



# Ambivalent Culture: A Migrant's Subject in Kiran Desai's the Inheritance of Loss

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## Abstract

The research explores The Inheritance of Loss from the perspective of Post-colonialism. The cultural relation between East and West or the Indian and Western culture is hierarchical, controversial, and ambivalent due to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. In this age of multiculturalism and globalization, any individual has a fondness for Western culture. But being a migrant, people experience cultural controversy and contradictory feelings simultaneously.

Ambivalent Culture is the subject of Third and Fourth World people. At first, these people observe the First and Second World; and assume their superiority in culture, custom, and lifestyle; and they are highly modernized and technologically updated. Due to these assumptions, the Third and Fourth World people willingly migrate to the First and Second World with the dream of economic prosperity and for the betterment of life to secure a better future by accepting the very concept of Western lifestyle, custom, and culture. The main problem of migrants appears with the involvement of Western lifestyle and culture, and they encounter cultural dilemmas and trauma. The migrants realize the gap between their own culture and another culture; and as compensation the hybridity in culture appears—the migrants relocate their existence with the cultural hierarchy, disorder, geopolitical confusion, inequality, illegal immigration, and forefront terrorism activity.

The Third and Fourth World people's migration to secure life with prosperity and a bright future in the First and Second World postulates the imbalance contact between self-identity and foreign identity which lead to the crucial situation and forms ambivalent culture; of the subject of migrant.

**Keywords:** Ambivalence, Migrant, Post-colonialism, hybrid, Western

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## **1. Introduction**

Kiran Desai, a migrant Indian-American writer, and daughter of the author Anita Desai, is a born storyteller. She is perhaps the youngest recipient of the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 2006 in *The Inheritance of Loss*. She left India when she was eight, lived in Great Britain for a very short time, and then moved to Massachusetts, USA.

The term “ambivalent” derives from the Latin prefix *ambi*, meaning “both” and *valence* which is derived from the Latin *valentia*, meaning “strength.” So it means an individual has both positive and negative feelings toward something, or has feelings for both sides of an issue. So as ambivalent culture is a culture in that a person experiences the thoughts and emotions of both positive and negative valences toward a culture. There is love and hate for a culture i.e., the dilemma of cultural identity and the existence of hybridity. It is a culture of mixed feelings; an individual experiences uncertainty or indecisiveness. Most of the migrated people have got this type of attitude which is more apparent basically in third-world countries.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, some of the characters express dual attitudes toward the thoughts and feelings of the so-called impressive Western culture. Biju, the cook’s son, an illegally migrated person working in New York Restaurant starts to negotiate with the fractured identities between Western modernity and non-western ‘backwardness’ between first-world wealth and third-world poverty. The judge fails to get into the center of Western culture. His English lifestyle remains as other, as inauthentic to the British. The quarrel between an Indian Nepalese, Gyan, and a Westernized Indian, Sai reflects the ambivalence of thinking about Western culture. Gyan argues it is complete nonsense for a non-westerner to enjoy the Christmas holiday while Sai shows her broad-mindedness towards a Western culture. Though she is an anglophile like her grandfather, she refuses to accept the idea that the Indian culture is inferior.

## **2. Statement of Problem**

Most third-world people have been migrating from one place to another for the betterment of life. Their involvement with another culture gets mixed feelings: trauma and dilemma of culture. Is there ambivalent culture prevalent in migrated people? Is it the subject of migrants?

### **3. Methodology**

I observe the text *The Inheritance of Loss* by using post-colonial theory. In addition, I use the library and internet resources during my research and collect information regarding cultural criticism and post-colonial issues.

### **4. Review of Literature**

Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* got its height with the praise made by reviews from various media and authors, and its success lay in getting a Man Booker Prize in 2006. This novel captures many issues of post-colonial India.

The cook, servant of a judge, though poor; is fond of Western culture. He has sent his son to America for the betterment of his son's life. In the press release made by Atlantic Monthly Press: "And the cook—too poor, perhaps, to even have a name—dreams of his son Biju's fairy tale existence in America [. . .] 'perfectly first-world on top, perfectly third-world twenty-two steps below'" (par. 4).

There is a cultural gap between the first and third worlds. The third-world people migrated to the first world with the hope of betterment but ambivalence in culture got pain of exile and ambiguities. Publishers Weekly reviewed *The Inheritance of Loss* as the "Stunning [. . .] In this alternately comical and contemplative novel, Desai deftly shuttles between first and third worlds, illuminating the pain of exile, the ambiguities of post-colonialism, and the blinding desire for a 'better life' when one person's wealth means another's poverty" (par. 11).

There is a great trauma and dilemma as well as chaotic and complex situation of the immigrant's life whereas it is an issue of the contemporary world. As Carlin Romano has praised *The Inheritance of Loss* in Philadelphia Inquirer magazine that "A finely textured story that mixes post-Raj dilemmas of modern India with the challenges of Indian immigrant life in New York" (par. 29). And in "Praise for *The Inheritance of Loss*"; Francisco Goldman, author of *The Divine Husband* writes: "The *Inheritance of Loss*, so moving, funny, and unflinching, is the best novel I've yet read about contemporary immigrant life and the ongoing parallel world 'left behind'" (qtd. in Desai, n.pag.).

Most of the Indian people and as a whole non-western people feel Western culture is superior and their own culture is inferior. And, the western culture ultimately influenced and made them think and feel ambivalent. As Homi K. Bhabha in his *Commitment to Theory* says that "The concept of cultural difference focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority; the attempt to dominate in

the name of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation” (19).

The Inheritance of Loss is a beautiful text which is analyzed from various perspectives. This emerged me to find out about the ambivalent culture which is prevalent in this modern society due to the rise of immigration worldwide.

## 5. Kiran Desai as a Post-Colonial Indian Writer

Kiran Desai was born in New Delhi, India to a renowned post-colonial author, Anita Desai in 1971. She is an Indian writer because of her Indian birth on one side and her representation of Indianness in her writings. Her writings explore the theme of multiculturalism, cross-cultural conflicts, hybridity, the illegal immigrant experience, and about post-colonial India. Her own exploration of self-identity and the cultural background depicting in her work represents her as a post-colonial Indian writer.

Kiran Desai's first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) secures her footsteps in the ranks of Anglo-Indian writers. Her Indianness in character depiction and story-telling gift as an Indian transfigure her to be an Indian writer with an English tone from the diaspora. Her second novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), blasts multiple themes and subjects of post-colonial India depicting the social periphery, cultural diversity, and activity. It has got a wide range of critics and reviews in newspapers and news portals. Though it becomes a masterpiece of story-telling, the Nepalese character's depictions and descriptions have outraged the heart of Nepalese readers with fume and fire. But her genius writing skill and true sportsmanship in her diasporic Anglo-Indian writing got the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 2006.

Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* provides much of post-colonial subjects in the text to establish her as a post-colonial Indian writer. Desai projects English education forefront of dominating native culture. The English tone and its taste completely mesmerized the colonized people. Tyson writes in *Critical Theory Today*:

*That so many people formerly colonized by Britain speak English, write in English, use English in their schools and universities, and conduct government business in English, in addition to the local languages they may use at home, is an indication of the residual effect of colonial domination on their cultures. (419)*

Desai vividly explores the West's uncivilized manners. Though Westerners think of themselves as superior and civilized; the harsh reality in New York City explains

what they are actually. New York is full of illegal workers in the basement. Everywhere there is disorder and uncivilized manner.

Kiran Desai's writing explores the turbulent effects of post-colonialism. Still, the Western culture is at 'the center', though multiculturalism and globalization exist. Her Indianness in her writing and her exploration of self with the conflict and dilemma of culture make her a post-colonial Indian writer. She extracts the background of the Kalimpong with a glimpse of a beautiful vision and urges them to write about their poor localities which are an essence of Indianness.

## 6. Ambivalent Culture: A Theme of Post-Colonialism

Ambivalence is the subject of post-colonialism. It is believed to be the discourse of minorities within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, north and south. The issues are of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination to expose the contrasting and ambivalent moments as the explanation provided by Homi K. Bhabha in "The Survival of Culture":

*Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of "minorities" within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South. They intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic "normality" to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races communities, and peoples. They formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the "rationalizations" of modernity. (438)*

Post-colonialism works as a translation, it translates the culture of lower group and minority rather than higher class or culture. According to the paper "What is Post-colonialism and Why does it Matter: An African Prospective" by Mabilia Justin-Robert Kenzo, "Post-colonialism translates a deep concern for the perspective of persons from regions and groups outside the hegemonic power structure" (5). The translation makes us aware of the subject matter concerned with the relationship between the colonizer and colonized. Because of the contact between colonized one and the colonizer, ambivalence creates questions about the identity which is prevalent in Westernized people and migrants.

Ambivalent Culture is the culture that exists in the person's and people's minds with some fluctuation between two or more cultures simultaneously. It is the attraction and repulsion towards the culture from time to time. A person experiences the thoughts and emotions of both positive and negative valence towards a culture.

The positive and negative attitudes create a love-and-hate relationship with the culture. The love and hate situation in the culture establishes the dilemma of cultural identity and at the same time, it has the existence of hybridity. It is a culture of mixed feelings; an individual experiences uncertainty or indecisiveness.

When more than two cultures are mixed there will be no unity in the totality of the cultures. So far as a concern with ambivalent culture, this culture is the established framework in the mind of mankind with the clash or mix of cultures that disrupts self or others. In *The Commitment to Theory*, Homi Bhabha says:

*Cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in relation of self to others. This is not because of some humanistic nostrum that beyond individual cultures we all belong to the human culture of mankind; nor is it because of an ethical relativism that suggests that in our cultural capacity to speak of and judge others we necessarily 'place ourselves in their position' . . . (20)*

So, Homi K. Bhabha presents the deep concern about ambivalent culture from the post-colonial perspective; and understanding and embedding the ambivalence refers to the formation of hybrid culture though the national identity is in crisis.

## **7. Ambivalent Culture as a Migrant's Subject**

Ambivalence is one of the prominent terms defined in post-colonial criticism that procures the thought of clash and contrast in cultural relations, social orders, and geopolitical confusions. It is the subject of a migrant because of the creation of a diasporic situation, disorder, inequality, illegal immigration, cultural hierarchy, terrorism activity, othering, and differentiation that question mark into the self-identity which generate a hybrid culture in intercultural location. Ambivalence produces the seeds of destruction as Ashcroft, Gareth, and Helen describe, "Colonial relationship is always ambivalent, it generates the seeds of its own destruction" (11).

The creation of orient and occident is making the concept of self and other as Homi K. Bhabha writes in his *The Commitment to Theory*, "I could see the mirror image (albeit reversed in content and intention) of that a historical nineteenth-century polarity of Orient and Occident which in the name of progress, unleashed the exclusionary imperialist ideologies of self and other" (6). The cultural practices of self and others are initiated by the colonial discourse with the colonial mentality and vision. Ambivalent culture becomes a subject when self and others differentiate while migrating from East to West. Because of the Western hegemony, racial discrimination, and domination; ambivalence is created which is also the subject of

migrants, because migrated people feel and realize when they enter the Western world.

The influencing characteristics of Western lifestyle and culture make the poor people of the Third World shift into the First World for the betterment of life. Even this shift is in the high range due to the hope of overall development and economic prosperity. When the people reach their destination, the Western world and lifestyle, they see their culture as inferior and hesitate to reveal their culture; then follow the Western as fond of with some interest. This creates the trauma and cultural dilemma of self and the ambivalence is constructed. This culture becomes a migrant subject. Migrated people have always been ambivalent. They mimic the Western world but cannot succeed as the whites have done. The crisis begins with them suffering invisibly; and clashes and conflicts destruct their identity, as Homi Bhabha writes in *Of Mimicry and Man*:

*Almost the same but not white: the visibility of mimicry is always produced at the site of interdiction. It is a form of colonial discourse that is uttered inter dicta: a discourse at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed; a discourse uttered between the lines and as such both against the rules and within them. (130)*

It is a migrant subject because migrated people are Anglicized; they want to become Anglophiles completely and there is always a difference between English and Anglicized. Bhabha says in his *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse*:

*Those inappropriate signifiers of colonial discourse—the difference between being English and Anglicized; the identity between stereotypes which, through repetition, also become different; the discriminating identities constructed across traditional cultural norms and classifications. (130)*

So the Third World people are migrating day by day for the betterment of life. They get in touch with Western culture and value it. They want to enjoy and celebrate the Western culture more intensely until they recognize where their identity is existing. Their relationship with Western culture makes ambivalence and this ambivalence is the self-destruction of their own self. Ambivalence creates the bias and contrast opinion which initiates cultural clash and conflict. Cultural clashes and conflicts never have a resolution. The collapse of self begins with the migrant very rapidly.

The cultural gap between First World prosperity and Third World poverty is the main concern about migration and inquisitiveness towards the betterment of life and the future. The effective tone of the English language and the elusive life of the

Western covers the illusion of reality. This illusion of reality fosters in the migrated people without being unaware of ambivalence. It is quite ambivalent because the migrated people feel completely betrayed, homeless, alienated, isolated, etc. and to recover it is no way. The healing process is absolutely unquestionable with the birth of hybridity and multicultural, and globalization matures.

## 8. Textual Analysis

### 8.1. The Judge's Hatred towards his own Presence in Europe

When the judge returns home from England, he is greeted by the geriatric brass band. Two thousand of people have been gathered to witness his presence in India making a historic event, the first son of the Indian community to join the Indian Civil Service (ICS) by the British government. Desai writes:

*He was a foreigner—a foreigner— every bit of him screamed. Only his digestion dissented and told him he was home squatting painfully in that cramped outhouse, his gentleman's knees creaking, swearing 'Bloody hell,' he felt his digestion work as super efficient as—as western transportation. (183)*

In Kalimpong, the retired judge is not enjoying his better life. Something troubles him eventually. When the GNLFF boys come and rob his house taking rifles and making scary situations, the policeman cannot do anything. So far, he is powerless too. The judge thinks of the irresponsibility of a policeman. The policeman couldn't find the person who has robbed his gun. They said, "Madman" (320) when he lost his dog mutt and reports the loss of the dog to the police. But the judge cannot think that punishment is a great thing but he thinks:

*A man wasn't equal to an animal, not one particle of him. Human life was stinking and corrupt, and meanwhile, there were beautiful creatures who lived with delicacy on the earth without doing anyone any harm. "We should be dying" the judge almost wept. (320)*

The judge's mind becomes full of trouble and suddenly questions his presence in England and joining in ICS. Desai writes, "It was clearer than ever why—but now that position of power was gone, frittered away in years of misanthropy and cynicism" (320).

Although he was retired and living in chaos and conflict, his colonial mentality and power only works in his house. He shouts to the cook about the loss of a dog. The judge chides, "FIND HER. It's your fault. Mutt was in your care! I will KILL YOU.



Wait and see. You didn't your duty. It was your duty and let her be stolen. How dare you? How dare you??" (344). So far as a concern with the cook, has also deceived the judge while buying vegetables and other things taking pocket money. He accepts that he has kicked the Mutt sometimes. Because of this reason the cook commands the judge to kill him and beat him.

The judge has hatred towards his presence in Europe and his adopted European culture and life because he has experienced a lot of ambivalent situations while living in Kalimpong. His retired life is full of nostalgia. Now, he has no power. His house is in a critical condition where repair is to be made. The culture that he follows is not accepted and realized by the people of poor localities. He suffers as a migrant in his homeland because of his resemblance to a foreigner. So the ambivalent situation is presented.

## **8.2. Mr. and Mrs. Mistry's Mysterious Death & Sai's Contact with European Culture**

Mr. and Mrs. Mistry have migrated to Russia. They are migrated because of the skill and capacity has with Mr. Mistry. When he was at Indian Air Force, he was a pilot and a possible candidate for an Inter Cosmos Programme. From Russia, some of the visiting Soviet aeronautical and aviation experts have come to select the candidate as a space pilot. They visit the Air Force of India and Mr. Mistry is selected because of his competency and steely determination. He joins in Moscow and her daughter Sai is sent to the convent school. Mr. Mistry persuades her wife that the competition was fierce. He has chosen to become the very first Indian man beyond the control of gravity, the fates have decided otherwise, in this skin, to see the world as the gods might. But his vision becomes blurred when he and his wife is crushed by local bus wheels, weighted by thirty indomitable ladies. They have a mysterious death. Desai writes, "Thus they had died under the wheels of foreigners, amid crates of babushka nesting dolls. If their last thoughts were of their daughter in St. Augustine's, she would never know" (30). Mr. and Mrs. Mistry's vision and hope of better and prosperous life have been doomed by the accident. Their European contact becomes unsuccessful and their daughter Sai becomes an orphan.

When Sai hears this news, she doesn't think to worry. She is a very confident and strong girl to console herself. When she hears the news of her parents, she says, "'I'm an orphan,' 'My parents are dead. I am an orphan'" (31). But, she has not that confidence and a strong heart in Kalimpong. She is betrayed by her lover. She loses the loving and caring relationship with Gyan because of her cultural background and lifestyle that she has maintained.

Sai was six-year-old when she has gone Russia with her parents. Her feeling and thinking towards the glimpse of Europe is quite remarkable. She has been sent to a convent school. Sai's European contact as Desai writes:

*Moscow was not part of the convent curriculum. Sai imagined a sullen bulky architecture, heavysset, solid-muscled, bulldog-jowled, in Soviet shades of gray, under gray Soviet people eating gray Soviet foods. A masculine city, without frill or weakness, without crenellation, without a risky angle. An uncontrollable spill of scarlet now in this scene, unspooling.* (30)

At the convent school, Sai gets a letter from her mom to meet and enjoy her leisure time. Sai thinks these letters are a book exercise because Sai has had no meeting for a long time. Desai says, "Sai had not seen her parents in two whole years, and the emotional immediacy of their existence had long vanished. She tried to cry, but she couldn't" (31). Her adopted Western culture and foreign identity collapsed after the death of her parents and her heading to Kalimpong is quite mysterious. Sai's Western cultural background and Kalimpong's lifestyle clash when she met a tutor Gyan whom she finds as a lover too.

Sai is actually uninspiring having a lot of contradictions when she gets a deceive note from her lover. Desai says, "Sai was not miraculous; she was an uninspiring person, a reflection of all the contradictions around her . . ." (287). There is a completely ambivalent situation that is prevalent in Sai's life. Desai says, "Gyan would find adulthood and purity in a quest for a homeland and she would be left forever adolescent, trapped in shameful dramatics. This was the history that sustained her; the family that never cared, the lover who forgot" (290).

When the dog, Mutt has been lost from the house, the quarrel begins between the judge and cook. The judge finds the cook as an irresponsible man and wants to kill him as the cook requested to kill him too. At this time, Sai becomes so astringent and bothered. Desai writes her motif as:

*She fled outside. Stood in the rich hamms dark in her white cotton pajamas and felt the empty burden of the day, her own small heart, her disgust at the cook, at his pleading, her hatred of the judge, her pitiful selfish sadness, her pitiful selfish pointless love.* (353)

At last, Sai completely becomes hopeless. She doesn't know where she exists. Her life and culture couldn't bear anything of this type. Her expression and thoughts as Desai writes:

*And always there would have to be something sweet and something salty—*

*Sai stood there—*

*She thought of her father and the space program. She thought of all the National Geographics and books she had read. Of the judge's journey, of the cook's journey, of Biju's. Of the globe twirling on its axis.*

*And she felt a glimmer of strength. (356)*

Actually, an ambivalent situation is created due to the co-existence with the culture. More Westernization and fewer Western people in poor localities create Sai a hard time and her cultural background and lifestyle where she is now living is a very conflicting and chaotic place. She is completely Westernized and alien to the Indian culture, though she doesn't reject any culture. Desai writes, "She was a westernized Indian brought up by English nuns, an estranged Indian living in India" (230).

### **8.3. Gyan's Unfaithfulness to His Girl-Friend Sai**

Gyan is from the poor localities of the hillside of Kalimpong, Bong Busti. He belongs to a migrant generation of Nepali identity. His ancestors had left their village in Nepal in the 1800s and arrived in Darjeeling, lured by promises of work on a tea plantation. His migrated identity always gives him trouble and confusion with the contact of different cultures. He finds a part-time job as a home tutor in the judge's house to teach Sai. Because of his migrant heritage, his identity in Kalimpong is missing something. Their fathers and forefathers had fought for the British. They became a servant of the British government. Although their contacts have been in the British services, they follow the Nepali culture. His contact with the family members of the judge's house makes him unaware of their lifestyle and culture.

He walks two hours uphill, from his place, the light shining through thick bamboo in starry, jumping chinks, imparting the feeling of liquid shimmering; he experiences the walk to Cho Oyu. The cook doesn't like Nepali men. Because they are not intelligent as the cook has understood. The cook says:

*Coastal people eat fish and see how much cleverer they are, Bengalis, Malayalis, Tamils. Inland they eat too lunch grain, and it shows the digestion—especially millet—forms a big heavy ball. The blood goes the head. Nepalis make good soldiers, coolies, but they are not so bright at their studies. Not their fault, poor thing. (82)*

During the study period, Gyan and Sai fall in love. Gyan has got different things in her. Her lifestyle and cultural attitude become ignorant to him. Gyan sees Sai's

Kimono dress and her spotted elbow which seems to be the hybrid culture. It is neither completely Western nor Indian. She follows Western culture and lifestyle which influences Gyan very much. Desai writes, “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— “ (177).

In the background of Kalimpong GNLF creates a whim for their victory. At that moment Gyan gives a pang of his passion and feeling towards GNLF so when he reaches Sai’s house; Sai too sensitively talks about the Christmas party which creates chaos and conflict in their life. Gyan doesn’t like to celebrate such a party. This type of environment creates complete disinterestedness in the friendship with Gyan and replies to Sai, “BECAUSE I’M BORED TO DEATH BY YOU, THAT’S WHY” (179). This is the clash and conflict between two different people from different cultural backgrounds. There is ambivalence in Gyan’s presence with Westernized people who live in India.

At Thapa’s canteen, Gyan has hate towards the judge’s family. Desai says, “. . . 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” (193). Gyan decides to betray Sai because she has no language at all. Gyan thinks of Sai as, “She who could speak no language but English and pidgin Hindi, she who could not converse with anyone outside her tiny social stratum” (193). Further, he thinks:

*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—feared— loki, tinda, kathal, kaddu, patrel, and the local saag in the market. (194)*

Desai writes, “Gyan and Sai—she thought of the two of them together, of their fight over Christmas; it was ugly, and how badly it contrasted with the past” (212). Desai says:

*The house didn’t match Gyan’s talk, his English, his looks, his cloths, or his schooling. It didn’t match his future. Every single thing his family had was going into him and it took ten of them to live like this to produce a boy, combed, educated, their best bet in the big world. (280)*

Gyan collides with dual thinking; his ambivalence is created due to the GNLF’s conflicting creation of so-called terrorism. Gyan has done mistakes as he feels now that he sent the boys to rob the judge’s house and betray Sai. Desai writes:

*How could he have told the boys about the guns? How? How could he have put Sai in such danger? His skin began to crawl and burn. He couldn't lie on the bed any longer. He got up and paced up and down. Could he ever be happy and innocent after what he had done? (299)*

Gyan regrets in Thapa's canteen as Desai says, "He wasn't laughing. Oh, that awful day when he had told the boys about the judge's guns. What, after all, had Sai done to him? The guilt took over again and he felt dizzy and nauseous" (345). This happened with his faulty thinking, his cultural dilemma, and his isolation. If he has a pure heart for Sai, he can accept Sai as a girlfriend and follows the culture that they want. But it couldn't happen to Gyan. He is much stroked by the job though well-educated, living a poor life, and has unhealthy contact with Sai. His guilty feeling towards the Sai family makes him aware of a problem that he has waived. His unfaithfulness towards Sai has been seen because of his ambivalent thinking and dilemma. That's why it is the ambivalent culture that has something about migrants.

#### **8.4. Biju's Mind-boggling Return**

Biju, a simple boy from Kalimpong, the son of the cook has a very hard life in New York. The cook's mentality towards the Western world is very clear that there is prosperity and a future of life. He is totally influenced by Western culture because of his presence as a cook in the judge's house. The Western part is more important for him because he has no significant identity as the judge has, even though there is no name mentioned throughout the time in the book. The judge, then Jemubhai or Jemu has a different identity after getting British education and serving British civil services. The judge has a big building at Cho Oyu with respect to having a high-class standard of life. So the cook wants to send his son Biju for the betterment of life with the hope of economic prosperity. Biju migrates to New York getting a tourist visa and works as an illegal immigrant. Although Biju was tracing strings of jobs the cook is very happy to get the news of his son's excellent job in New York. Desai writes, "His repetition provided a coziness, and the cook's repetition of his son's repetition double-knit the coziness." "Excellent job,' he told his acquaintances, 'better even than the last'" (19). This shows Biju's hardship and how hard it is to work and get the right job in America. This creates hopelessness in Biju for his better life. Though migrated and works as an illegal immigrant, he suffers from ambivalence.

When Biju was working in Baby Bistro, there were people from different countries; on top French and down below the kitchen Mexican, Indian, and Paki. When Biju was at Le Colonial, it was authentic for the colonial experience; on top of rich

colonial, down below poor native, Colombian, Tunisian, Ecuadorian, and Gambian. Likewise, in America, there are meetings of various people from different countries. Desai says, “There was a whole world in the basement kitchens of New York, but Biju was ill-equipped for it and almost relieved when Pakistani arrived” (24). It is the cultural diversity in the western part of the world where all the Third World people migrate and go to work for a better life. Because of this many people suffer from hard life which makes their identity in isolation and the presence of ambivalence strikes very bitterly.

Biju has completely no right jobs at all. His life is becoming harder; he searches from one to another restaurants asking for a job. Desai writes about his job search:

*Biju approached Tom & Tomoko’s— ‘No jobs.’*

*McSweeney’s Pub— ‘Not hiring.’*

*Freddy’s Wok— ‘Can you ride a bicycle?’*

*Yes, he could. (55)*

Biju’s hardship makes him sleep. Desai says, “When he returned home to the basement of a building at the bottom of Harlem, he fell straight into sleep” (57). Biju feels so cold while working in Freddy’s Wok as he exclaims, “I’m also cold” (58) losing his temper. Biju always thinks of hate and love relationships about matters, cultures, and people. He doesn’t like hubshi and hates black people, etc. Desai says “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” (86). The fluctuation of love and hate relationship makes Biju completely ambivalent and he cannot bear the things at all. His friend Saaed Saeed also finds this dilemma in Biju. Because of his illegal status in America Biju cannot get a chance to apply for the green card lottery. He becomes restless sometimes and walks as a homeless man which is the subject of a migrant. Desai describes:

He walked to the far end where the homeless man often slept in a dense chamber of green that seemed to grow not so much from soil as from a fertile city crud. A homeless chicken also lived in the park. Every now and then Biju saw it scratching in a homey manner in the dirt and felt a pang for village life. (91)

Though Biju is in confusion and contrasting situation of living in New York with no money and no secure job, his father boasts to everyone saying “My son works in New York” (93). The cook believed that his son will take him there. But the situation brings him too hard to stay in New York after running from one job to another one.

He cannot find the solution. He never gets a chance to apply for the Green Card. Yet last he buys a ticket to return to Kalimpong. Biju is completely bewildered about the road to Kalimpong when he comes back. On the road to Kalimpong, he is being robbed. Desai writes:

*Biju handed over his wallet. He took off his belt.*

*'you're forgetting your shoes.'*

*He took them off. Under fake soles were his savings.*

*. . . Biju began to quake, and fumbling, tripping, he took off the last items of clothing, and stood in his white underpants. (348)*

He runs into the jungle and at last reaches the house of the judge to meet his father, the cook. This chaos and very dangerous have come to the forefront of Biju's life because of his unable to catch or adopt Western values, lifestyle, and culture. He only ran one restaurant to another one. He is completely unaware of things; he has to think for the betterment of life. He ran only for the green card to the pressure given by his father. His love and hate relationship collides with the conflict. So he is totally in confusion and ambivalent about his life and culture though he respects Indian culture. This is the ambivalence that is created in the migrated world. So far as this ambivalence is concerned, it has stroked hard that he could not bear while he returns with nothing.

### **8.5. Saeed's Progress and Prosperity in America**

Saeed is from Zanzibar. Biju meets him at Queen of Tarts bakery. Biju admires much of him though he is a Muslim because he had a previous fight with a Pakistani. Saeed Saeed is also from the Indian community and prefers to sing like Amitabh Bachhan and Hema Malini. Saeed is not drowning in America. He is admired by zanzibaries and other people from different culture and background. Desai writes:

*. . . Saeed Saeed wasn't drowning, he was bobbing in the tides. In fact, a large number of people wished to cling to him like a plank during a shipwreck—not only fellow Zanzibaris and fellow illegals but Americans, too; overweight confidence-leached citizens he teased when they lunched alone on a pizza slice. (85)*

Biju accepts friendship with Saeed because he was kind and not Pakistani. So Biju has ambivalent thinking about culture and people from different countries and place. Saeed has no such ambivalent thinking. Because of his talent and very good nature, he becomes a very successful person in New York. At the end of the meeting

with Biju, Saeed talks about his fake marriage with Lutfi's sister. He has completely adopted the Western culture and he is going to get the green card after 4 years too. He says to Biju, "But in four years I get my green card and fast out of there I get divorced and I marry for real. Now we are only going to have a ceremony in the mosque. . . . this girl she is." (349).

Though Saeed has confusion, and problems while working from one place to another he is transformed into better life easily. Biju is unsuccessful regarding this because of his dilemma and conventional mentality. Saeed gets happy life in the restaurants of New York. He accepts and follows the Western lifestyle.

### 8.6. GNLF's Demand of Gorkhaland

Gorkha Nepal Liberation Front (GNLF) is the activist group shouting the demand for a separate state, Gorkhaland. They processed the rally in the street of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and other places where Nepali people has been settled after the British Service. They cry for compensation in lieu of their service in the British government. They fought in a world war with great courage and bravery. In fact, the GNLF people are living in Kalimpong, Darjeeling, and around a hillside.

GNLF share the same feeling about their identity, culture, and lifestyle. All the Nepali-speaking people have been inhabited at the time of colonization. They have migrated from Nepal. Their service in British is quite remarkable. The culture is different from the people of high-class living standards of the Indian community. Their cultural clash and conflict with Westerners make a terroristic activity that leads to chaos in the village of Kalimpong. In Ringkingpong hill whoever can see the "LIBERATION" scrawled across the waterworks. Desai writes:

*But then one day fifty boys, members of the youth wing of the GNLF, gathered to swear an oath at Mahakaldara to fight to the death for the formation of a homeland, Gorkhaland. Then they marched down the streets of Darjeeling, took a turn around the market and the mall. 'Gorkhaland for Gorkhas. We are the liberation army. (139-140)*

The judge's anglophile neighbor Lola thinks that Nepalese are the main causes to make this type of trouble in India. They have learned from other movements. Desai writes:

*Separatist movement here, separatist movement there, terrorists, guerrillas, insurgents, rebels, agitators, instigators, and they all learn from one another, of course—the Neps have been encouraged by the Sikhs and their*



*Khalistan, by ULFA, NEFA, PLA; Jharkhand, Bodoland, Gorkhaland; Tripura. . . (143)*

Gyan also remembers the stirring of stories when British leave has been demanded. And now the GNLFF is voicing for separate land due to their identity, culture, and secure life. The slogans voiced in the street procession, “India for Indians. No taxation without representation. No help for the wars. Not a man, not a rupee. British Raj Murdabad!” (174). They burn the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950. And the cultural group has been requested to contribute funds to purchase calendars and cassette tapes of speeches. Desai writes:

*It was requested (required) that every family—Bengali, Lepcha, Tibetan, Sikkimese, Bihari, Marwari, Nepali, or whatever else in the mess—send a male representative to every procession, and they were also to show up at the burning of the Indo-Nepal treaty. (211)*

The liberation front is created because of their ambivalent thinking towards high-class people and their high-class culture, the Western one. Their English tone, their lifestyle, and other things are quite unbearable to the Nepalese-Indian. They wanted their own land because of their different cultural existence, though they all migrated from Nepal.

To bring to a close this chapter, ambivalent culture is a migrant’s subject in *The Inheritance of Loss* is very the reality of migrants whose contact gets the cultural tussle. Their cultural tussle and the superiority of Western culture dominate the migrants. Those migrants who can adjust and live a better life would have a prosperous life, but those who cannot adopt they seem to have ambivalence. This ambivalence creates a cultural hierarchy in the mind; neither they want to copy nor can copy; neither the higher culture nor stay quiet and calm in easy with their own culture. So contact between different cultures is more important to make the cultural situation ambivalent. The contacts between different cultures have only the possibility of immigration which creates hybrid culture as a new form of culture.

## 9. Conclusion

To conclude, there is an ambivalent culture among migrant people due to cultural differences, which absolutely generates a hybrid culture. A hybrid culture is a form of cultural difference because of the contact between different alien cultures. In the thorough study of Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*, ambivalent culture is created due to colonial discourse. The world is separated into four worlds- First,

Second, Third, and Fourth World whereas the migration rate is high towards the First and Second World. This migration rate is increasing day by day with the hope of economic prosperity and progress. They are hoping for the betterment of life and are queasy to copy the English tone.

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