, writers often prioritise the representation of the experiences of those who have been uprooted and displaced from their mother land, such as Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. The novel is set in the mid-1980s in the Himalayan town of Kalimpong and revolves around the lives of the judge Jemubhai Patel, Sai Mistry, the cook, and his son Biju. The novel revolves around two parallel narratives; the first narrative follows the life of a retired judge who studied law at Cambridge University and now resides in his crumbling house in Kalimpong with his granddaughter Sai. The second narrative focuses on Biju's experiences as an undocumented migrant in New York City.

Most migrants repeatedly reveal common characteristics, such as longing for return and a sense of incomplete integration into their home country. As Biju spends time

looking for different jobs due to his sensitive situation as an illegal migrant, he misses his home and father more and finds it difficult to contact him frequently as he does not have a permanent address. Moreover, he did not have the means to help him communicate with his father, so they could not easily contact each other.

Biju had been trying to reach his father for days, but the phone lines had been unreliable. Finally, he got through, but the connection was poor. They had to shout to be heard, and the conversation was difficult as Desai clarifies: "BIJU?" By natural logic he raised his voice to cover the distance between them, sending his voice all the way to America. "Biju, Biju," the watchman's family chorused, "it's Biju," they said to one another." (230). Biju told his father that he was doing well, but the cook could tell he was lying. He asked Biju when he would be able to come home, but Biju did not know. The phone line went dead then, and Biju was left feeling empty.

In the novel, it is evident that one of the main reasons for the characters to migrate is to enhance their economic and social positions as they were both born in poor communities. The judge would not go to Europe without the help of his late wife Nimi, as the judge's family needed money to send him to England to take the Indian Civil Service examination<sup>21</sup>, and this is why they arranged for him to marry the daughter of a wealthy man, Bomanbhai Patel, where she was only 14 years old at the time, but she was considered to be very beautiful. The two were married shortly after. He went to Cambridge to get a better education, succeeded, and became a very important figure in

---

<sup>21</sup> Also known as the ICS examination, is a highly competitive and prestigious examination which is designed to select candidates for various administrative positions within the civil services of the Indian government.

the Indian legal system, but on the other hand, Biju achieves nothing and returns home empty-handed.

Both the judge and Biju experience profound loneliness due to their displacement and lack of cultural familiarity in both Britain and America. With no cultural bonds to the west and a lack of recognition for their background, they experience a loss of self-esteem, ultimately leading them to a decline in their self-respect. Their struggles for acceptance in a western-dominated society reflect the tension between western cultural norms and the diverse identities of the east.

## **II. Reading the Novel from an Orientalist Perspective: A Critical Analysis**

Orientalism revolves around the glorification of the West, where the media and colonial legacy have been ingrained in the minds of post-colonial subjects. Jemubhai Patel is a character that is infected by the narratives of the west. His childhood plays a major role in shaping his views of the west for his father instilled in him the mentality of glorifying the western life and developed in him a sense of discipline and superiority over his Indian fellows. This eventually left him detached from his Indian identity and culture at a young age. For him, England was an oasis of rationality, a place where laws were laws and people were people, where one could depend on the plumbing and the electrical wiring, where the roads were smooth and the cars were new, the airports were clean, and the runways long.

During his childhood, he spent several years in a mission school run by Scottish missionaries who focused on the English language and raising children with Christian values. In that school, there was a painting of Queen Victoria, symbolising the British

Empire's legacy in India. The more the young judge looks at it, the more respect and appreciation he develops for it, as the novel revealed in the following passage:

In the entrance to the school building was a portrait of Queen Victoria in a dress like a flouncy curtain, a fringed cape, and a peculiar hat with feathery arrows shooting out. Each morning as Jemubhai passed under, he found her froggy expression compelling and felt deeply impressed that a woman so plain could also have been so powerful. The more he pondered this oddity, the more his respect for her and the English grew. (57)

The judge's father was involved in a small enterprise that involved arranging false witnesses for court cases. He took pride in his skill of influencing people and manipulating justice, and he had high expectations for Jemubhai to enhance the family's social status. Born into a peasant caste, he aspired to become a judge in order to enhance his social mobility<sup>22</sup> and gain wealth and privilege. He pursued a law degree at Cambridge University, a prestigious institution with a global reputation.

The father's ambitious aspirations for his son, aimed to secure a high social status in Indian society, envisioning him as a district commissioner or high court judge. Consequently, Jemubhai yearned for a position of authority, imagining himself wearing a "silly white wig atop a dark face" (Desai 59), aspiring to reach the esteemed pinnacle of the ICS. In the case of the cook, he was dreaming that his son would become something great one day and was really proud of him, naively believing that New York is a city that boasts plenty of space, food, and modern amenities, unlike India where these resources

---

<sup>22</sup> Born into a peasant caste, he aspired to become a judge in order to enhance his social mobility and gain wealth and privilege. He pursued a law degree at Cambridge University, a prestigious institution with a global reputation.

are often limited as the novel explains: “The cars and buildings are nothing like here. In that country, there is enough food for everybody” (84). However, he did not know about the difficulties and the maltreatment his son received every day due to his skin, nationality, and accent as Desai portrayed: “He works for the Americans; the cook has reported the content of the letter to everyone in the market” (14). This belief was reinforced when Biju complimented America, although he was not really happy staying there, averring: “I have a new job in a bakery and the boss leaves us in complete charge” (83).

Biju was also fascinated and disillusioned by the American society and did whatever he could to migrate there and start working for the life he aspired for. As shown in the novel, he was regarded as “The luckiest boy in the whole wide world” for arriving in New York.” (187). Before displacing from the homeland, Biju was preoccupied with the idea of achieving a brighter life in America than the one he had in India. He believed that India was a country of backwardness and lack of opportunities, so he left for New York after exhausting experiences to get a visa.

Orientalism is predominant in the novel as the motivation for the characters to move to the west was due to the narratives and stereotypes spread about the west as the land of opportunities and civilisation. These narratives are often constructed by westerners themselves through their representations of the ‘Orient’ as a place of backwardness and exoticism, which reinforces the idea that the west is inherently superior to the east and perpetuates cultural imperialism. In other words, the characters’ desire to migrate is not only driven by economic or personal reasons but also by the internalised Orientalist discourse that shapes their perception of themselves and their own culture as inferior. This internalised Orientalist discourse led them to rise their expectations of the

west, yet, they had no idea about what waited for them there. Once Biju relocated to the new land, his experience of living in a new cultural environment triggered nostalgia and a longing for their homeland.

### **III. The Echoes of the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in *The Inheritance of Loss***

Amidst the struggles that face the migrants is the struggle of recalling the past. Like many characters in postcolonial novels, Biju battles with the themes of memory and nostalgia. Disenchanted with his life in a city that embodies a clash between western modernity and non-western poverty, Biju feels trapped between western materialism and ethnic self-interest. He summons his memory as a relieving aid to escape reality for a while and remember his past time in India. He reminisces about his past and longs for his homeland, evoking a deep sense of nostalgia.

As the author illustrates, Biju becomes very nostalgic when he thinks of his childhood back in his village in India: “The Jamuna River and the men traveling downstream on inflated buffalo skins bring nostalgic feelings in him. He remembers his grandmother and how she crossed on market trips into towns and back, with a sack of ice on her head.” (118). When he talks to his father on the phone, he feels a strong sense of connection to his home, almost as if he can feel it, disclosing:

The atmosphere of Kalimpong reached Biju all the way in New York; it swelled densely on the line and he could feel the pulse of the forest, smell the humid air, the green-black lushness; he could imagine all its different textures, the plumage of banana, the stark spear of the cactus, the delicate gestures of ferns; he could

hear the croak trrrr whonk, wee butt ock butt ock of frogs in the spinach, the rising note welding imperceptibly with the evening. (230).

Nostalgia and memory can be a source of comfort and a reminder of roots, but it can also prevent one from fully embracing life in the new environment. They both serve as a source of comfort and pain and help Biju to remember his roots. However, they also prevent him from fully embracing his new life in New York City. He is constantly torn between his past and his present, and he is never quite sure where to go next. He is constantly reminded of his difference from the other people in New York, and he feels like he will never be able to fully assimilate into American culture, making him reconsider his American dream as a restaurant owner, which is apparent when the cook said: "My son works in New York," the cook boasted to everyone he met. "He is the manager of a restaurant business." (84). He did know that his initial enthusiasm and aspirations for a better life in New York would be met with disillusionment and disappointment.

#### **IV. Disillusionment Beyond Expectations**

Desai effectively portrays the challenges and difficulties her characters face as they leave their homeland to establish new roots in a foreign land. The process of uprooting oneself and relocating to an unfamiliar place is often emotionally tiring. Through her writing, the author captures the complex emotions and dilemmas her characters experience as they search for a better life in a new environment.

Biju and the judge's decision to move to the west was fuelled by the hope of finding equal treatment and opportunities. However, their expectations were quickly shattered as they encountered discrimination and a lack of equitable prospects. Instead of being welcomed with open arms, they were blocked by barriers of racism that hindered

their ability to ameliorate their lives. The stark contrast between their aspirations and the reality they faced in the alien country became a source of deep disappointment and disillusionment.

### **1. The Judge's Experiences in England**

Upon realising his dream and reaching England, the mistreatment he endured only strengthened his conviction that the east, including his own Indian culture, was inferior to the west. This sense of inferiority developed into a sense of hatred towards Indians and a sense of jealousy toward the British as the author explains: "He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians, both." (119). The judge's journey to England uncovered a lot of wrong perceptions about the idealised west since the moment he landed there, which forced him to reassess his assumptions about England. The judge envisioned England as a land of grandeur and opportunity, a place where he can escape the limitations he faced in his homeland.

However, the sights that greet him upon his arrival shatter his romanticised image. Instead of the majestic architecture and opulence he expected, he finds himself surrounded by small, grey houses on streets that feel cramped and suffocating, almost as if they were trapping him in an unfulfilled dream. This stark contrast between his expectations and the reality he encounters forms the foundation of his disillusionment. The country that he had imagined was completely different in reality as illustrated in the novel:

He continued to be amazed by the sights that greeted him. The England in which he searched for a room to rent was formed of tiny gray houses in gay streets, stuck

together and down as if on a glue trap. It took him by surprise because he'd expected only grandness, hadn't realized that here, too, people could be poor and live aesthetic lives. (38).

Jemubhai's experience in Britain sheds light on the disparity between his idealised representation of the Empire and the harsh reality he encounters. Within British society, racism serves as a prominent factor that challenges Jemubhai's perception of colonial perfection. An instance of this is evident when he arrives at Cambridge and faces the general reluctance of the British to rent rooms to Indians: "He visited twenty-two homes before he arrived at the doorstep of Mrs. Rice on Thornton Road. She didn't want him either, but she needed the money and her house was so situated." (38).

This disillusionment was not solely rooted in unfulfilled expectations, but also in the racism and discrimination he faced as a person of colour, background, and language. The judge was subjected to pervasive racism by white English people, which was another disappointment to him. Each time he boards public transportation, both elderly, unattractive women resembling "collapsing pumpkins," (39), and young, beautiful girls promptly relocate and express displeasure over the strong aroma of curry emanating from him.

If sometimes he laughs, he becomes used to hiding his mouth with his hand as Desai illustrates: "He forgot how to laugh, could barely manage to lift his lips in a smile, and if he ever did, he held his hand over his mouth, because he couldn't bear anyone to see his gums, his teeth." (40). He also becomes overanxious about his brown body which he keeps washing obsessively and repeatedly with fragrant soap to remove the bad smell and covering it with socks and shoes all the time. he struggles to adapt to English cuisine, which greatly upsets his digestive system.

The judge's brown skin and cultural background make him a target for prejudice, leading to experiences of marginalisation and alienation: "For entire days nobody spoke to him at all, his throat jammed with words unuttered, his heart and mind turned into blunt aching things." (39). He becomes acutely aware of how his background is perceived by others, and the realisation that he is not seen as an equal or deserving of the same opportunities deeply affects him.

## **2. Biju's Experiences in America**

In the case of Biju, he moves further to the fringes. Biju struggled a lot as an illegal migrant as he was prohibited from access to basic services, such as healthcare, education, and social welfare, exploited and vulnerable to abuse, and lived in "the shadow class" (102). Desai portrays how Biju cannot get himself to live in the land of dreams, how this country crushed his dreams instead of building them, and his wish to get back to his hometown in Darjeeling. He has faced many disappointing moments during his stay in America, shifting from one job to another like an escapee from the migration authorities and working in terrible, filthy, and uncomfortable conditions.

Biju comes to the realisation that he has held admiration for white individuals, despite the fact that they have caused significant harm to India. On the other hand, he notices a lack of kindness and generosity from white people towards almost everyone else in America, who have never inflicted any harm on India. Biju also becomes aware that others share similar prejudices towards Indians, further highlighting the biases and stereotypes that exist, proclaiming: "This habit of hate had accompanied Biju, and he found that he possessed an awe of white people, who arguably had done India great harm,

and a lack of generosity regarding almost everyone else, who had never done a single harmful thing to India.” (Desai 77).

Racism is a recurring theme in the novel, exposing the deep-rooted prejudices and inequalities that persist within western societies. Desai highlights the harmful effects of racial discrimination, showcasing the barriers and injustices faced by individuals based on their race or ethnicity. She provides other instances of racism:

“He smells,” said the owner’s wife. “I think I’m allergic to his hair oil”. She had hoped for men from the poorer parts of Europe—Bulgarians perhaps, or Czechoslovakians. At least they might have something in common with them like religion and skin color, grandfathers who ate cured sausages and looked like them, too, but they weren’t coming in numbers great enough or they weren’t coming desperate enough, she wasn’t sure. (48).

Moreover, when the customers at the French restaurant express dissatisfaction with the odour of the food and become furious upon discovering that individuals of Indian, Algerian, and Moroccan descent are preparing their supposedly "French" cuisine as shown in the novel: “What were they thinking? Do restaurants in Paris have cellars full of Mexicans, Desis<sup>23</sup>, and Pakis?” (23).

This discriminatory reaction leads Biju to lose his job, highlighting the impact of racial biases and stereotypes in perpetuating unfair treatment and marginalisation based on one's ethnicity. Desai further provides moments of racism when Biju even got vigorously pedalling on his bicycle while being subjected to taunting and harassment

---

<sup>23</sup> It is commonly used to refer to people of South Asian origin or descent, particularly those from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

from taxi drivers who had recently arrived from Punjab: “They harassed Biju with such blows from their horns as could split the world into whey and solids.” (49).

Biju's experience of mistreatment at work is further exemplified through his interaction with his employer, Harrish Harry, who not only holds a position of authority but also lacks empathy toward Biju's well-being. This becomes evident when Biju sustains a significant knee injury, and rather than showing concern or understanding, Harrish Harry fails to demonstrate any empathy towards Biju's pain and struggles. He did not only refuse to take Biju to the hospital but also insulted him. This incident left Biju feeling extremely frustrated with Harrish's cruel behaviour, remarking: “Without us living like pigs”. He adds: “What business would you have? This is how you make your money, paying us nothing because you know we can't do anything, making us work day and night because we are illegal. Why don't you sponsor us for our green cards?” (202).

All of these conditions revealed to him the bitter reality of living in the west and were enough to break the stereotypes he had imagined about his dreamland as a land of prosperity and opportunities. He came to the realisation that the pursuit of his American dream had been misguided and unfulfilled, and he found it very difficult to survive because he could not get a good, stable job that paid well.

Jemubhai's and Biju's encounters with racism challenged their misconceptions about the fairness and inclusivity of the western world, exposing the unfair treatment they received. Both of them share a similar misguided understanding of the west, and both suffer the consequences of this illusion. The humiliation experienced by Indians becomes a poignant revelation of the true reality of the west, which aligns with Kiran Desai's intention to disillusion Indians from their flawless image of the west as a heavenly land of abundance.

### 3. Barriers of Language

Language barriers can be a major obstacle for migrants who are trying to integrate into a new society. This is evident in the character of Jemubhai, whose English is accented with "the rhythm and the form of Gujarati" and is full of mispronunciations (112). This makes it difficult for him to communicate effectively with others, which made him a target of mockery from them. When examiners asked the judge to name his favourite writer, he said that he did not have a favourite, but that he was fond of Sir Walter Scott. The examiners then asked him to recite a poem of his and he did so, but to his dismay, they began to laugh at him because of his thick accent.

Over time, the judge grew disdain toward his Indian language and embraced English: "There was a worse aspect of contamination and corruption: he heard cases in Hindi, but they were recorded in Urdu by the stenographer and translated by the judge into a second record in English, although his own command of Hindi and Urdu was tenuous." (62). The shame of speaking in a thick accent contributed to isolating himself even further, because language plays a significant role in social interaction and integration, particularly in a foreign environment. The judge's inability to express himself fluently in English prevents him from fully engaging in conversations.

Similarly with Biju, language barriers obstructed him from understanding and having effective communication with people from different backgrounds. To illustrate, his attempts to obtain a visa to go to the United States are depicted as a challenging and arduous process. When an announcement was made over the loudspeaker instructing everyone to line up at window number seven to receive a number for their visa processing, Biju, like many others in the room, could not comprehend what was being said due to

language barriers as explained in the novel: “An announcement was made from the invisible loudspeaker: "Will all visa applicants line up at window number seven to collect a number for visa processing." "What what, what did they say?" Biju, like half the room, didn't understand.” (183).

In general, Language becomes a barrier for the judge to express himself fluently and engage fully in conversations. Biju encounters language barriers during his visa application process, as he struggles to understand instructions due to his limited language proficiency. These instances highlight how language barriers can impede understanding, communication, and social integration for migrants, adding to their sense of isolation and exclusion in a new environment.

## **V. Media and Globalisation in *The Inheritance of Loss***

The novel effectively portrays the clash of cultures, feelings of isolation, and a sense of being uprooted not only in a new land but also in one's place of origin. This is a result of the impact of globalisation and encounters with different cultures, ideologies, and unfamiliar values that are gradually infiltrating traditional societies, raising significant doubts about established customs and ways of life.

In the book *Questions of Cultural Identity* (1996) by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, it is mentioned: “In relation to the processes of globalisation, which I would argue are coterminous with modernity and the processes of forced and 'free' migration which have become a global phenomenon of the so-called 'post-colonial' world.” (4). The statement attempts to explain the interconnectedness between globalisation and the historical legacies of colonialism in shaping the movement of people in the post-colonial world.

Additionally, in Bhabha's book *The Location of Culture*, he stated: "The increasing trans nationalisation of markets<sup>24</sup>, the growth of global media and communications, the mobility of populations (tourism, migration), have all worked towards the dissolution of the old rigidities in the national culture." (72). This statement explains that the world is changing in many ways, especially when it comes to different countries and their cultures. In the past, each country had its own strict rules about how things should be done. But now, things are becoming more flexible and open. Many people like to visit other countries and live there for a while, bringing their own culture and learning new things. All of these changes are making the world more connected and interesting, and cultures are becoming more mixed and diverse.

Media outlets such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and the internet, play a significant role in the process of globalisation. They serve as a powerful tool for spreading information, ideas, and cultural aspects around the globe, transcending geographical distances, and connecting people from different parts of the world. In view of that, media plays a significant role in migration as apparent in the novel, as it is set in the mid-1980s, a time when the internet and satellite television were becoming increasingly popular in India.

For instance, Biju, who works in the kitchens of restaurants, often watches satellite television to stay connected to his home in India. His use of media helps him maintain his bond with India, even though he lives in a foreign country. Moreover, the novel shows how satellite television can bring India and the west closer together. For example, the judge watches British TV shows and reads British newspapers, or when: "Biju found

---

<sup>24</sup> refers to the process by which markets become increasingly integrated across national borders.

himself smiling at the memory of the time the whole village had watched India win a test match against Australia on a television running off a car battery because the transformer in the village had burned out.” (270). This helps him to stay connected to his former life in England, and similarly to Sai who struggles to adjust her life in India with her western upbringing and finds comfort in reading English novels as well, which helps her feel connected to her home in the west.

Globalisation and media influence individuals' perceptions and attitudes, leading them to question their own sense of belonging and self-worth based on external perspectives. This manipulation occurs to serve the interests of influential nations. This refers to the viewpoints and portrayals presented by globalisation and media, which often come from dominant or influential nations. For instance, western media, along with western narratives, have succeeded to print an image in the minds of people that the west is a paradise and that it is the land where it is possible to achieve the highest standards of life.

However, westerners most of the time are not tolerant with people who come from different backgrounds and are maltreated, which is mirrored by what happened to the judge and Biju when they moved to England and America respectively. In general, globalisation is the catalyst factor for migration to the west. Characters like Biju, driven by the desire for better opportunities and a higher standard of living, are drawn to the west due to the perceived economic advantages associated with globalisation that can trigger cultural displacement.

## **VI. Cultural Displacement**

When individuals migrate to a new country or cultural environment, they often encounter unfamiliar customs, traditions, and social norms. This process of migration can lead to a disconnection from one's original culture, resulting in cultural displacement. However, while commonly associated with international migration, it is important to recognise that cultural displacement can also occur within the borders of a single country. It is the experience of being uprooted from one's cultural context and forced to live in another that happens when a person gets exposed to another culture, either by his/ her surroundings or getting exposed to it by media, which is the case of Sai, the judge's granddaughter.

The cultural displacement she experienced was a result of the conflicting influences and the gradual realisation that her upbringing in the convent had distanced her from her own cultural roots because she received a western education and was raised on western values. She kept receiving western influence when she went to live with her grandfather who already internalised the British culture and entirely forgot about his original Indian roots: "The judge's casual discrimination of others starts as soon as he is back from England. On his homeward journey, he was reading "How to Speak Hindustani, since he had been posted to a part of India where he did not speak the language." (Desai 131).

### **1. Psychological Implications of Cultural Displacement and Migration**

Migration itself represents a significant life transition with profound psychological implications. It evokes a range of emotions, including excitement, anticipation, but also stress and anxiety as individuals leave their familiar surroundings

and integrate into a new culture. This process can create a sense of disorientation and confusion, stemming from the blending of diverse cultures within themselves. The shifts in cultural norms, values, and expectations contribute to psychological distress and a pervasive feeling of alienation. By examining the characters in the novel, it becomes evident how this amalgamation of cultural influences engenders emotions of disorientation, confusion, and a deep sense of loss.

Biju's experience as an illegal migrant in the United States highlights the psychological impact of cultural displacement on one's sense of self-worth and belonging. He faces the daunting challenge of adapting to a new culture, language, and way of life while confronting systemic barriers and discrimination. Biju's psychological journey is marked by a constant negotiation between his Indian heritage and the pressures to assimilate into the dominant western culture. This internal struggle leads to feelings of marginalisation, invisibility, and a profound sense of longing for home. His psychological distress arises from the tension between his desire for upward mobility and the loss of his cultural roots. Similarly, the judge, who faces racism and discrimination during his time in England, struggles with the psychological consequences of such experiences. The derogatory comments and exclusion he encounters contribute to a sense of otherness and alienation. The judge's encounters with racism shape his perception of self and others, influencing his interactions and relationships with those around him.

Comprehensively, migration brings about significant life transitions with profound psychological implications. It evokes a range of emotions, from excitement and anticipation to stress and anxiety, as individuals navigate unfamiliar cultures and environments. This process of cultural displacement can lead to disorientation, confusion, and a sense of alienation as individuals grapple with blending diverse cultural influences

within themselves. Furthermore, the experience of racism exacerbates these psychological effects, shaping one's sense of self-worth, belonging, and interactions with others. The psychological distress caused by cultural displacement and racism highlights the immense challenges migrants face in forging their identities and finding a sense of belonging in new surroundings.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* explores the complexities of migration and displacement through the experiences of characters like Judge Jemubhai Patel, Sai, and Biju. The analysis emphasises the themes of globalisation, cultural displacement, and the power dynamics between the east and the west. It highlights the struggles faced by migrants, including humiliation, exploitation, and language barriers, while also delving into the psychological implications of cultural displacement. The novel serves as a reminder of the challenges migrants face in a new country, including racism and discrimination, and underlines the psychological distress experienced during the process of uprooting oneself and integrating into a new culture, including feelings of disorientation, alienation, and longing for home.

## **Chapter Three:**

### **Identity Construction in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss***

## **Introduction**

Kiran Desai's novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, delves into the complexities of living in a post-colonial society and explores the concepts of identity crisis and migration. Through the experiences of characters: the cook, the judge, Sai, and Biju, the novel traverses inherited circumstances, cultural expectations, and the enduring impact of historical injustices. The title of the novel carries irony as it typically connotes something cherished and passed down to future generations. However, in this case, it signifies the inheritance of something lost, wretched, and hurtful, which is the loss of identity and a sense of belonging due to colonial rule and its aftermath in Indian society. The characters find themselves caught between two worlds, grappling with the challenges of adapting to a new environment and culture while struggling to define their own identities.

Desai skilfully portrays their internal conflicts and their search for self-discovery, shedding light on the psychological and emotional toll of postcolonial existence, where fractured identities and the pursuit of belonging are central themes. The characters' experiences shed light on the far-reaching effects of power dynamics, cultural assimilation, and the quest for personal and cultural identity. This chapter aims to explore the influences of displacement, colonialism, and their lasting consequences on the characters' identity construction and self-perception in a world shaped by intricate cultural dynamics, globalisation, and shifting power structures.

### **I. Colonialism's Lingering Impact: The Influence of Western Narratives in Post-Colonial Societies**

The end of the colonial period does not imply absolute freedom for the colonised countries, as the enduring effects of colonialism continue to persist in the present day and

its effects are deeply rooted and hard to get rid of, especially in the mindset of the post-colonised people. During post-colonialism, many people go through difficulties that affect their perception of their identity, which is oriented to western values, and become very sceptical towards it, as they have come to see themselves as being inferior in comparison to westerners. The novel's characters experience these difficulties and challenges that shape their perception of self and their relationship with western values, for the westerners have the power to indoctrinate their ideologies into people, such as describing Europeans and Americans as superior to the rest of the nations, as Edward Said explained in his book *Orientalism*: "The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony." (5).

Biju and the judge's perception that the west offers greater opportunities for success and prosperity is rooted in their belief that western societies present a more favourable environment compared to the economic challenges and limited prospects they observe in India. The belief that the west is superior to the east is shown in the Judge's use of the English language to show that he is loyal to the British colonisers and to the west. This is in contrast to the cook, who uses Indian expressions. This shows the difference between the two men, even though they share the same cultural association and identity.

In other terms, the Judge's use of English can be seen as a way of asserting his power and authority. The theme of superiority and inferiority is also apparent when the cook sent his son to work in America and was very proud of this achievement, as Desai portrayed: "My son works in New York," the cook boasted to everyone he met. " 'He is the manager of a restaurant business.'" (84). The cook's bragging statement about his son working in New York as a manager in a restaurant business, which was not the case at all

in reality, reflects the power dynamics and perceptions of cultural superiority. His pride and emphasis on his son's occupation in a western setting suggest a belief in the inherent superiority of western institutions and practices. This perspective positions western societies as the epitome of success and elevates occupations tied to western influence, reinforcing a hierarchical structure where local occupations and cultural practices are deemed inferior.

Bhabha further explains in his book *The Location of Culture* that economic and political domination by western powers has a significant influence on the information systems, popular media, and specialised institutions and academies of the western world where he mentioned: "I am further convinced that such economic and political domination has a profound hegemonic influence on the information orders of the western world, its popular media, and its specialized institutions and academics." (20). Bhabha suggests that the economic and political power that is practiced by western nations creates a hegemonic force that shapes the information orders prevalent in western societies. This hegemonic influence extends to the media terrain, where the production, dissemination, and consumption of information are controlled and influenced by dominant western narratives and perspectives. Popular media, including television, film, and digital platforms, tend to reflect and promote the values, ideologies, and cultural norms of the dominant western powers, and encourage them to come and visit them.

As a result, individuals from non-western backgrounds may feel the need to conform to western ideals in order to be accepted or recognised in society, as they feel the need to conform to a western lifestyle in order to fit in and get accepted. The construction of identity becomes influenced by the prevailing western narratives, perpetuating a homogenised and often exclusionary understanding of identity. To put

differently, certain cultural norms and values associated with the west are prioritised and considered superior, while other diverse identities and experiences are marginalised or excluded

## II. The Inherited Losses

The characters of the novel share one common thing, which is the sense of loss. Sai, the judge's granddaughter, lost her parents in a car accident when she was very young, as Desai mentioned: "My parents eloped and nobody spoke to them again. They died in Russia where my father was a scientist." (147). Biju also lost his mother when he was very little, as it is clear in the novel that "She had died seventeen years ago, when Biju was five, slipping from a tree while gathering leaves to feed the goat." (14). Moreover, these main characters, along with the judge, lost their sense of belonging as they lived in mixed cultural societies and fully absorbed western values, except for Biju, who decided to stick to his identity and felt ease being an Indian. Although his father never experienced life in the west first-hand, he romanticised it and had no reason to live but to send his son to America to become a successful person and to follow the delusional American dream as the cook said: "My bones ache so badly, my joints hurt—I may as well be dead. If not for Biju." (3), which is a clear sign that the cook has trust and loyalty to the west.

Additionally, the cook's father used to serve the whites only. The cook wanted to follow his father's steps, to serve the British, not an Indian man which is clear when Desai mentioned: "The cook had been disappointed to be working for Jemubhai. A severe comedown, he thought, from his father, who had served white men only" (63). The cook wanted to belong to the British, not to this Indian retired judge. The loss that the cook experienced was his loss of dignity and worth. He believed that he would receive the same

treatment from the colonisers as his father used to be treated by the British nicely, unlike the judge who keeps humiliating and shaming him, and even hitting him when the judge lost his favourite dog Mutt after the cook asked to be beaten due to his sense of guilt and humiliation that followed him most of his life as illustrated by the cook when he said: “ ‘I’m a bad man,’ cried the cook, ‘I’m a bad man, beat me, sahib, punish me [...] ‘Yes’, wept the cook, ‘that is right. It’s your duty to discipline me. It’s as it should be’.” (319-320).

The cook’s strong desire for punishment and his belief that he is a bad man suggests a reliance on external validation for his self-worth. His perception of himself is fragile, wretched, and heavily influenced by the judge’s treatment and his internalisation of his negative judgment. In addition to the maltreatment from the judge, he was humiliated by others who were in a position of power, like the policemen when they once came to investigate the judge’s house after it was once robbed. The cook tried to be a part of the conversation between the judge and the policemen, which obviously annoys the judge when he says, “Go sit in the kitchen. Bar bar karta rehta hai.” (11).

The humiliation continued when the policemen went to investigate the cook’s hut next to the judge’s house: “The respect on the policemen’s faces collapsed instantly when they arrived at the cook’s hut buried under a ferocious tangle of nightshade. Here they felt comfortable unleashing their scorn, and they overturned his narrow bed, left his few belongings in a heap.” (13). It is worth pointing out that humiliation can trigger an identity crisis as it deeply impacts an individual's self-perception and sense of worth. Experiencing humiliation can cause profound shame and self-doubt. Moreover, the effects of humiliation can be long-lasting, straining relationships and interrupting

personal growth. Ultimately, rebuilding a positive and cohesive sense of self becomes challenging in the aftermath of humiliation.

When it comes to Biju, he inherited all of those traits that his father had: very small wages, poor life and working conditions, humiliation, and belittling looks from both American and Indian authorities upon his return to India. They not only took away all his belongings and the money he had earned in America but also abandoned him alone in the forest:

This is as far as we are going. You can walk up to Kalimpong by yourself, “they said and pointed at a path through the trees. “Shortcut.” Panic lurched in him. “How will I take my things?” “Leave them here. Safekeeping.” They laughed. “We’ll send them to you later.” “No,” said Biju, terrified by the realization that he was being robbed. “Go!” They pointed [...] Darkness fell and he sat right in the middle of the path—without his baggage, without his savings, worst of all, without his pride. Back from America with far less than he’d ever had. (316-317).

Biju's loss of belongings represents not only a material setback but also a blow to his self-worth and dignity. As for the judge, he had a hard time rejecting his Indian heritage and getting rejected by the British heritage too. He desperately wants to become a part of the colonising society but had a severe crisis in his mentality and personality due to that rejection.

### III. Negotiating Mimicry and Hybridity: Formation Identity in the Intersection of Cultures

#### 1. The judge as a Mimic Man

Mimicry can be seen as a strategy to gain acceptance or assimilate into a culture that is perceived as more powerful in an effort to assert one's own worth and claim a similar status. To put it differently, the judge was a mimic man: his adoption of British customs and mannerisms dislocated and alienated him from his Indianness. To illustrate, he embraced various aspects of British culture, such as playing chess which is a European game: "I'm playing chess, can't you see?" (89), he ate chocolate pudding, which is another symbol of British and European culture: "The judge ate the lovely brown puddle and gradually his face took on an expression of grudging pudding contentment" (3), spoke in a British accent and used British English expressions and idioms such as "bloody hell" (167), followed British social customs, such as taking tea at 4:30: "4:30: tea had to be perfect" (62). He also felt annoyed when his granddaughter's tutor, Gyan, did not use cutlery while eating and called him 'Charlie' instead of his real name as shown in the novel: "The judge looked irritably across the chops at Gyan. His presence, he felt, was an insolence, a liberty driven if not by intent, then certainly by foolishness. "What made you come out in such weather, Charlie?" (109).

Despite abandoning the most cherished values that give him recognition in the world to become like the British, he failed and came to accept the reality that achieving equality with them is unattainable. When he returned to India after finishing his studies at Cambridge University, he felt alienated from his identity as well, which eventually led him to be estranged even in his own homeland, isolated, and closed in his own world

reviving old memories. He became like an outsider even to his own family as Desai describes:

He was a shriveled figure in a white shirt and black trousers with a buckle to the side. The clothes were frayed but clean, ironed by the cook, who still ironed everything pajamas, towels, socks, underwear, and handkerchiefs. His face seemed distanced by what looked like white powder over dark skin. (33).

He continued to use western-style products, such as powder puffs and ironed clothes, even though they were not common in India. This made him seem even more out of place. He became caught between two worlds and found himself confined to a “third space”, unable to fully align himself with either side. Moreover, he was torn between the idealised persona of James Peter Paterson, a white man, and the reality of his own brown skin and the name Jemubhai Popatlal Patel. His natural environment, his family's customs, and manners, all seem foreign to him, as the author mentions in the novel: “The judge could live here, in this shell, this skull, with the solace of being a foreigner in his own country, for this time he would not learn the language.” (29). His aspiration to establish his own value and attain a comparable status ultimately proved unsuccessful.

The Judge bought a house in his motherland, far away from other Indians. He loved the place because it gave him the “solace” of being a foreigner in his own country. He was proud to have the house because of his obsession with western culture. However, the house also symbolised his place of being in-between, and it constantly reminded him of his wasted life, which was full of guilt and shame: “The judge could live here, in this shell, this skull, with the solace of being a foreigner in his own country.” (29), where he was able to practice the British side of him.

This situation resonates with the concept of ‘double consciousness’, a term coined by W.E.B Du Bois, an influential African-American sociologist, historian, civil rights activist, and writer where he explains that black people in America are constantly torn between two conflicting identities, which can lead to feelings of alienation, frustration, and a sense of not belonging in either culture. In this sense, he feels a deep sense of attachment to his Indian heritage for his sense of “double consciousness” causes him to struggle with feelings of isolation and disconnection. He feels as though he is not fully accepted by either the British or Indian communities, which leads to a sense of bitterness and anger toward the world around him.

## **2. Sai and Her Quest for Establishing Her Identity**

Sai's experience of being raised in a convent school, where the curriculum emphasises British cultural values and norms and encourages students to adopt an English-speaking, Anglicised identity, poses significant obstacles to her ability to fully embrace and adapt to her Indian identity. She completely emulated the western norms and struggled to balance her two conflicted identities as she was taught to speak English, wear western-style clothing, and learn British customs and manners, and this process ultimately led to her feeling like she did not fully belong in either the Indian or British communities.

The magazine that Sai engages with, as described on the very first page of the novel, embodies an environment of intellectualism, knowledge acquisition, and a sense of affiliation with western culture, she only knew how to serve tea in the English way: “Sai, her hands shaking, stewed tea in a pan and strained it, although she had no idea how to properly make tea this way, the Indian way. She only knew the English way” (Desai

6), and believing that all western cultural and religious aspects are better than the Indian ones: "Cake was better than laddoos, fork spoon knife better than hands, sipping the blood of Christ and consuming a wafer of his body was more civilized than garlanding a phallic symbol with marigolds. English was better than Hindi." (30).

She was confused about her true self and how to balance her western side with her cultural heritage. Her math tutor Gyan, a Nepali who later joined GNLF<sup>25</sup>, was very angry about the fact that she is an Indian who celebrates western holidays, such as Christmas. Gyan raised the issue of mimicry, the influence of westernisation, and the tension between embracing one's own traditions versus adopting foreign practices, as described along the following lines:

"I am not interested in Christmas!" he shouted. "Why do you celebrate Christmas? You're Hindus and you don't celebrate Id or Guru Nanak's birthday or even Durga Puja or Dussehra or Tibetan New Year." She considered it: Why? She always had. Not because of the convent, her hatred of it was so deep, but... "You are like slaves, that's what you are, running after the west, embarrassing yourself. It's because of people like you we never get anywhere. (163).

Gyan's frustration is understandable. For centuries, western countries have colonised and exploited non-western countries. As a result, many non-western people have internalised the idea that western culture is superior to their own. However, what Gyan could not conceptualise is that Sai was simply trying to find their place in the world.

---

<sup>25</sup> GNLF stands for the Gorkha National Liberation Front. It is a political party in India, particularly active in the Darjeeling region of West Bengal. The GNLF advocates for the rights and interests of the Gorkha ethnic community and has been involved in the movement for a separate state of Gorkhaland.

They are trying to find a way to celebrate their culture and their heritage, while also embracing the best of what western culture has to offer.

### 3. The Construction of Hybrid Identities in *The Inheritance of Loss*

With the characters being locked between two cultures, they created Cultural Hybridity which is the blending of different cultural and social identities to create something different and unique. Bhabha argues that cultural identities are not fixed or essential but are constantly negotiated and performed in this in-between space. When people start to form a hybrid identity, they begin to blur the boundaries established between the east and the west. The judge's and Sai's hybrid personalities and imitation of western values might seem in favour of colonialism, yet, this is not always the case, as Homi Bhabha discussed in his work *The Location of Culture* that the coloniser will:

lose the sense of the masterful self and its social sovereignty. It is at this moment of intellectual and psychic 'uncertainty' that representation can no longer guarantee the authority of culture; and culture can no longer guarantee to author its 'human' subjects as the signs of humanness. (137).

This quote can be applied to the characters of the judge and Sai as they are fully assimilated into the European culture, as well as Biju who experienced the harsh life of America, because he erased the barrier that destroys the stereotypes that were created to beautify the picture of the west and to deform the picture of the east. Biju leaves his home in Kalimpong, India, to pursue better opportunities in the United States. As an illegal migrant, Biju grapples with the challenges of assimilation and navigating a foreign culture. He faces exploitation and discrimination that exemplify the complexities of cultural hybridity as he attempts to build his Indian identity within the western context.

Hybrid identities are not necessarily formed throughout displacement only. They can be formed in a variety of ways, including through exposure to different cultures even in the homeland, through relationships with people from different cultures, or through personal experiences that lead to the adoption of multiple cultural aspects, such as Sai who grew up with a mix of Indian and western influences in a convent school based on British teachings.

#### **4. The Role of Nostalgia in the Search for Identity**

When Biju was undergoing new life experiences in New York, he faced a profound sense of nostalgia, longing for the familiarity of home and a true sense of belonging. The more time he spends in America, the more the feelings of loneliness and displacement grow inside of him. These nostalgic feelings made him stick to his Indian identity, unlike the judge, for he knows that there is no point in trying to be like Americans and felt a strong sense of connection and loyalty to his Indian heritage and culture that he did not want to abandon, which is apparent when Biju said: "One should not give up one's religion, the principles of one's parents and their parents before them. No, no matter what." (Desai 136).

The loss of identity and belonging is the major loss in the novel for all characters. Biju was trying very hard to preserve his Indian identity as he worked in different restaurants that served beef because he was a Hindu, and Hindus consider cows to be sacred animals. In his quest for a place to call home, Biju seeks to find a living and working environment that respects and acknowledges his cultural background as a Hindu and as an Indian.

When he finds a job at a restaurant serving steak, a food item that goes against his religious beliefs, he feels discomfort and quickly rejects it. Biju firmly believes in the importance of preserving one's religion and upholding the principles instilled by his parents and gets resentful of Indians who have set aside their culture because they live in a society that values western cultures over eastern ones, where eating beef does not really matter to them. This is apparent when Biju had a conversation with a prospective employer:

"Do you cook with beef?" he [Biju] asked a prospective employer. "We have a Philly steak sandwich." "Sorry", Biju replied. "I can't work here." "They worship the cow," he [Biju] heard the owner of the establishment tell someone in the kitchen, and he felt tribal and astonishing. (137).

Subsequently, he finds an alternative opportunity at the Gandhi Café, where he hopes to find a greater sense of harmony between his work and personal convictions, as well as a sense of familiarity and comfort in the cuisine, the music, and, above all, the people around him that remind him of his identity and background. It is the genuine appreciation and respect for his culture, something he struggles to find elsewhere in New York, that truly makes him feel at home. This strong attachment to his cultural roots, coupled with the negative experiences he endures in America, leads him to make the decision to return to India.

Upon his arrival, he attempts to convey his emotions, describing how he perceives his regained connection with his father: "the enormous anxiety of being a foreigner ebbing—that unbearable arrogance and shame of the immigrant." (300). Biju's experience in the west provided him with clarity regarding his sense of belonging and unveiled his authentic cultural identity. On the whole, the novel meticulously examines

the conflict between deeply rooted cultural traditions and the pervasive influence of outside forces, and highlights the challenges the characters face as they navigate the process of assimilation.

#### **IV. The Psychological Influence of Colonialism on Identity Construction in *The Inheritance of Loss***

The psychological impact of colonialism on individuals on the foreign soil is reflected in the judge's complex journey of self-identification and his attempts to reject his Indian heritage. The judge was trying to be “less” Indian and spent his life doing so and was compelled to demonstrate his “whiteness” to white individuals, which only adds to his internal confusion and complicates his interactions with both Indians and westerners, eventually causing distress in his sense of self. The judge was “subjectively” and “intellectually” behaving like a white man and was continuously reminded that he is not a British individual.

The events of the novel took place after several decades of Indian independence, and although the Indians got their freedom, the aftermaths of colonial rule still affect their lives, such as struggling to reconcile their Indian identity with the western influence they have been exposed to during colonial rule, racial discrimination, political unrest, and class division<sup>26</sup>. From a psychological perspective, Frantz Fanon provides an explanation of how colonial rule and racism still affect post-colonial subjects. He was particularly interested in the ways in which colonialism created a sense of inferiority and self-hatred among colonised people.

---

<sup>26</sup> The social stratification or hierarchy within a society based on economic and social status. It signifies the separation of individuals or groups into different classes, typically determined by factors such as wealth, occupation, education, and social standing.

In the case of the judge, he had a hard time rejecting his Indian heritage and getting rejected by the British heritage too. The desperate desire to become a part of the colonising society had a severe crisis in his mentality and remained a colonial subject in his mind. This happened because the colonisers succeeded in returning the occupied attached to them due to globalisation that made the exchange of goods, services, and people without restrictions easier and that created the image of the highly developed and civilised west.

This rejection made him prefer staying in his shell with his mixed identity, as he used to be all alone and unseen during his stay in England. Jemubhai became acquainted with the concepts of hatred and racism. Initially, he hated all people around him, but this sentiment extended towards himself as time passes. This prevailing feeling of animosity gradually shapes Jemubhai into a cruel and harsh man, as described in the novel: “Never again would he know love for a human being that wasn’t adulterated by another, contradictory emotion” (44).

The colonial effect on psychology hinders individuals in the hosting country from establishing a collective bond, a shared identity, and a sense of belonging among themselves. For instance, the judge was married to Nimi before going to Britain, but when he returned to India, he noticed how attached she was to her Indian heritage and despised her because she was practicing her Indianness. She was an embodiment of the Indian culture, from which the judge hated and tried to separate himself:

“You are the one who is stupid.” For the first time he hit her, although he had wanted to before and fought the urge for some time [...] He emptied his glass on her head, sent a jug of water swinging into the face he no longer found beautiful, filled her ears with leaping soda water. Then, when this wasn’t enough to assuage

his rage, he hammered down with his fist [...] He even limped a bit, his leg hurting from kicking her. (304).

Frantz Fanon in his book *Black Skin White Masks*, mentioned the idea that the black people outside their country lack a sense of community, kinship, as well as belonging to each other as mentioned in the quote above. Contrary to the belief of the judge, Fanon emphasises the significance of self-acceptance and firmly rejects the notion of seeking validation from others. He challenges the idea of being seen as an unfinished or potential being and instead embraces his complete identity as it is, without the need to conform to any universal standard or seek external validation: "I am not a potentiality of something. I am wholly what I am. I do not have to look for the universal. I will belong to myself and I will belong to my blackness." (Fanon 103).

Moreover, Fanon scrutinises how individuals of African descent from the Caribbean sometimes view themselves as superior to Africans, as they believe their closeness to French culture aligns them more closely with whiteness. This perspective echoes the judge's inclination to distance himself from his Indian roots. Fanon's discussion highlights the complex dynamics of identity formation and the impact of proximity to European culture on perceptions of superiority.: "This is because the Antilles Negro is more "civilized" than the African, that is, he is closer to the white man." (15).

This quote effectively describes the case of the judge when he went to Cambridge and decided that he would not integrate with other Indians like him, where he and his friend "watched the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace, avoided the other Indian students at Veera Swamy's" (Desai 118-119), simply because they relate to the British more than the rest of the Indians, as well as his maltreatment of his wife and cook because he regards them as inferior to his position.

Overall, the judge illustrates the psychological turmoil caused by colonialism for migrant individuals as he struggles to distance himself from his Indian heritage and experiences internal confusion as he attempts to align himself with whiteness (for instance, he bought a powder puff to make himself look whiter) reflecting ideas explored by Frantz Fanon in his work *Black Skin, White Masks*.

## V. Dynamic and Shifting Identities in *The Inheritance of Loss*

In the novel, the characters' identities are portrayed as fluid and ever-changing, and it delves into the complexities of navigating multiple cultural, social, and historical influences. Through the experiences of Sai, Biju, and the Judge, the novel explores the constant negotiation of identity and challenging fixed notions of self. Stuart Hall argues that identity is not fixed or stable, but rather is constantly shifting and changing throughout one's life. This is because identity is shaped by various circumstances that people encounter, such as their life experiences, surroundings, relationships, and social location.

As they move through life, their identities are constantly being renegotiated and reconstructed. For instance, the judge is a victim of the aftermaths of the colonial rule in terms of his identity, as he had a confused relationship with his own cultural heritage and his engagement with western values and education. The judge's journey reflects the fluid and dynamic nature of identity, influenced by colonialism, cultural hybridity, and personal experiences in the west.

As for Sai, her dynamic identity is revealed through her complex journey of self-determination, navigating between her Indian heritage and the western influences that shape her life. Her evolving perspectives and cultural conflicts contribute to the

exploration of dynamic identities in the novel. Sai's identity is not fixed as she seeks to reconcile her own values with the expectations and influences of her upbringing and the people who surround her who are familiar with western norms and education.

Likewise, Biju, as an illegal migrant, grapples with the pressures to assimilate into the American society while still maintaining his sense of identity and connection to his homeland. Biju's journey reflects the fluid nature of identity as he constantly negotiates and adapts to different cultural contexts. His experiences highlight the challenges and dilemmas faced by individuals living in the west and contribute to the broader exploration of dynamic identities in the novel. In different terms, his trials as a migrant living away from his homeland, as well as his challenges in adapting to a new culture, his quest for a sense of belonging, and his ever-changing self-reflect the complex process of identity evolution and transformation influenced by shifting environments and circumstances.

In general, identity is a very complex concept to understand. There is no single or fixed definition to it as it is in a continuous change and influenced by a variety of factors, such as personal experiences, cultural influences via media, and social location. People who are confused about their identities may feel a strong sense of belonging to their homeland, but they may also feel a sense of belonging to their new home which creates a sense of unease and confusion. This can be a difficult and challenging process, but it can also be a source of great strength and resilience, like Biju who had to go abroad to discover his real sense of self, home, and belonging.

### **Conclusion**

Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* explores the hardships of living in a postcolonial society and sheds light on the impact of colonialism on the characters' lives.

Migration, driven by economic motivations and the perception of western superiority, becomes a prevalent theme in the novel, as characters like Biju and the judge seek to enhance their lives in western countries only to face further marginalisation and loss of identity. The interaction with another country's customs and lifestyle, either by going to that country or by getting exposed to it at home through media, greatly shapes people's perspectives about their identity, especially if they have certain stereotypes about the country, which will only cause to them a cultural shock and compels them to face disillusionment and disappointment. When Biju and Jemubhai settled in Europe and America, they were expecting to improve their lives and to be treated with respect and equality; however, they face discrimination and racist practices, which caused them further psychological disturbance. Moreover, being attached to a culture and trying to assimilate into it, despite the fact that the country does not welcome people from different backgrounds only adds suffering and disappointments, which will ultimately lead him/her to lose his/her sense of belonging and force him/her be confined in an empty space where it is hard to define whom a person is, consequently, shaking the ground to establish a solid definition of the identity. Desai attempted to reflect this issue through the characters of the migrants Biju and the judge, and through Sai, who was culturally displaced in her actual home.

## **General Conclusion**

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

The novel thoroughly weaves together the concepts of colonialism, post-colonialism, Cultural Identity, Assimilation, Orientalism, discrimination, migration, psychology, and Cultural Hybridity to explore the construction of identity in a world shaped by western dominance. Through the characters' journeys, the novel invites readers to reflect on cultural influences and the complexities of belonging in the context of a colonial legacy.

Living in a foreign land as a central concept in the novel, highlights the challenges faced by individuals who search for a better life. Characters such as Biju go through the unfamiliarity of foreign cultures while longing for the familiarity of their homeland. The characters grapple with the complexities of assimilation, the longing for a sense of belonging, and the tension between their cultural heritage and the influences of western society. Biju leaves India in search of a better life in New York. However, he finds himself caught between two worlds, struggling to cope with the foreign culture and yearning for the familiarity of his homeland. His experiences mirror the challenges faced by migrants and the deep-rooted longing for a sense of belonging.

The reason that prompted him to migrate abroad was his deep fascination with the development witnessed by the west in all fields. However, upon reaching his destination, he encounters disillusionment and disappointment, realising that his expectations of a prosperous life in the west were misplaced. Biju's dreams of a brighter life in America were shattered as he faced humiliation, exploitation, and the unfulfilled promises of the American dream. Similarly, the judge experiences a profound sense of disillusionment, loneliness, and cultural unfamiliarity both in Britain and India, especially since he became a mimic man. This led him to a decline in his self-esteem and a loss of self-respect. Influenced by his upbringing and education, he internalises the mentality of glorifying

western life. However, the maltreatment he received in the land he perceived as a paradise reinforced his belief in the inferiority of the east and his Indian heritage.

Although not all people were displaced physically, they were displaced emotionally and psychologically like Sai because she was torn between her Indian heritage and the impact of western culture and struggled to provide a solid ground for her identity. Her English education in a British-style boarding school reflects the imposition of western values on the east. These experiences contribute to a sense of displacement and identity crisis for her, highlighting the lasting legacy of colonialism and the ways in which the west has historically viewed and represented the east as inferior. The psychological turmoil caused by colonialism and migration becomes evident as the characters struggle to reconcile their multiple identities. They are haunted by a deep yearning for a sense of belonging while simultaneously facing the pressures of assimilation and the constant negotiation between conflicting expectations. Amidst all existing struggles, cultural hybridity emerges as a result of the collision and mutual influence of two cultures. The characters experience the blending and intermingling of elements from their Indian heritage and western influences. This dynamic fusion leads to the emergence of new identities, reflecting the complexity and richness of our globalised society.

Overall, *The Inheritance of Loss* revolves around the idea of the centre and the periphery, which are England, America, and India respectively, where the centre represents wealth, technological advancements, and civilisation, whereas the periphery, or the margin, represents poverty, conventional technology, and backwardness. When the post-colonial subjects, who are the marginalised subjects, decide to go to the centre, they collide with cultural and psychological displacements, which can be a traumatic experience that leads to the loss of one's identity, in addition to racism and maltreatment

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

due to the different and inferior background, eventually creating a hybrid human being with a fragmented and distorted identity who tries to become a westerner, but as a deteriorated version, such as the judge when he decided to go to England to continue his studies, or Biju, who aspired to become something great in America, and even Sai, who was trapped between her western upbringing and her Indian background.

## **Bibliography**

## Primary Resources

Desai, Kiran. *The Inheritance of Loss*. New York: Grove Press, 2006. Print.

## Secondary Resources

A. Subbulukshim. "Identity Crisis in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*." *Journal of English Language Teaching and Literary Studies*. 1 Jan- June 2016. Print.

Abu-Agag, Naglaa. "HOMI BHABHA'S THIRD SPACE AND NEOCOLONIALISM" *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*. 9.3 (2021): 25-43. Print.

Abu-Agag, Naglaa. "الفضاء الثالث والإرث الاستعماري." *ahewar.org*. 10 March 2021. Web. 13 Feb 2023.

Al-Sabeel. "تاريخ تون | الاستشراق." *Youtube.com*. Google Inc., 20 Jan 2021. video. 13 Feb 2023.

Amran, Yassin. "أسئلة الهوية ما بعد الاستعمارية." *Omran.org*. 03 Sep 2018. Web. 23 March 2023.

Asghar, Muhammad Asif. "A DIASPORA STUDY OF KIRAN DESAI'S INHERITANCE OF LOSS." *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*. May 2022. Print.

Bahadur Chhetri, Negendra. "Diaspora and Cultural Identity: A Conceptual Review." *Journal of Political Science*. 10 Dec 2020. Print.

Bayer VM, Lakeisha. "Binary Opposition in Literature: Definition & Examples" *bophin-com.ngontinh24.com*. Lakeisha Bayer VM. Web. 14 Feb 2023.

Betta, Besma. Zidane, Rahmouna. "Lingering Shadows of Identity Displacement in the Postcolonial Novel in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*." *Rufuf Journal-Laboratory of Algerian Manuscripts*. 01 Jan 2022. Print.

Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge. USA and Canada, 1994. Print.

Bhandari, Nagendra. "Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space Theory and Cultural Identity Today: A Critical Review" *Nepal Journals Online*. 5 (2022): 171-181. Print.

Bonsu, Osei. "Osei Bonsu on Stuart Hall." *frieze.com*. 16 Jan 2019. Web. 20 Feb 2023.

D.R. Marahana. "KIRAN DESAI'S INHERITANCE OF LOSS: A STUDY ON GLOBALIZATION MARGINALIZATION, IMMIGRATION AND POSTCOLONIALISM." *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*. Aug 2021. Print.

Demerdash, Nancy. "Orientalism." *Khan Academy.org*. Web. 13 Feb 2023

Raja, Masood. "What is Ambivalence in Postcolonialism?" *Youtube.com*. Google Inc., 11 Nov 2019. Video. 14 Feb 2023.

Fanon, Frantz Omar. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Pluto Press. France, 1952. Print.

Golla, Kiran Kumar. "FACING POSTCOLONIAL DILEMMAS: A STUDY OF KIRAN DESAI'S 'THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS.'" *International Research Journal of Management Sociology & Humanity*. 2016. Print.

Jannatulfarhana. "LIVING BETWEEN BEING 'COLONIZED' AND 'POSTCOLONIZED': A POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS." *International Journal of English*. 23 Oct 2019. Print.

Kaleidoscope eyes. "An Introduction to Frantz Fanon's Black Skin White Masks A Macat Sociology Analysis." *Youtube.com*. Google Inc., 9 Aug 2016. Video. 26 Feb 2023.

Kondali, Ksenija. "MIGRATION, GLOBALIZATION, AND DIVIDED IDENTITY IN KIRAN DESAI'S THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS." 2 Feb 2018. Print.

Lawrence, Christopher. *18th- and 19th-Century European Expeditions*. University of Maryland Libraries, 2015. Web.

Lone, Sissel Marie. "Race, Gender and Class in The Inheritance of Loss and

Mambrol, Nasrullah. "Literary Theory and Criticism." *literariness.org*. 10 Apr 2016. Web. 13 Feb 2023.

Milisha, Loorthu Sintha. G. Brishya. M.Vinith. "Displacement in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss." *International Journal for Creative Research Thoughts*. 12 Dec 2021. Print.

Mohrem, Boubaker. "Examining the Concept of the 'Other' According to Edward W. Said." *International Journal Online of Humanities*. 6.2 (2020): 1-13. Print.

Panavelil, Abraham. "Postcolonial Dilemmas in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss." *International Journal Online of Humanities*. 5 Oct 2017. Print.

Peterson, Charles. "Frantz Fanon West Indian psychoanalyst and philosopher."

Britannica, 24 Mar 2023. Web. 06 Apr 2023.

Rutherford, Jonathan. Identity: Community, Culture, Difference. Lawrence &

Wishart, London, 1990. Print.

Said, Edward Wadie. Culture and Imperialism. New York. Pantheon Books, 1993.

Print.

Said, Edward Wadie. Orientalism. New York. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1978.

Print.

Sharma, Shashi. Sharma, Monika. "Marginal and Cultural Clashes in Kiran Desai's

Novel The Inheritance of Loss." jalhss.org. Research Gate, June 2019. Web. 25

May 2023.

Sohail, Ahmad Said. "Appropriation and Westernization: A Postcolonial Study of the

Inheritance of Loss." Pssr.org.pk. Pakistan Social Sciences Review, Oct-Dec

2021. Web. 25 May 2023.

University Quick Course. "Edward Said and Orientalism: A Simple Explanation."

Youtube.com. Google Inc., 26 Apr 2020. video. 13 Feb 2023.

Wani, Intiyaz Ahmad. Pandey, Sanjay Prasad. "The Crisis of Identity in the Era of

Globalisation: a Study of Kiran Desai's the Inheritance of Loss." International

Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering. Apr 2019. Print.

## Résumé

La migration a un profond impact sur la construction de l'identité, perturbant souvent les cultures traditionnelles et les identités des migrants. Kiran Desai, une auteure renommée qui s'appuie sur ses propres expériences en tant que migrante, explore la migration et l'identité dans son roman populaire *The Inheritance of Loss* (2016). Le roman examine de manière approfondie les défis auxquels sont confrontés les migrants après le colonialisme, ainsi que les effets transformateurs de l'exposition à de nouvelles cultures sur leur identité. L'étude se penche sur les conséquences de la migration, notamment les crises d'identité vécues par les protagonistes de Desai, en examinant les épreuves qu'ils endurent, telles que le racisme, la marginalisation, les tourments psychologiques et les traumatismes, tout en naviguant entre leur identité d'origine et les nouveaux environnements culturels. La recherche utilise des approches culturelles, historiques et psychanalytiques pour éclairer les impacts psychologiques du colonialisme, en employant des méthodes descriptives et appliquées pour décrire les luttes auxquelles font face les migrants en diaspora. Finalement, les résultats révèlent que l'exposition à un nouvel environnement peut remodeler l'identité des migrants lorsqu'ils adoptent les pratiques et les valeurs de la culture d'accueil, sous l'influence des pressions pour s'assimiler en raison du racisme, intensifiant ainsi leur crise d'identité et leur processus de reconstruction.

للهجرة تأثير عميق على بناء الهوية، حيث غالبًا ما يتعرض المهاجرون لتعكير ثقافتهم التقليدية وهوياتهم. كيران ديساي هي واحدة من أشهر الكتاب الذين تناولوا قضايا الهجرة والهوية استنادًا إلى تجاربها الشخصية كمهاجرة في حد ذاتها. تقدم روايتها "ميراث الخسارة" (2016) استكشافًا شاملاً للتحديات والمحن التي يواجهها المهاجرون في أعقاب الاستعمار، ويبرز أيضًا التحديات التي يواجهونها في التعرض لثقافات جديدة تلعب دورًا في إعادة تشكيل هوياتهم. بناءً على ذلك، تطرح الأطروحة سؤالاً رئيسيًا يستكشف تأثيرات الهجرة التي تؤدي بشخصياتها إلى تجربة أزمات هوية. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى توفير وصف وتحليل للمحن التي مروا بها أثناء محاولتهم التعرف على هويتهم الحقيقية، مثل التمييز العنصري والتهميش والصراعات النفسية والصدمات، حيث يكافحون للتوفيق بين هويتهم الأصلية والبيئات الثقافية الجديدة التي تعرضوا لها. استنادًا إلى هذا التوضيح، تستخدم هذه الدراسة النهج الثقافي والتاريخي والنفسي التحليلي لتوفير تفسير واضح للتأثيرات النفسية للاستعمار، بالإضافة إلى الأساليب التطبيقية والوصفية التي تساعد في تطبيق نظريات معينة لوصف التحديات التي يواجهها المهاجرون في الشتات. بناءً على هذا التفسير، أظهرت النتائج النهائية أن التعرض لبيئة جديدة يمكن أن يغير هوية المهاجرين حيث يتبنون ممارسات وقيم الثقافة المضيفة، مما يؤدي إلى تحول في الهوية وتوافق أكبر مع معايير الثقافة المضيفة. علاوة على ذلك، قد يشعر المهاجرون بضغط للاستيعاب في الثقافة الجديدة كوسيلة للتعامل مع التمييز العنصري، مما يؤثر بشكل إضافي على أزمة الهوية وعملية إعادة تشكيلها.