



The Dynamics of Resistance: Redefining Identity in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

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Article History:

Submitted 22 December 2024

Reviewed 26 February 2025

Revised 28 February 2025

Accepted 04 March 2025

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Article DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.3126/ajhss.v2i1.77170>

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ABSTRACT

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* intricately explores the complexities of cultural identity both as a tool of domination and a form of resistance within the context of postcolonial India and the global diaspora. The novel delves into the lives of characters grappling with the legacies of colonialism, globalization, and displacement, revealing how the power dynamics and historical forces shape cultural identity. Through the experiences of characters like Sai, Biju, and the judge, Desai illustrates how dominant cultures impose hierarchies and erasure while marginalized individuals and communities reclaim and redefine their identities as acts of resistance. The novel critiques the ways in which cultural identity is commodified and manipulated in a globalized world while also celebrating its potential to foster resilience and solidarity. Desai's novel underscores the dual nature of cultural identity as a site of struggle and empowerment, reflecting the broader tensions of belonging and alienation in a rapidly changing world. Ethnic identity matters a lot when a particular group of people is forced to live under different forms of domination, such as demographic, economic, cultural, and political. The main argument of this article is that Desai's work

offers a nuanced critique of the legacies of colonial rule and the reminiscence in the form of cultural domination over the people who do not belong to the same culture and language-speaking group. The main argument of this paper is that the minority or dominated group has to develop enough power to defy undue subjugation exercised by the majority or dominant group.

KEYWORDS: Belonging, colonialism, culture, ethnicity, identity

INTRODUCTION

The Nepali-speaking populace residing in different parts of India is dominated by linguistic and cultural differences because they have distinct cultural paradigms, customs, language, religious practices, etc. They are scattered in different parts of India, and the northeast is more densely populated. Even though their population is higher than others as a single ethnic group, they are discriminated against in all walks of life. Different language-speaking and cultural groups inhabit India, and it is divided into several states on this basis where they can enjoy their political and cultural rights. Still, some of the cultural groups are more victimized than others, even if they have a comfortable majority in the area. This is true of the Nepali ethnic group residing in northeast India, a comfortable majority living there for several centuries but very badly discriminated against just because of their different identity as Nepali people.

The Nepali diaspora in North-East India has not been provided with political rights, authority, or cultural recognition. A common sentiment has developed among them: "We are constitutionally tortured. Return our land from Bengal" (Desai, 2006, p. 139). They fought a political war, demanding free Gorkha land so that they could enjoy liberty and especially release from the unjust domination and discrimination with the preservation of their identity. In this case, Desai (2006) says, "It was the Indian-Nepalis time, fed up with being treated like the minority in a place where they were the majority. They wanted their own country, or at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs" (p. 10). The experience of the Nepali ethnic group in north-east India, as presented by Kiran Desai, is really frustrating because they are addressed as *daju* (porter) or *bahadur* (watchman) for males and *kanchhi* (sex worker) for the females. Usually, it is thought that the majority dominates the minority, but the case is the opposite in northeast India. This paper has made a study to find the reasons why the majority is dominated by the minority.

The non-Nepali Indians presented in the novel are obsessed with the Western lifestyle and mannerisms, disrespecting their cultural values. They suppose the way they have copied from the West is the best. They follow a hybrid culture; they belong nowhere, probably so they cannot endorse the sentiment of the cultural value of the Nepali people there. They are proud of following the English way of life despite the fact that what they follow is not the original English lifestyle. They try to copy the English style of living, but in fact, they do play the role of a Buffon in it. About the dominance of such characters in the novel, Wilhelmus (2006) remarks:

All this is the substrate of Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* which documents the collapse of one kind of civility based nostalgically on English life, and the emergence of another rash, uncivil, chaotic, and violent at large in India today. In the wake of 9/11, it is an attempt to grapple with the human dimension of our current dilemmas by doing what novels have always done best, delineate the lives of a small caste of characters in reaction to the historic forces around them. (p. 345)

This exemplifies that the Indian people living in the part are blind in following the Western culture and way of life; they are doing a mimicry of culture and take false pride that they are the civilized people. For them, imitating the Westerners is to be superior,

living under cultural hegemony even after the political independence from the British Empire. One of the famous critics, Sen (2006) in *Women's Review of Books*, maintains,

The two elderly women who take up Sai – Lola, a widow and her sister Noni, who tutors Sai – live such a life. Their little rose-covered cottage is called Mon Ami, and its extensive land house perhaps the country is the first broccoli path. At night, they listen to the BBC on the radio, drinking smuggled cherry brandy. They are conscious of their class; their superiority to Mrs. Sen their Anglophonic neighbor, who is not quite as gentle as they are; their fellowship with Father Booty of the Swiss dairy, which makes real cheese, not the processed version that most Indians eat, and their relationship to Uncle Potty, a wealthy old Indian who is living off his inheritance. (p. 27)

It reflects the hypocrisy of the character's practice while trying to make a mimicry of the Western lifestyle. Bhat (2018), in relation to the characters used in the novel, remarks, "Though modern people show flexibility enough to assimilate and adjust themselves with others, yet there are innate and immediate regional traits which distinguish them, and make one race of mass distinct from the other" (pp. 69-70). However, this is not true in the case of the misbehavior and distrust shown towards the Nepali nationalities in the novel.

This paper discusses the reasons why the so-called educated and highbrow people in Northeast India practice discrimination against the Nepali population there, even though the Nepalis are in the majority as such. The article argues that the Indians do practice discrimination just because they have not overcome the hangover of colonial dominance. They believe that following the West is being modernized and civilized, which has caused them to look down on the Nepali people who do not follow Western culture and have maintained their original lifestyle. Maintaining and continuing their Nepaliness has been the major ground on which they are discriminated. However, the same backwardness and detachment from the Western lifestyle have been the site of resistance and a common identity. The paper has been organized into different sections, that introduce the topic, discuss the theory of ethnicity created on different grounds, and discuss the instances in the novel, how the ethnicity of Nepali people has been developed as the identity marker and a means of resistance.

ETHNICITY AND THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY

Cultural identity is the sense of belonging to a group, shaped by shared traditions, language, beliefs, and values. It influences how individuals perceive themselves and interact with the world, blending heritage with personal experience. In a globalized society, cultural identity can be both a source of pride and a dynamic, evolving concept. It is not something that one can or cannot have. It is something one does (Jenkins, 2008, p. 5). Identity. Therefore, is a process of 'being' or 'becoming.' As Jenkins (2008) says, how we know ourselves is basically the same as how we know others, depending upon observation, retrospection, and projection (p. 69). The process of selfhood operates within and between individuals and is realized initially in relation to others; this process continues throughout life. According to Elliot, the fabrication of selfhood arises at the level of human interaction and interpersonal relationships (2008, p. 28-29). The idea of the 'self' arises from the symbolic interaction in society. 'I' is the

unsocialized self, an assortment of personal desires, needs, and dispositions, whereas 'me' is the socialized self, as Elliot says, made up of the internalized attitudes of others as experienced in life (Jenkins, 2008, p. 33). 'I' reacts to the 'me' in a social context and develops the sense of self through active, creative engagement with others and the wider world. The theory of the self and identity, so to speak, is the concept of 'reflexivity' and according to Giddens (1993), the reflexivity of modern social life consists of the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices which keep on altering the person's character (p. 38) because a community shapes an individual's behaviors.

Primary identifications are selfhood, family, and kinship because, unlike friends, one cannot choose one's family. The subsequent possible primary identification is ethnicity. Secondary identification could be at different levels, such as a peer group in the class, a team or organization member, political identity, nationality, gender, sexuality, class, caste, cultural beliefs and practices, and so on. The idea of the self is not only psychological but also social and political. As Elliot (2007) asserts, individual subjectivity sustains and reproduces identity (p. 50), either personal or collective.

Identity thus denotes how individuals and collectivities (groups) are distinguished in their relations with other individuals and groups (Jenkins, 2008, p. 18). In other words, identity is a process and cognition of who one is, whom one belongs to, and how one is similar to and different from others. For Jenkins (2008), identity is at its best confined to a supporting role in relationships based on similarity alone or identification with someone or something (p. 19). For Hall (1973), identity is the process of finding similarities and the product of making a 'difference' and 'exclusion' (p. 4). Knowing who I am is a matter of distinguishing and distancing myself from you and you from that person over there (Jenkins, 2008, p. 20). The recognition of 'us' depends upon our not being 'them'. 'Differentiation from' permits 'identification with' to occur; therefore, it is prior and more significant.

Group identities are often treated as the most potent forms of identification regarding their capacities, whether rooted in socialization, peer pressure, perceived shared interest, or mobilizing people (Jenkins, 2008, p. 8). It is how we know who is who and what is what (Jenkins, 2008, p. 8). Similarity has no meaning without difference; we can't have one without the other, and exclusion is inherent in inclusion. Knowing who I am means understanding who I am not, and it makes me recognize with whom I share the ways of living and their foundations that create the sense of belonging and develop ethnicity and one's identity.

Ethnicity is related to the idea of belonging to a group for an individual, a way of seeing the world (Brubaker, 2006, p. 64). According to Jenkins, only the sense of 'groupness' is real. "Real, but illusory" (2008, p. 11). Groups are real because they can be observed, and one can feel one belongs to them. The feeling of belongingness is not only the tale of same blood alone; it is based on occupations, social institutions, and affiliation to them, religion, custom, tradition, culture, language, nationality, caste, class, etc. that makes one feeling belonging to the people of the same kind. It is something that is different from the mainstream. As Morris (1968) defines it, "An ethnic group is a distinct category of the population in the larger society whose culture is usually different from its own. The members of such group are, or feel themselves, or are thought to be,

bound together by common ties of race or nationality or culture . . . members usually identify themselves with the group and give it a name" (p. 168). According to Weber, "Common descent, belief in a common origin is . . . a key element of ethnic identity; the second is that differences, both cultural and physical, visible differences like dress, language, and other differences of everyday behavior, even feeding habits" (as cited in Elliot, 2007, p. 61). They are the social constructs like culture and the product of circumstances.

Ethnic attachment, as Shils (1957) asserts, ". . . is held together by an infinity of personal attachments, moral obligations in concrete contexts, professional and creative pride, individual ambition, primordial affinities and a civil sense which is low in many, high in some and moderate in most persons" (p. 131). There is intense loyalty and feelings of obligation in small groups, and they are executed in practice. According to Geertz (1973), people's primary attachment is to others who are seen to be of the same 'race', who are kinsmen and women, who speak the same language, or whose sense of collective past and future is based on the shared experience of people of a region, of the same religion or caste, or on a community of culture and custom. According to Fenton (2010), ". . . the strongest belongingness between/ among the people develops on the basis of family, custom, place, religion, and language" (p. 79) that creates an ethnic group and demands a unique identity and its recognizance.

The more complex the level of social organization, the more advanced the level of culture, the more the repression of desire and hence the greater the need for individual control of violence and destructiveness. Human destructiveness is linked to repression, repetition, and death drive, 'Thanatos'; the drive to destroy is as strong, if not stronger than the desire for life, 'Eros.' Eros is the flowering of love, emotional ties, communal bonds, and civic association, and Thanatos, on the other hand, is the drive of aggression and destruction. The association and dissociation of a person to some cultural/ethnic group is not only a social but a psychological phenomenon too. Self-identity is subject to an increasing process of dislocation and fragmentation, a process governed by disturbed narcissism.

Elliot (2007) cites Freud's idea that certain forms of self-love are suitable for social relations and lie at the core of individuals' involvement with culture and politics (p. 79). Narcissism is essential to the integrity of the self and highly beneficial to genuine moral and cultural aspirations. Sometimes, through the projection of 'Otherness,' hatred of other people establishes a seemingly conflict-free society. It is the result of frustration that finds confirmation in the more destructive and harmful aspects of contemporary cultural life.

People misbehave because an unreasoned sense of threat guides them, and they behave worse when there is a sense of a threat to their identity. Sometimes, as Ballock says, ". . . the size of a minority group is perceived as a threat by the dominant group" (as cited in Fenton, 2010, p. 94), and sometimes, class politics is racialized or ethnicized to manipulate the sentiment of the minority group. Dominant populations might perceive the presence of a minority and its mobilization as a threat to their prerogatives. As mentioned by Fenton (2010), the 'threat' is in three modes: demographic, economic, and political (p. 94). Such ethnic discrimination or domination has been better expressed in literature.

DESAI'S THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Reframing Ethnic Identity by Resisting in Desai's Novel

Bengalis and Gujaratis in northeast India enjoy all powers even if they are not the majority in terms of population. They behave dominantly over the Nepali people, and most of them carry negative, biased attitudes and have jaundiced eyes to look at Nepalis. They often look at Nepalis as 'robbers,' 'murderers' and people 'without principle' who 'will kill for fifty rupees' (Desai, 2006, p. 49). This clearly shows the social position of Nepalis in the region, where they '... are eighty percent of the population' (Desai, 2006, p. 175). Nonita often uses the derogatory term 'Neps' for Nepali people, time and again in her conversation throughout the novel. She usually expresses her hatred toward Nepalis. She frequently advises other characters not to believe in Nepali people because she thinks they are untrustworthy. She warns others about Nepali: "I tell you these Neps can't be trusted. And they don't just rob. They think absolutely nothing of murdering, as well" (Desai, 2006, p. 1). This is how a negative image has been developed against the Nepali nationalities in the North East India. It has helped unite the 'Neps' under several identity markers and sites of resistance as discussed below.

Cultural Difference

The characters and their names carry cultural identity. Lolita behaves as if she were a great female character in the Indian peninsula who has shaped the history of a nation or is an epitome of beauty. However, a Nepali boy who is more brilliant than her is named Budhoo, which means someone who is dim-witted. She does not use derogatory terms for Budhoo; she also looks very low on Kesang, her housemaid. She describes her maid as less than the human race and presents her as having no human emotions, though the maid has done nothing wrong to her. She "... always professed that servants didn't experience love in the same manner as people like themselves" (Desai, 2006, p. 76). But "... she actually felt jealous of Kesang" (Desai, 2006, p. 76) when the maid narrates her adventurous and joyful love story and the even when she got married running away from her parents and the way her husband pursued their love even though they belong to different caste groups. After hearing such an adventurous love story, she "...was forced to wonder now if it was she who had never experienced the real thing; never had she and Joydeep had such a conversation of faith" (Desai, 2006, p. 76). Nepalis are more liberal and less orthodox in the matters of getting married and maintaining their relationship than the so-called modern Westernized Indians there in the northeast.

Lolita also comments on Englishmen, for whom she says, "Very unskilled at drawing borders, those bloody Brits" (Desai, 2006, p. 143). She also criticizes India's politics and political leaders and considers state-making to be Nehru's biggest mistake. She says, "This state-making is the biggest mistake that fool Nehru made. Under his rules, any group of idiots can stand up demanding a new state and get it, too. How many new ones keep appearing? From fifteen we went to sixteen, sixteen to seventeen, seventeen to twenty-two...." (Desai, 2006, p. 142). Jamubhai Patel, a pensioner, a remnant of English colonial rule in Indian, feels like he is the one who can maintain the English legacy and feels proud of being an employee of the colonizers, cannot afford to send his granddaughter Sai to a boarding school but he is not ready to send her to the

municipality school for his prestige. To maintain his hypocrisy, he has managed home tuition for her, which was carried out by Lolita. It is very difficult to keep the show-off for them because "They lived on his pension, but still they need more money, what with endless repairs being done to the house, the price of everything rising in the bazaar, and the wages of their maid, sweeper, watchman, and gardener" (Desai, 2006, p. 47). But when Sai's grade increases, she cannot teach her Mathematics and advises Jamubhai Patel to take another tutor for her. She is ". . . Westernized Indian brought up by English nun, an estranged English living in India. The journey had started so long ago he continued in his descendants" (Desai, 2006, p. 230). She boasts of being educated in a convent school, but she is intellectually weaker than a Nepali boy. She has been so Westernized and hypocrite that ". . . she had no idea how to make tea this way, Indian way properly. She only knew the English way" (Desai, 2006, 7). So, she has learned the missionary creeds from an early age: "And on top a flat creed: cake was better than laddoos, fork, spoon, and knife better than hands, sipping the blood of Christ and consuming a water of his body was more civilized than garlanding a phallic symbol with marigolds. English was better than Hindi" (Desai, 2006, p. 33). This is how even the Indians who discriminate against the Nepali group feel low to the English people, and they have forgotten their own culture for the sake of showing themselves Westernized; however, they are the cultural hybrids, they belong to nowhere.

Gyan has a very short relationship because he realizes very soon that there is a vast cultural and conceptual gap between them. The gap widens when Gyan is inspired by and values his culture and language and starts feeling great in belonging to a forbidden race of Nepalis in India. He cannot stop him from being involved in the movement when he knows that gets his friends have been a part of it:

It was after the new year when Gyan happened to be buying rice in the market that he heard people shouting as his rice was being weighted. When he emerged from the shop, he was gathered up by a procession coming panting up Mantri Road led by young man holding their khukris aloft and shouting "Jai Gorkha." In the mess of faces he saw college friends whom he'd ignored since he started romance with Sai. Padam, Jungi, Dawa, Dilip. (Desai, 2006, p. 172)

He feels sorry for being emotionally engaged with Sai, with whom he has hardly any common ground of belonging, but just the infatuation. He starts feeling of owning manhood in himself "It was a masculine atmosphere, and Gyan felt a moment of shame remembering his tea parties with Sai on the veranda, the cheese toast, queen cakes from the baker, and even worse, the small warm space they inhabited together, the nursery talk" (Desai, 2006, p. 177). He feels bored with his job and, most importantly, the people because he begins to feel the difference between them. He begins to search for another job so that he could quit the job and annoying people. "How glad he would be if he could get a proper job and leave that fussy pair, Sai and her grandfather with the fake English accent and the face powdered pink and white over dark brown" (p. 179). This statement explains the tremendous cultural difference between the Anglophone Indians and the Nepali cultural groups.

Gyan always feels uncomfortable to remain with the people who are culturally different and feel themselves superior. "Eating together they had always felt embarrassed-he, unsettled by her finickiness and her curbed enjoyment, and she, revolted

by his energy and his fingers working the dal, his slurps and smacks. The judge ate even his chapattis, his puris and *parathas*, with knife and fork" (Desai, 2006, p. 194). He feels he is surrounded by people who have a derogatory feeling about his culture; he starts to feel a sense of exile. He is exiled in his own homeland as Edward Said (1993) remarks:

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unbearable rift forced between a human being and native place, between the self and its true home, its essential sadness never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exiles life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exiles are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever. (p. 173)

He is involved in the movement spontaneously as a 'mystical experience of the collective' as described by Nietzsche. He cannot help but go with the rally and shout slogans along with the people of his type, culturally, who share familiar sensations. He cannot remain aloof from the phenomenon:

As he floated through the market, Gyan had a feeling of history being wrought, its wheels churning under him, for the men were behaving as if they were being featured in a documentary of war, and Gyan could not help but look on the scene already from the angle of nostalgia, the position of a revolutionary. . . . There he shouted along with the crowd, and the very mingling of his voice with affirmation he'd never felt before, and he was pulled back into the making of history. (Desai, 2006, p. 173)

When he marches along with his people, ". . . he felt out to the experience again. How can the ordinary be changed?' (Desai, 2006, p. 173). He understands his cultural identity emotionally as Barker (2000) opines, "Identity is best understood not as a fixed entity but as an emotionally changed description of ourselves" (p. 166) as it keeps changing.

This changes his mental attitude about his essence and identity. He is no longer a romantic lover; the fancy relationship becomes problematic for him. His cultural understanding makes him realize that Sai is one of the major causes of the gap in the relationship because she is a culturally hybrid girl who knows very little about Indian culture and nothing about Nepali culture and lifestyle. He analyzes her culturally:

She who could not eat with her hands; could not squat down on the ground on her haunches to wait for a bus; who had never been to a temple but for a architectural interest; never chewed a *paan* and had not tried most sweets in the *mithaishop*, for they made her wretch; she who left a Bollywood film so exhausted from emotional wear and tear that she walked home like a sick person and lay in pieces on the sofa; she who thought it vulgar to put oil in your hair and used paper to clean her bottom; felt happier with so-called English vegetables, snap peas, French beans, spring onions, and feared-*fried-loki*, *tinda*, *kathal*, *kaddu*, *parel*, and the local *saag* in the market. (Desai, 2006, p. 194)

The date is not as enjoyable as it used to be. Gyan condemns Sai for her following the Western culture blindly where she has not learned anything of being even an Indian and belonging to the culture. She enjoys Christmas and English New Year more than Durga Puja, Dussehra, etc. Gyan asks, "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" (Desai, 2006, p. 179). He does not like her to be enslaved by the West, blindly following the Western culture despite the fact that she belongs to a nation that is culturally richer than Westerners. He says to her, "Like slaves, that's what you are, running after the West, embarrassing yourself. It's because of people like you we never get anywhere" (Desai, 2006, p. 179). One who keeps following others reaches nowhere by oneself. Finally, he decides to break the relationship because she is not culturally fit for him.

Linguistic Difference

Nepali language makes the people who reside in northeast India an ethnic group rather than a common descent. They are called 'Neps' there because they have a common language, Nepali. Noni considers it a serious political issue of the Nepali people's linguistic rights, who are deprived of linguistic opportunity because the Nepali language has not been included in the school curricula. They have to read in Bengali, which is not their mother language, nor is it the national language of India. She says, "Obviously, the Nepalis are worried. They've been here, most of them, several generations. Why shouldn't Nepali be taught in schools?" (Desai, 2006, p. 143). Language is a means of cultural identity and unity, and more importantly, the Nepali community in India primarily feels a sense of belonging to each other because of the Nepali language.

She feels sympathy for and supports the Nepali-speaking community regarding their suffering in neighboring states or countries. She argues, ". . . you have to take it from their point of view," said Noni, "First the Neps were thrown out of Assam and then Meghalaya, then there's the king of Bhutan growling against" (Desai, 2006, p. 142). Language makes a group of people stand out from the other group and a marker of identity and resistance when it is required, as the Black Americans did against the White Americans by making English of their own to talk against the Whites.

Commensality

A unique Nepali food item, 'dhindo' (porridge made of millet flour), is a matter of discussion among the non-Nepali people in northeast India. Jamubhai Patel supposes that eating 'dhindo' stops Nepali people from being brilliant and intelligent but turns them into physical labourers. He believes "Coastal people are more intelligent than inland people" (Desai, 2006, p. 81) because of their feeding habits. He further describes,

Costal people eat fish and see how much clever they are, Bengalis, Malaylis, Tamils. Inland they eat too much grain, and it slows the digestion, especially millet, which forms a big heavy ball. The blood goes to the stomach and not to the head. Napalis make good soldiers, coolies, but they are not so bright at their studies. (Desai, 2006, p. 82)

It is not a matter of fact but attitude. The biased attitude of the Bengalis makes them think that 'dhindo' is such a bad type of food item, and he just plainly remarks about 'inlanders' and Nepalis as physical laborers. He has spoken of the mentality of the Indians regarding Nepali people because almost all of the Nepali people are engaged in the profession of serving the Indians as the masters being a 'daju' a collie or a 'bahadur'

(a watchman) or the same kind. They believe that Nepalis are not good at studying or at any other job that requires academic excellence.

Nationality

Nationality is a person's state membership in a specific nation, usually determined by birth or naturalization. It has always been a significant issue for the distinction and discrimination between and among the people in the world. Nepalis in northeast India are not only discriminated against on other excuses, but also their nationality is under suspicion. Nonita suspects the nationality of even Budhoo, the army man who fought for her country, risking his life. She shows her mental bankruptcy when she suspects that he may rob her house and escape to Nepal:

Budhoo? But he's Nepali. Who can trust him now? It's always the watchman in a case of robbery. They pass on the information and share the spoils . . . Remember Mrs. Thondup? She used to have that Nepali fellow, returned from Calcutta one year to find the house wiped clean . . . Quick across the border, he'd disappeared back into Nepal. (Desai, 2006, p. 50)

She suspects and hates the Nepali people, but ironically, she heavily depends on servants who are Nepalis. She has a very low view of Budhoo, but she has ". . . trusted Budhoo for no reason whatsoever. He might murder them in their nighties" (Desai, 2006, p. 51), but she can sleep at night because of Budhoo. Moreover, the name 'Budhoo' itself is a derogatory word to name someone that means 'not having common sense or wisdom.' Another minor character, Mr. Iyre, also remarks the same in the novel. He thinks, "Nepalis making trouble . . . very troublesome people . . ." (Desai, 2006, p. 250). He further says, "They should kick the bastards back to Nepal" (Desai, 2006, p. 250). This shows the average perception of the non-Nepali Indians in the region toward the Nepali people.

The non-Nepali people are very worried about the Gorkhaland movement and its gaining strength. They are so much concerned about the possible consequences that it may create an independent country that has very strong emotional ties with the people in another country than India. Lolita speculates about the outcome of the movement in her own words: "Those Neps will be after all outsiders now, but especially us Bongs. They've been plotting this a long while. Dream come true. All kinds of atrocities will go on- then they can skip merrily over the border to hide in Nepal" (Desai, 2006, p. 250). Asking for freedom, rights, liberty, and recognition of Nepali nationality has been blamed as an atrocity.

Nepali people are so much distrusted that they guard the bungalows, however, they are not permitted to enter the big bungalow of the retired judge just because they are Nepalis, which has made the bungalow a matter of curiosity for them. When the incident of gun robbery takes place, the police search for the bungalow and Nepalis have an opportunity to have a glance at the bungalow, which was always restricted for other times. The mob collected ". . . because like most of the town's residents, they rarely had the opportunity to see themselves from top to bottom" (Desai, 2006, p. 231), which remarks Nepali people had never had the chance to see themselves on a full-length mirror and they are denied the entrance into the building which they guard for its safety.

CONCLUSION

Desai's novel reveals how ethnic identity is not a fixed construct but a fluid and often fractured experience shaped by historical, political, and socio-economic forces. Through the characters of Biju and Sai, she highlights the struggles of identity formation in both homeland and diaspora, exposing the marginalization, alienation, and internalized hierarchies accompanying ethnic consciousness. She presents ethnic identity as a site of loss and negotiation, where characters must reconcile personal histories with collective struggles. The novel suggests that identity is continuously reshaped by migration, displacement, and socio-political upheaval, reinforcing the idea that inheritance—whether of culture, class, or nationhood—is often accompanied by exclusion, disillusionment, and an ongoing search for belonging.

Usually, there are three kinds of societies: the first, where there is a dominating majority; the second, where there is a dominating minority; and the third, where multiple groups live together in a 'relatively cohesive political system.' The dominant group, whether that is the majority like Whites in America or a minority like Whites in Africa or the Hindi-speaking dominant minority in North-east India, rules and dominates the others and enjoys power. Thus, ethnicity is not only the concept of racial, national, or tribal population but also the issue of asserting and gaining control. It is the relation of power, domination, and hegemony over others. Common culture builds a nationality and creates power of domination and resistance at the same time. The dominated people need to establish their identity and unify to resist unfair domination and discrimination.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

I hereby wish to declare that I do not have any conflict of interests to disclose.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

I declare that this manuscript is originally produced by me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those who have directly or indirectly provided me with valuable information and advice while working on this paper.

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To cite this article [APA 7th edition style]:

Sharma Kandel, B. B. (2025). The dynamics of resistance: Redefining identity in Kiran Desai's *The inheritance of loss*. *Academia Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 2, 187-198. <https://doi.org/10.3126/ajhss.v2i1.77170>