



## Women in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain*: A Study

Dr. Dewanand Tiwari  
Assistant Professor,  
Department of English,  
Nandini Nagar P.G.College,  
Gonda, Uttar Pradesh

### Abstract

Anita Desai and Kiran Desai both have attracted extensive attention in India and abroad as a writer of English fiction. As a novelist of considerable merit, Anita Desai has enriched the tradition of Indian writing in English. She deals with the psychological problems confronting Indian women; particularly after marriage she has the capacity to convey the inner feelings of woman in her works. As the daughter of a great literacy figure, Kiran Desai is influenced by her mother Anita Desai, but she has also emerged as an artist of unique style. Nationalism, multiculturalism, globalization and despair are the theme of her writing. This research illustrates abnormal behavior of their women. This study has a moderate endeavour to flow Desai's female characters' quest for identity shaking the traditional shackles with which women are subjected. In their women's life, there is aloofness, isolation, loneliness and annui. These writers have shown different natures of women and gave voice for emancipation of women.

**Keywords:** Kiran Desai, Anita Desai, Women characters, Alienation, Identity Crisis, Socio- Cultural conditions, Globalization, Multiculturalism.

### Introduction

The purpose of the research is to examine women characters of Kiran Desai and Anita Desai with reference to their theme of alienation, quest for identity and self respect. It is a style of women characterization. This paper attempts to bring out streaks of commonness and similarity in their handling of themes of alienation and dilemma in human existence. Kiran Desai and Anita Desai's women undergo psychological turmoil. Their women are tormented in psychological insight. Thus, this paper represents the disinherited life of Kiran Desai and Anita Desai's portrayal of women. Anita Desai's '*Fire on the Mountain*' and Kiran Desai's '*The Inheritance of Loss*', both the novels portrays the realm of serious writing in the Indian and global

scene. While *Fire on the Mountain* portrays an old woman and her great granddaughter, *The Inheritance of Loss* tells the tale of a retired judge and his granddaughter

### **Women in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*:-**

*The Inheritance of Loss* is one of the best novel in English writing. Here, in this novel Kiran Desai portrays many female characters of successive generations of women. Sai's grandmother Nimi belongs to the first generations she shown as subjected by the patriarchal setup. She denotes the rustic and illiterate class. The second generation include Loli, Nona, Mrs.Sen and Sai's mother denote educated and urban ladies. They exhibits life of liberation and meaning. Whereas Sai is the third generation of women in the novel.

Kiran Desai very skillfully described how Jemubhai who also oppressed and suffers in England, marries Nimi only for financial support to go aboard. So their marriage was negotiated to incur a sumptuous dowry:

"The dowry include cash, gold, emeralds from Venezuela, rubies from Burma, uncut Kundan diamond, a watch on a watch chain, Lengths of woolen cloths for her new husband to make in to suits in which to travel to England, and in a crisp envelop, a ticket for passage on strathnaver from Bombay to Liverpool."(91)

He does not love Nimi as she is unable to learn English and he considers English speaking persons are epitome of the sophisticated class. Nimi is victim of patriarchal system. She has lost herself even her previous name Bela by her husband's family. She is not welcomed in her law's house and Jemubhai leaves her when she was not acquainted with them properly. When Jemubhai returns home after many years and he has imbibed western hypocrisy and the notion of privacy. When he sees the silly behavior of his wife he could not control himself and burst on her caring little about her feeling. His bows become intolerable to her but she doesn't revolt till her last patient. In the life of Nimi deprivation, injustice, oppression, alienation and isolation are well discernible. Being a woman she suffers much but she never opens her mouth against her husband. She sent to Gujarat and there she takes the shelter in her uncle's house but even there she is not permitted to stay more. Her uncle tells her:

"You are your husband's responsibility. Go back. Your father gave a dowry when you married.... you got your share and it is not for daughter's to come claiming anything thereafter. If you have made your husband angry, go ask for forgiveness."(306)

Kiran Desai's second important character is Sai. She is an orphan. Sai is hybrid child of her parents. Her mother is Gujarati Judge's daughter while her father is Russian. They died in one accident. She is educated, bold, frank and independent character. Her character inspires weak child to face all challenges with verve and guts. The demise of her parents become the root cause of her removal from the convent school. That's why she compel to live with her grandfather Jemubhai. There she has made her own world where she finds herself alone.

Sai's life sees some changes coming in the contact of her lady tutor Noni, who is also faced many problems due to having no strong financial support. Noni sees herself in Sai. She manages a Nepali Gyan as a Maths tutor to Sai. Sai falls in his love which could not meet it destination. In the company of her Maths tutor Gyan, who is educated but could not get job, she seeks her success in the love. But she gets him odd many times and on many places. He finds her fascinating in the beginning of their love affairs gradually

could not see his match in her. Their happy love story suffers a blow with the Nepal uprising - the result of a demand for a separate state for the Gorkhas by GNLFF. Their demand was "Gorkha land for Gorkha". He fights for him joining GNLFF. In case of Sai he feels insecure seeing her frank way of expression and her way of life whereas Sai's behavior is contradictory. Her love story ends with the environment of alienation and isolation.

### **Women in Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain*:-**

The novel *Fire on the Mountain* is one of the best novel of Anita Desai. Her novel *Fire on the Mountain* got full attention when it distributed in 1977 and owned the Sahitya Academic award in 1978. As the women novelist she has projected female characters that they faced in their life. Nanda kaul is the protagonist of the novel. The tale of the novel is separated into three sections. Part I "Nanda Kaul at Carignano" manages her separated life in a rambling house called Carignano. Part II is named "Raka comes to Carignano." Raka is Nanda's extraordinary granddaughter and this part portrays the underlying antagonism and the ensuing affinity that creates between the two. Part III titled "Ila Das leaves Carignano" shows Nanda Kaul's gathering with her beloved companion Ila Das. This part manages the terrible assault and demise of Ila Das.

Nanda Kaul is one of those heroin who have suffered a life time of unhappiness caused by a loveless marriage. Nanda Kaul's husband carried a life-long affair with Miss David, the mathematics teacher, whom he could not marry because of social compunctions. Nanda was merely used as a necessary adjunct to his status. While the external forms of living filled her days with constant activity, her inner voice spoke a different language of tentative aspirations to curtail her isolation and alienation. Therefore after being left alone, to recover from this aching alienation, she gives vent to a "celebratory freedom of self-expression." All she now wants is to be left alone, to hear the sound of the cicadas and the pines, to merge with the pines and be mistaken for a tree, "to be a tree, no more and no less." Meena Beliappa remarks, Anita Desai, "seeks to relate the subjective world of the individual to the spirit of the place" (26). Like all the male centric social orders the world over, Indian culture has likewise built up an entire arrangement of female qualities like obedience, submissiveness, modesty, humility, devotion etc. Nanda has consistently fitted into this form of an ideal woman. Rather than valuing her, her husband has gone ahead, has had a deep rooted illicit relationship with Miss David, a Christian woman.

Raka, is another character shows up in Carignano in the second part of novel, also the product of a loveless marriage. She is week looking secretive great granddaughter of Nanda kaul. First and foremost, both maintain a strategic distance from one another. Raka doesn't talk a lot and is drenched in her own reality. Her strange conduct might be credited to the way that she comes from a wrecked family. She has an alcoholic father and a steadily weak mother. Raka's mother, Tara, doesn't show up any place in the novel, however we are told about her by her mother Asha. Her mother believes her own girl to be answerable for the break in her marriage. Asha writes to her mother, "... he's not actually as terrible as Tara would make you accept... despite the fact that the facts confirm that he does drink." (Desai 15) Contrary to what she had feared, Nanda's reality isn't at all upset by the stay of Raka. Shockingly, this indifference on the part of Raka disturbs Nanda and she tries to attract Raka by telling her fascinating stories of her own childhood.

In the part third, Ila Das leave Carignano Anita Desai projected Ila Das another female character. She is old companion of Nanda Kaul. She had encountered better days when her father was alive. After the death of her father the family fortune was shared among her brother. Ila and mother didn't get anything. They even took “the last of the jewellery, and soon had them driven out into the rented rooms and boarding houses, finally to whatever roof charity would hold them.” (Desai 124) Ila has never been wealthy. Nonetheless, the difficulties in her life have not affected her ability to stand up in the face of adversity or shake her confidence in herself. The tragedy of Ila Das. The tragedy of Nanda Kaul’s childhood friend, Ila Das suggestively paints the picture of the predicament and pathetic state of women in our society. Ila Das and Nanda Kaul represent involvement in and detachment from the emptiness and meaninglessness of both the approaches to life. Anita Desai seems to convey that if we want to make our existence meaningful, we must try to maintain a discreet balance between reality as it exists and the illusions that surround it. Therefore pursuing a streak of alienation, there is a positive and affirmative echo that emerges from a close analysis of *Fire on the Mountain*.

## Conclusion

The research concludes that the both novels, *Fire on the Mountain* and *The Inheritance of loss*, have the idiom of the pain and anxiety of displacement, nostalgia, a search for an idealized home and the struggle of the individual to establish interpersonal relationships with other individuals and humanity. The sense of place and atmosphere is very strongly portrayed in both the novels. It is best evoked through the pictorial details of natural surroundings, which appear as backgrounds to the rituals and assumptions of daily life. In *Fire on the Mountain* too, at the height of emotions, Desai makes nature speak for her characters. The activities in nature seem to be defining and underlining the underlying tension in the situation. The association of Raka with mosquito and moth brings about its interesting psychological association in narration. *The Inheritance of Loss* begins with an enchanting picture of the “far peak” of Kanchenjunga. “All day, the colors had been those of dusk, mist moving like a water creature across the great flanks of mountains...a plume of snow blown high by the storms at its summit”. This paper also attempts to bring out streaks of commonness and similarity in their handling of themes of alienation and dilemma in human existence.

## References:

- Desai, Anita. *Fire on the Mountain*. New Delhi: Allied, 1977.
- Desai, Kiran . *The Inheritance of Loss* . New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2006.
- B. P. Giri. Review. *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Desai. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006.
- Bande, Usha. *The Novels of Anita Desai: A Study in Character and Conflict*. Bande Usha. New Delhi: Prestige Book, 1988. Print
- The Novels of Anita Desai: A Study in Character and Conflict*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1988. Print
- Dubbe, P. D. (2000). “Feminine Consciousness in Anita Desai’s *Fire on the Mountain* in *Critical Essays on Anita Desai’s Fiction*,” ed. Jaydipsinh Dodiya. Delhi: IVY Publishing House, pp. 117-122.
- Jain, Jasbir (1987). *S tairs to the Attic: The Novels of Anita Desai*. Jaipur: Printwell Publishers.