

Chapter 1

Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Gorkha Movement

The universe of Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* is governed by terror resulted from loss. The novel is set in India mainly against the historical backdrop of the Nepali insurgency. It deals with the events that take place in India, England, and New York. The novel highlights some of the outstanding issues of contemporary society such as globalization, marginalization, subordination, economic inequality, exploitation, poverty, nationalism, insurgency, immigration, racism and political violence.

In the novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, post-independent India has failed to contain ethnic, cultural and political divides amidst individualization and modernization. During Independence war different ethnic and political groups were united for a single cause of national independence. However, after India became independent different interests of these ethnic and political groups rivaled for their larger share of power in the government and felt betrayed by the national politics. Some parts of the newly independent country become industrialized and modernized. The life of the people did not change in other parts of the country which lacked industrialization. As a result, ethnic, cultural and political gaps among diverse communities came into conflict with each other.

Lost clout of liberating nationalist politics is compounded by the power in coping with the political and economic crisis. Local contentions are silhouetted against the collision of global force. Wounds are the only things bequeathed by the past and the future is no longer awaited eagerly because it is unlike to promise healing.

Nationalist politics has created divisions among individuals. Jemubhai Patel, former Oxford graduate, has receded deep into desperation after retirement as a judge of the British India. He indulges in self-loathing as a form of psychological defense. His self-disgust has resulted from the unbridgeable gap between what he wanted to be and what he really is. He has lost his Indian self because of Western education. He despises his family members. As he loses family ties, he is uprooted from his native culture.

Sai, a teenage granddaughter of the judge tries to win love of a Nepalese maths teacher, Gyan who is involved in the Gorkhaland movement even though he does not have a clear idea of the cause. The Cook's son, Biju goes to the United States hoping to make big money. Nevertheless, he is as badly treated by his employers as his father was being treated in his homeland. When he returns home unruly violence has already become routine life in his birthplace.

The Judge has become a victim of the hegemonic British colony. His subordinated thought is despised by this own ideology. Ethnic Gorkha community is sidelined by different Indian ethnic communities from the mainstream national politics. So, mercenary Gorkha ethnicity is in confrontation with the post-independent Indian ethnicities. The former tries to get out of the latter's control.

Gyan mainly is subsumed by the virile of ethnic nationalism. He takes part in the violent nationalist politics hoping to find adulthood in the formation of the spate Gorkhaland for Gorkhas. He cannot keep himself away from the deceptive ethnic and nationalist politics even if he is educated. In course of time ethnic nationalism takes terrorist turn when the elite use the ethno – nationalism to secure secular good for themselves. Biju, a subaltern, is symbolically emasculated by the insurgents when he

is about to get home. He is robbed off his belongings and is forced to get home in night.

In the novel, it is the ethnicity that gives rise to the nationalist politics. Nationalism appeals to ethnicity as its driving force. In course of time, nationalist politics takes a violent turn. In this way terror is manifested in different nodes of tangled web of ethnicity and nationalism.

Gyan represents someone who is looking for his personal identity as he feels that he is getting disadvantaged because of his Nepali nationality. When he joins the nationalist movement, at first, he seems to find his place in the society, but he later starts to question the significance of his decision. His relationship with Sai undergoes a lot of ups and downs due to their different classes and nationalities; when their relationship encounters problems these differences are surfacing and by wording the stereotypes, they actually word the problems and differences between their classes and nationalities.

Two sisters Noni and Lola are representatives of a wealthy higher class which is strongly influenced by British culture. They behave very dismissively towards people who are, in their opinion, of a lower class. Lola's daughter, Pixie, works in England for the BBC and both sisters consider everything British as a sign of higher class, so they cook English food, wear Marks and Spencer underwear and read British literature, which during the colonial period was considered as a literary canon even in the colonies. However, their ostentatious richness marks them as an easy target during the Nepali riots in the area.

Booty is a Swiss priest who came to Kalimpong after Indian Independence on a missionary work and stayed in the area for thirty years. He, on the other hand, is a representative of a person from Western culture who accepted the Eastern culture

and even though he brought some Western influences into the area; he assimilated with the local people. He has to leave India during the riots as his visas are expired and experiences the feeling of displacement when he has to go back to his country.

The novel is a compound of the life stories of the main characters and gradually discloses their lives, as well as the environment in which they grew up and which shaped them. Even though all the characters are from one small town in the hills their stories spread as far as Britain and the USA. The time scale is also quite wide as the stories reach from 1940s until 1980s, when most of the story takes place.

Episodes concerning the past life of Judge Jemubhai Patel or the brief life history of Sai's parents and her childhood are revealed. Indian Nepalese demanded a separate state for themselves during the 1980s. The Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) has been formed mainly by the Indian Nepalese youth who "are 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" (9). Their main grievance is that though they and their forefathers have sacrificed a lot for India they have been treated in the country only as slaves. The Gorkhas consider it their birthright to fight for a separate homeland. They still remember how the British Army and later the Indian Army had used the brave Gorkha soldiers for their selfish ends. Therefore, the GNLF has taken a vow to get their demands fulfilled unconditionally.

Desai ends her novel in a shocking scene that suggests a Voltaire-like garden in which, like *Candide*, the cook's son and the young heroine Sai assume satisfaction with their biographies--circumstance becomes fate. The ending is provocative, since it comments on the paths facing modern India. These situations in the novel raise the

questions; why people of particular cultural origin i.e. Nepalese revolt. And how ethnicity of Nepalese relates with Indian nationalism.

Post-independent India has failed to maintain ethnic, cultural and political divides amidst industrialization and modernization. During Independence war different ethnic and political groups were united for a single cause of independent nationality. However, after independence different interests of these ethnic and political groups began to crave for their larger share of power in national politics. The main argument of the thesis is that all the ethnic and political groups in spite of their divergent interests got united for the safety of nation but a split came to that unity when it came then the matter of power sharing, which ultimately led to ethnic nationalism. Some parts of the newly independent country became industrialized and modernized. The lives of the people did not change on other parts of the country which lacked industrialization. As a result, ethnic, cultural and political gaps among diverse communities came into conflict with each other. The present novel *The Inheritance of Loss* captures such social and political environment of India particularly with Nepalese origin and their movements of power sharing. So the present study aims to explore how ethnicity is constituted and consolidated through the discourse of nationalism and manifests in different forms of ethnicism in *The Inheritance of Loss*. It is argued that ethnicity acts as a driving force for nationalism in the novel.

The significance of the study is to explore the ethnic nationalism through the novel of Kiran Desai *The Inheritance of Loss* which is less explored. The novel has raised the issue of ethnic identity which creates conflict among the typical group. And through this research it is tried to bring the concept of civil war in general that gives

the view about the conflict of particular group. Particularly, the research picks the issue of Nepalese origin people in India who are marginalized.

This study is textual reading based on library research and internet searching. For this, private study, library research and internet searching are pursued. References are drawn from critical books, essays, journals, book reviews, magazines, articles, and other materials from both print and electronic sources as necessary. The tool of this study is nationalism.

This study has been divided into four chapters only. The first chapter is the general introduction of the study. It tries to apprise the issues of ethnicity and the review of literature. The second chapter is based on the theoretical ideas used as a tool in the study. The third chapter deals with the textual analysis of the chosen text. The last chapter concludes the issues and ideas examined in the previous chapters.

The focus of the study is Gorkhaland movement depicted in the novel of Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*. It explores how this movement affects the life of the characters of Nepalese origin and different other origin. Beside that other issues of the novel are not given primary focus.

Literature Review

Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* has attracted the attention of many critics since its publication. They agree that in literature, especially in fiction a new kind of writing has emerged after September 11 terrorist attack of the World Trade Center on 2001. This kind of writing radically questions the certainty of the human knowledge; progress of human civilization; identity, stability and security of human life. The novel *The Inheritance of Loss* Kiran Desai bears the traces of 9/11 incident and its repercussions in the contemporary world. The novel deals with postcolonial condition, migration, ethnicity, identity, masculinity, nationalism and terrorism.

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* deals with ethnicity, identity, immigration, nationalism, globalization and violence. According to Pankaj Mishra, Kiran Desai's

“extraordinary new novel manages to explore, with intimacy and insight, just about contemporary international issue: globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence. Despite being set in the mid-1980s, it seems the best kind of post-9/11 novel” (1).

Mishra again argues that the characters of Jemubhai Patel, the judge and Biju, the cook's son,” Mishra views that “Kiran Desai wants to portray the dilemma faced by the immigrants.” (qtd. in Das 60)

In Sonali Das's view *The Inheritance of Loss* deals with “the struggles of unknown people of low economic background in troubled times” (59). In fact, Desai depicts the struggle of the people who are not recognized in the national order for their identity and rights. These people are bound together by common language and culture which lays foundation of their ethnic identity.

Mandira Sen writes: “Desai's deceptively gentle novel deals with the very basis of existence: the quest for a decent life, for justice” (28). In her view, Desai points to the “complexities of race and ethnicity in both places, [Darjeeling and overseas] with their undercurrents of antagonism and incomprehension” (27).

Another issue which has come into focus in the interpretation of the novel is its concern about immigration. Immigration is not a new phenomenon but the novel reflects upon it from the perspective of Nepalese diasporas who form the majority of Kalimpong and Darjeeling and contemporary Indian immigrants abroad. According to Sonali Das, the novel paints “a realistic portrait of the lives of the migrants from Asia

and Africa in the developed world and in what conditions they live in order to earn a living, while back home relatives and acquaintances paint a false glamorous picture of living and working in the Western Dreamlands” (63). Binnie Kirshenbaum, author of *Almost a Perfect Moment* has commented:

A nation’s tragedies, great and small, are revealed through the hopes and the dreams, the innocence and the arrogance, the love betrayed, and the all-too-human failings of a superbly realized cast of characters. Kiran Desai writes of postcolonial India, of its poor as well as its privileged, with a cold eye and warm heart. *The Inheritance of Loss* is an exquisite novel: mature, signification, and first read. (qtd. in Das 62).

Ashok K Mohapatra seems the novel as social exclusion in post colonial fiction. He argues that *The Inheritance of Loss* can be described as a novel of immigrant genre. The story of the illegal migration in search of better livelihood and life containing themes such as desire in the foreign land for the home left behind, exile, and the negotiation between the imagined ‘home’ and the ‘host culture’ usually unfolds in the postcolonial and multicultural registers of the novels of immigrant genre. “However, immigrant experience and the state of exile in the diasporan space is only part of a larger scheme of this novel because it includes other stories dealing with social exclusion not so much in the globalized diasporan space of New York as in the milieus of the imperial metropole of London and colonial and postcolonial India. All these stories, including Biju’s, act out different types of homecoming – each with its specific kind of experience of social exclusion and effect of an enigma of arrival.” (10)

David Wallace Spielman looks into the characters' struggle to find what he terms contradictions'. He argues:

[W]hether the characters should embrace cultural adaptability is of crucial importance to the novel. Desai explores both sides of the issue and ultimately challenges the desirability of assimilation and the wisdom of maintaining the margins, [...]. Instead they struggle to establish 'solid knowledge' [...] because it provides [them] a sense of mastery and understanding, a refuge from contradictions. (75)

In Tom Wilhelmus' view, the novel "delineate[s] the lives of a small cast of characters in reaction to the historic force around them" (345). He examines the struggle of the people to establish new civilization when the established one collapses. "*The Inheritance of Loss*," he writes: "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" (345)

Dr. Kamaljeet Sinha picks the issue in the interpretation of the novel is the racial identity. He argues:

"As a postcolonial feminist academic, while sharing the writers' hybridity and class location; draws attention to questions of ethno – racial identity in relation to boarder national histories and destinies; and these leads to the unsynchronized and contradictory factors of ethnicity, class and gender. Ethno – Racial consists of ideologies and practices that seek to justify, or cause, the unequal distribution of privileges, rights or goods among different racial groups. Modern variants are often based in social perceptions of biological differences between peoples. These can take the form of social actions, practices

or beliefs, or political systems that consider different races to be ranked as inherently superior or inferior to each other, based on presumed shared inheritable traits, abilities, or qualities. It may also hold that members of different races should be treated differently.” (71)

None of the critics have paid adequate attention to the key issues raised by the novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*. The novel puts into question the established notions about ethnicity, identity, and nation. Apart from these issues, however, the novel explores how nationalism, masculinity and terrorism have undergone massive conceptual changes as the world becomes more interconnected and more independent because of the globalization process. This research explores how the novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* illustrates ethnics and nationalism in different contexts.

Chapter 2

Concept of Nationalism

The Nationalistic Approach

In general, a nation is a form of political organization in which a group of people live together, share the same history, traditions and language and is controlled by its government. It is also a federation of tribes having certain territory, population, common origins and a sovereign government. The citizens of a nation have to feel free regarding their rights and duties. The concept of nationalism signifies the aspiration for national independence felt by people. There is a doctrine that nations should act independently to attain their goals. It is an advocate of national independence of or a strong national government.

According to Benedict Anderson, the idea of nation and nationalism is considered imaginary. It is a purely cultural concept for a group of people bound together by shared values and cultural characteristics including culture, religion and common language. Thus, the nation as Anderson believes is “an imagined political community, and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (5-6). The issue of nationalism is interconnected with politics and sovereignty of a country.

Raphel Samuel, as quoted by Eastrope, supports this argument and states that “the idea of the nation, though a potent one, belongs to the realm of the imaginary rather than the real. It occupies a symbolic rather than territorial”(11). Like nation, the concept of nationalism is also understood as a state of mental construct than the geographical one. However, for Edward Young territory plays a pivotal role besides the cultural phenomena. For him “nation is a kind of a corporation. It is a border that allows another country to recognize it as a nation” (60). Thus, according to Young the idea of nationalism includes not only the unity in the sentiments but also the

geographical border.

Nationalism seeks similarity out of differences, and emphasizes on unity. It is a feeling of unity with a group beyond one's immediate family and friends. The second definition believes in a radical activity empowered with fanatic notions to establish a sovereign country. Hence, the armed revolutions sometimes can generate a better result. Anderson thus defines nationalism as imaginary because the people who constitute the nation might have never met each other but a form is established. So, it is purely based on an abstract theorization. It is a mental construct.

Nationalism is further defined as an ideological movement. Anthony Smith defines, "nationalism is ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its member deem to constitute an actual and potential nation" (9). Every historical movement is also the foundation for establishing nationalism in a country. But in Michael Freedman's opinion, "nationalism is an ideology about individuated being. It is an ideology in which social reality concerned in terms of nationhood is endowed with the reality of natural things" (750). Thus, nationalism is a kind of inner awareness regarding the issue of social uplifter in a country.

Anshuman Mondal views nationalism as a political movement. For him "nationalism is a form of cultural politics. It is political because it is a movement which desires to seize, control of or break away and create its own state" (22). The politics of every country has a dominant role to establish a nationalistic sentiment among the citizens. Eric Hobsbawm considers "nationalism as a political principle and national unit should be congruent" (9). Thus, the structure of human society as imagined by nationalism remains the same all the time. This political movement holds that a nation usually is defined in terms of ethnicity or culture that has right to

constitute an independent or autonomous political community based on a shared history and common identity.

The critics have elaborated the concept of nationalism as an ideology which claims that a given human population has a truth based on shared history and a common destiny. This collective identity which is historically constituted always talks about the right to constitute autonomous political community. It thus, highlights the popular sentiments inspired by the idea of the nation. This organization continuously keeps up the population strong and efficient.

Many theorists agree on a single point that nation is a community of people who share the same belief and thus they are bound by same historical territory, myths, memories, culture, economy, etc. They are guided by collective consciousness.

Hobsbawm notes that the collectively of persons has the same ethnic origin and in general speaks the same language and possesses a common tradition. To elaborate further the concept of nation, David Miller defines nation as:

“A community (1) constituted by shared belief and mutual commitment (2) extended in history (3) active in character (4) connected to particular territory and (5) moved off from other communities by its distinct public culture” (27). Miller tries to clarify the notion of nationalism through the definition of a community and relates with the combination of shared belief, history, character and culture. This intellection of a community extends the study of nation.

Steven Grosby regards nation as a community. He argues ;

“It is a community expensive, temporally deep community of nativity... important for understanding the nation recognize that relations that are perceived to enduringly bind one individual to another are possible not only within a family but also within the

territorially extensive modern nation” (14).

Grosby opines that the nation designates an idyllic condition of a conflict free unity. It is also extended with history, politics, territory and public culture. So, the concept of nationalism is interconnected with the different factors of the society. However, “no community is free from conflict” (Grosby 15). This is actually the theme of this study.

Every community carries a bitter history along with its freedom. Hobsbawn states:

The primary meaning of nation and the most frequently ventilated in the literature was political in the era of revolution that it should be, in the French phrase, one and indivisible. The nation so considered was the body of citizens associated with the revolutionary action or creating problems for it; and the more one and indivisible it claimed to be, the more heterogeneity within it created problems. (21)

Thus, the society is the chain of the social relationships and activities. The nation claims homogeneity through territorial unity, myths and ideologies. It assumes that ideology is achieved through the collective ideas, regarding language, religion and territorially bounded community.

Types of Nationalism: Civic and Ethnic?

The nation is assumed to be a conflict free community and if anything happens that is likely to create conflict. As Hobsbawn claims that the heterogeneity rules in the place of one helps to create an indivisible nation. Many critics have fierce arguments about the types of nationalism. The general and accepted distinction is that there are typically two types of nationalism: civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism. Are they opposite or complement to each other? This is a major point of argument

among nationalist thinkers.

Civic nationalism is exercised in those areas in which there exists a civil society. It belongs to the same community, guided by the same law and that the territory and people must belong together. For this type of nationalism, the vital bond is law. Such kind of nationalism is always bounded by certain rules and regulations. It is also known as liberal nationalism. Margaretta Mary Nikolas describes,

“Towards attaining a unified culturally homogeneous group housed within an already existent specific political boundaries. The starting point for civic nationalism is the state and the pursuit by this state of its own nation congruent with its territorial borders” (11).

To view the general idea, the boundary of the nation also determines a kind of nationalistic concept. The nation can be well identified and the citizens feel more comfortable to move around the county. Civic nationalism provides the framework in law, political division of a country and legislative possibilities to reconcile the divisions.

Nikolas further elaborates that civic nationalism promotes the belief that a society is united by the concept and importance of territoriality, citizenship, civic rights and legal codes and that is transmitted to all members of the group. That is the reason Smith remarks citizenship to be the foundation of civic nationalism. Moreover, civic nationalism is believed to be complement to liberal democracy. It is likely to have advocated the high culture. But, Anthony Smith claims that civic nationalism is very far from accommodating the groups that claim of different cultures. This failure has led to the empowerment of ethnic nationalism.

Ethnic nationalism refers to the nationalism as determined by descent. Here boundaries are not chosen, rather they are inherited. In another words, the bond is that

of blood instead of law. It is generally assumed that ethnic nationalism incorporates a more collectivistic identity. In a general sense, ethnicity is an element that can provide this required similarity or ethnic homogeneity. It promotes the belief that communities are formed on the basis of ethnic tie. So, ethnic nationalism is constructed with the sentiments of the citizens but not the geography or territory.

Besides, the principle of ethnic nationalism has become more powerful in comparison to civic nationalism, in the current political phenomenon. This is particularly due to the formative factors of this nationalism. In Nikolas' view:

The elements that are at the core of ethnicity and ethnic nationalism- memory, value, myth, and symbolism – drawn from blood ties, bonds to the land and native traditions inferring the ethnic nationalism represents that which is subjective within nationalism (13).

The issues like race, ethnicity and culture are also the elements to define nationalism in a sense. They are the important factors in determining nationalistic subjects. In ethnic nationalism, the state is defined by language, religion, customs and traditions. Sometimes it is compared with the glue that holds people together in a sense that it is not the state that creates the nation but the nation that creates the state.

Nothing is more attaching to human beings than blood ties. It is due to this reason, ethnic nationalism has become vibrant than civic nationalism. Civic nationalism is a failure in a sense that it is unable to incorporate the general public sentiments and suppression of high class people towards the minority class whereas ethnic nationalism is often said to have taken important role to address the problem. Another theorist on the list to support civic nationalism is Ernest Gellner. He focuses on civil society.

As to the dichotomy of civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism, Margareta

Mary Nikolas holds that they are not actually set against each other. In her own words, “Civic and ethnic nationalism are not part of a dichotomy of nationalism set against one another but are the intermingling components of the one ideology and subjectivity of modern nationalism” (3). Both the civic and ethnic nationalism form the complete idea of nationalism and they are really interconnected to make the complete sense of nation. Taking her view into consideration, both civic and ethnic nationalism are the two sides of the same coin. In short, while comparing these two, communities are to be culturally homogeneous, or the nation should be a homogeneous unit. So, both the civic and ethnic nationalism have taken only a different route to achieve that same goal.

While emphasizing the centrality of nation in terms of idea, John McLeod believes that “the nations are notions of collectivity and belonging a mutual sense of community that a group of individuals imagines it shares” (69). The nation is the conceptual outcome of notion. To Franz Fanon, the idea of nationalism similar to McLeod, is a formal binding together of desperate elements where grows a repeated dialect of uniformity.

The centrality or uniformity or homogeneity is the general assumption of nationalism either through territory or ideological framework. Homogeneity refers to the same or similar kind or nature. If there is anything to challenge this assumption, the nation falls in crisis. Nation or nationalism is ideological and theoretical discourses in order to justify the actions of certain groups of people who hold certain position in social and political arena. As Anthony Eastrope states:

In the first place there is a widely held belief that nation is a form of ideology that is a way of thinking designed to promote the interests of a particular social group. According to this view, the idea of nation, the

national state and national unity is a homogeneous deception perpetuated by the ruling class in order to mark its own power. So national identity is not real because it's really just an exercise in class domination. (6)

Nation, particularly is the area of political liberation that may cause the problematic relations between nationalist elites and the ruled class. It is also a kind of ideological war regarding the nationality consciousness. Partha Chatterjee views "the elites seem to speak on behalf of the people but function to keep people disempowered do not recognize the role played by less privileged individual or groups in resisting colonial rule" (quoted in John McLeod, 108). So in a general consensus, nationalism supports elitism and fails to bear witness to the different activities and arguments of the people. Many critics have agreed on the point that nation is a construct. For instance, Antony Smith points that "the nation is socially constructed" (78). He emphasizes on social engineering as formative factor for nation. This factor also includes skill and imagination. Similar to Smith, for Benedict Anderson, the nation is an imaginative construct. He believes nation as an imagined community and nationalism as a discourse that validates the construction. However, Antony Eastrope believes that the notion of imagined communities is constructed. Eastrope finds that Anderson is also unsatisfactory for he believes "Anderson cannot extricate himself from the conventional contrast of tradition and modern societies as an opposition between the real and the false" (8-9). The traditional concepts always become the hindrance for the new ideas of national issues, and the old thoughts are to be replaced.

Ethnicity is related to the identity of a community in which people are bound together by the same linguistic or cultural practices. "It welds together individuals who share a history, culture and community, who have an amalgam of language,

religion belonging in common and perhaps most critical of all, they feel that they come from the same stock” (Flona Wilson and Bodil Floke Frederiksen qtd, Par. 2).

For James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin also “[e]thnic identities are understood to be defined mainly by descent rules of group membership and content typically composed of cultural attributes, such as religion, language, customs, and shared historical myths” (848).

Primordialism takes ethnic affiliations as given and immutable. Sociologists like Pierre Van den Berghe consider, “ethnic and racial sentiments as an extension of kinship ties” (qtd, in Conversi 16). The perspective brings forth the centrality of descent in defining ethnic groups. Supporting this view Donald Horowitz also defines ethnic group as ‘super-families’. For primordialist, social mobilization appeals the instinctive aspect of the ethnic ties.

However, other theorists like Frederik Barth, ethnicities are defined by the differences rather than the shared commonalities. Barth writes, “ethnicity is best understood as a process of boundary formation that has been constructed and maintained under specific socio-historical conditions” (qtd. In Barker 249).

Highlighting the importance Barth argues that “ethnicity is defined not by the cultural characteristics of group members but by the differences thought to distinguish them from others” (qtd. In Fearon and Laitin 856).

Some theorists have stressed the role of ethnic symbolism in the nationalist movements. Concrete objects like historical monuments, legends and rituals constitute this symbolic capital. According to Anthony D. Smith, the persisting features in the formation and continuity of national identities, are myths, memories, values, traditions and symbols (qtd. In Conversi 21).

Smith has noted crucial role played by the intellectuals in providing

sustenance to the nation from a re-lived ancient past providing the linkage with earlier 'ethnies' or ethnic communities. Their role is to "[build bridge] between past and present, and political programmes" (23).

Identities are no longer exclusively attached to specific territories and locales but are increasingly shaped by global forces that transcend local, regional, and borders. Thus, constructions of gender, racial, ethnic, class and national differences all have to be re-examined in light of the fact that immigrants and global travelers negotiate the hegemonies of both their home and societies.

Ethnicity, Identity and Nationalism

Ethnicity is related to the identity of a community in which people are bound together by the same linguistic or cultural practices. "It welds together individuals who share a history, culture and community, who have an amalgam of language, religion and regional belonging in common and perhaps most critical of all, they feel that they come from the same stock" (Flona Wilsosn and Bodil Folke Frederiksen qtd. in Garg, Par. 2).

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Instrumentalism opposes the predetermined nature of ethnicity as posited by the primordialist. It conceives ethnicity as highly variable and externally controlled for the strategic purposes. Instrumentalists claim that ethnic group boundaries are not primordial, rather socially constructed. In instrumentalist social mobilization so-called elites of the ethnic community appeal to 'the symbolic material' constructed in the name of cultural heritages. Myth of ethnic descent, myth of ethnic chosenness lies its heart.

However, other theorists like Frederik Barth, ethnicities are defined by the differences rather than the shared commonalities. Barth writes, "ethnicity is best understood as a process of boundary formation that has been constructed under specific socio-historical conditions" (qtd in Barker 249). Highlighting the importance of difference Barth argues that ethnicity is defined not by the cultural characteristics of group members but by the differences thought to distinguish them from others" (qtd. in Fearon and Laitin 856).

Simon Harrison also agrees that "difference, or difference, is widely understood to lie at the heart of ethnicity and nationalism" (343-344). "[M]etaphors of blood, kinship and homeland", argues Chris Barker, "are frequently implicated in the formation and maintenance of [those] ethnic boundaries" (249).

Boundary formation creates differences among groups. Boundaries make one group distinct by defining it from others on the basis of what it is not. Ethnicity in this sense is exclusionary. It is constituted through the discursively formed by excluding what it is not.

Acknowledgement of 'the place of history' by ethnicity implicates its relation to the concept of nation and nationalism. "Ethnicity", for Eric J. Hobsbawm "is one way of filling the empty containers of nationalism"(258). However, "the lines

between ethnic and national groups are less definite and much harder to police, since they can be altered or infringed upon by assimilation and other everyday acts that blur or call boundaries into question” (Fearon and Laitin 856).

However, local resistance movements and even sub-nationalism are results of safeguarding ethnic boundaries and heritage. Homogenizing effects of nationalism is heightened in its attempt to strengthen the nation-state which demands integration of the ethnic minorities. Sub-national movements grow out of attempts of the ethnic minorities to keep their ethnic identity alive.

Some theorists have stressed the role of ethnic symbolism on the nationalist movements. Concrete objects like historical monuments, legends and rituals constitute this symbolic capital. According to Anthony D. Smith, the persisting features in the formation and continuity of national identities, are myths, memories, values, traditions, and symbols (qtd. in Conversi 21)

Smith has noted crucial role played by the intellectuals in providing sustenance to the nation from a re-lived ancient past providing the linkage with earlier’ ethnies’ or ethnic communities. Their role is to “[build bridge] between past and present, between ethnic myths and their modern translation into viable, coherent identities and political programmes” (23).

Identities are no longer exclusively attached to specific territories and locales but are increasingly shaped by global forces that transcend local, regional, and national borders. Thus, constructions of gender, racial, ethnic, class, and national difference all have to be re-examined in light of the fact that immigrants and global travelers negotiate the hegemonies of both their home and host societies.

Chapter 3

Ethnic Nationalism in *The Inheritance of Loss*

Kiran Desai, in her novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* presents ethnic nationalism fraught with warrior Gorkha masculinity in Kalimpong and Darjeeling, amidst postcolonial developments as Indian national order mutates rapidly. Because of the rapid globalization process. After New Year when a procession takes to the Mintri Road “led by young men holding their kukris aloft and shouting, ‘Jai Gorkha’ (Desai 156) a man, apparently a GNLF leader addresses the mass after the procession stop outside of the police station:

“In 1947, brothers and sisters, the British left granting India her freedom, granting the Muslims Pakistan, granting special provisions for the secluded castes and tribes, leaving everything taken care of, brothers and sisters – ‘ Except us. EXCEPT US. The Nepalese of India” (158).

In this speech the speaker aligns himself with Indian Nepalese segregating them from other ethnic groups in the language of ‘us’ and ‘other’. As Stuart Hall writes: “The term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity” (qtd. In Barker 250). The speaker also rightly attaches Indian Nepalese ethnicity with the language and culture of the place inhabited by them for generations. He says, “We will defend our homeland. This is where we were born, where our parents were born, where our grandparents were born. We will run our affairs in our own language” (Desai 159).

Language has a pivotal role in constituting the Indian Nepali ethnicity. Nepalese ethnic heritage is carried through common language. As Anjan Ghoseh elucidates:

The different castes and tribes among the Nepalis had their distinct dialects like Sherpakura, Lumbukura, Raikura, etc. As the different communities engaged in public social intercourse in the tea gardens and market places, Khas Kura became the lingua franca in the hills. An amalgamation of the dialects in Khas Kura constituted a jatiya bhasa which unlike in Nepal was not the royal imposition of a court language, but grew out of the grassroots interaction in everyday life. Thus even the other hill communities like the Lepchas, Bhotiyas and Tibetans took to Gorkhali or Gorkha bhasa for communication. This syncretic development of the language served as a foundation for the emergence of Gorkha ethnicity. (11)

Common language that lays foundation for the ethnic identity ultimately leads to state formation as Lola answers Noni's question "[W]hy shouldn't Nepali be taught in schools?" thus: "Because on that basis they can start statehood demands" (Desai 128).

Mr. Subash Ghising, prominent leader of the Gorkhaland movement, in a statement to Inder Jit, explains that "their demand for a Gorkhaland is basically a question of their identity and a fight for justice and economic progress" (qtd. In Ghosh 10). Ghising's statement is evinced by GNLFF leader who addresses the protesters outside police station: "[W]e are Gorkhas. We are soldiers. Our character has been in doubt. And have we been rewarded? Have we been given compensation? Are we given respect?? 'No! They spit on us'" (Desai 158).

Anjan Ghosh argues: "Anxieties of eviction looming large, prompted the Gorkhas to demand Gorkhaland as sanctuary, imparting an Indian identity to them as distinct from the Nepalis" (10). This is reflected in Noni's request to take the 'Gorkhaland issue' from Indian Nepalese's point of view: "First the Nepalese were

thrown out of Assam and then Meghalaya, then there's the king of Bhutan growling against –“ (Desai 128).

As Otto Bauer says a nation is always a process, a becoming. The narrator comments:

Gyan taking part in a protest remembers the satiring stories of when citizens had risen up in their millions and demanded that the British leave. There was the nobility of it, the daring of it, the glorious fire of it – ‘Indians. No taxation without representation. No help for the wars. Not a man, not a rupee. British Raj Murdabad!’ If a nation had such a in its history, its heart, would it not hunger for it again? (158)

Gorkha ethnic nationalism every now and then is understood in terms military masculinity of the Gurkha soldiers. As a GNLG leader addressing mass outside of the police station mentions:

We fought on behalf of the British for two hundred years. We fought in World War One. We went to East Africa, to Egypt, to the Persian Gulf. We were moved from here to there as it suited them. We fought on World War Two. In Europe, Syria, Persia, Malaya, and Burma. Where would they be without the courage of our people? We are still fighting for them. [...] We are soldiers, loyal, brave. India or England, they never had cause to doubt our loyalty. (158)

Nepalese have been treated as they are not belonging the land. They are the victim of injustice and discrimination. The Indian-Nepalese wanted their own country or state, a Gorkhaland where they would not be treated as minority or slaves:

There was a report of new dissatisfaction in the hills, gathering insurgency, men and guns. It was Indian-Nepalese this time, fed up with being treated like the minority in a place where they were a

majority. They wanted their own country or at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs. (Desai 156)

Ethnicity of the people demanding Gorkhaland is symbolized in the history of the bravery of the Gorkha soldiers. In the Gorkhaland movement of *The Inheritance of Loss* figured out. Ethnic nationalist movement is reflected in members of the youth wing of GNLF. The narrator outlines:

[O]ne 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 street of Darjeeling, took a turn around the market and mall.

Gorkhaland for Gurkhas. We are the liberation army. (126)

The members of the youth wing of GNLF also invoke nationality by self – proclaiming ‘liberation army’. Their identity is manifested in their determination to fight to death for their homeland. GNLF leader assert that “[i]f necessary, we will wash our bloody kukuris in the mother waters of the Teesta” (159)

The novel represents the nation state in miniature and the palimpsest design is created by various ethnic people who are mainly marked by means of class, ethnicity, race and language. Homeland or Nation is primarily an imaginary origin and Benedict Anderson’s famous definition will always be pertinent to the concept of nationhood: “.....it is an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign (Anderson 15).” Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Community*, echoing Hobsbawm, argues that, nation is a community which is not tied by religion or kin, but by its imagined status as –“The members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 15).”

In the novel Biju’s return from New York culminates in the scene where he is

robbed by the rebels of the Gorkhaland Insurgency demanding separate state or nation (ironically unhoming Biju) for them (Gorkhaland). He runs off alone through the local forest that leads him to the gates of Cho Oye and meets his father. But he does not get the welcome moment there which alienates Biju from the atmosphere. This movement and its traumatic ambivalence of personal and psychic effect and shock not only creates alienation rather defamiliarizes him from everything. Desai notes though Botty championed local cheese over foreign ones, Kalimpong turned him into a foreigner. Being an Indian foreigner after fifty years of residence there, the Gorkhaland insurgency revealed that he was in the country like an illegal. Father Botty becomes a foreigner, "...lovable Father Botty who, frankly, had done so much for development in the hills than any of the locals, and without screaming or waving kukris, Father Botty was to be sacrificed (161)"

In the novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* Indian Nepalese fight for their homeland- Gorkhaland. Gorkha ethnicity is prominently figured as the driving force for the nationalism. Metaphorical use of 'Kukri' as a vehicle carries the tenor of Gorkhali. GNLFF members use emotional appeal to 'communicate threat' by piercing their thumb with Kukuri and masse in a protest program.

The riot which breaks out in 27th July 1986 claiming 13 locals along with few jawans and scenes like "beheaded body [running] briefly down the street, blood fountaining from the neck" (Desai 276) extremely terrorizes people. The violent riot and commitment made by the members of the wing of GNLFF to fight to death for their homeland sufficiently prove Jn Jindy Pettman's argument that "The birth of the nation is through the bleeding of young" (158).

Identity is constituted and reconfigured through the discourse of nationalism and nationalist movements involving terrorism. The Gorkha ethnicity is constituted by

the military service of Gorkha soldiers in the British Army and the discourses which represent their engagement in different conflicts and wars. Every now and then GNLF members invoke ethnicity of the Gorkhas in their demand for a separate state, “Gorkhaland for Gorkhas!”

In the novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, ethnicity is emboldened through the discourses of nationalism. Violence becomes necessary byproduct of the oppositional politics be that the case of separatist nationalism of Gorkhaland movement. American nationalism renders its use of violence as its duty to protect its citizens. However, America renders the violence used in its opposition as terrorism.

Ethnicity is depicted in the novel is consolidated through wars. Military of agitators of the Gorkhaland movement is consolidated through armed conflicts with the police. Armed conflict provides them with an opportunity of proving their warrior identity. On the other hand, they impose blockades and force people to take part in the agitation.

“It was requested (required) that every family – Bengali, Lepcha, Tibetan, Sikkimese, Bihari, Marwari, Nepali, or whatever wise in the mess – send the represents to every procession,.. If you didn’t, they know and ... well, nobody wanted to finish the sentence” (Desai 193).

Indian Nepalese is not eligible to become rulers. Their identity is taken to be suitable only to become soldiers which are, in Connell’s words prime examples of ‘subordinated’. In Cook’s remark Indian Nepalese identity is shown subordinated to other ethnic identities – Bengali, Tamil and Malayali.

Nepalese identity is denigrated because of its relationship with military cruelty and mercilessness because of their close affinities to terrorism. Talking to Lola and Sai, Noni mentions; “I tell you, these Neps can’t be trusted. And they don’t just rob.

They think absolutely nothing of murdering, as well” (45). What Noni implies is that because of mercenary culture Nepalese are cruel. They are capable of merciless killing. This is why they can get involved in terrorism be that state terrorism or no-state terrorism. Here terrorism is essential factor for their ethnic identity. Whenever Gorkhalis are involved in the movement in search of their Gorkhaland back to them terror occurs.

The novel challenges the traditional state of belonging or ethnic ideals from the perspective of tripartite displaced identities, the retired judge *Jemubhai Patel*, his granddaughter *Sai*, the cook and his son *Biju*, the young Nepali tutor *Gyan* and his Gorkha community all representing different levels of diasporic identities and as a result separate and distinct ethnicity. They are also continually in trouble with their respective ethnicity, linked with political subjectivity admixed skillfully in the novel. The identities born in such diverse and interactive spaces inevitably retains influences from memories of origin or ‘roots’ but also simultaneously absorb and exhibit the influences of the new culture/ethnicity. In its transnational or multiethnic dimensions they are constantly facing with and thus continually evolving and modifying also for which continually becoming ‘unbelonged’. As Stuart Hall observes, “Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices they represent, we should think instead of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete and always in the process and always constituted within not ‘outside’. This sense of both ‘belonging’ and ‘unbelonging’ creates together in levels of layers the atmosphere of ethnicity culture and identity which is also a strata of nationality in Desai’s “*The Inheritance of Loss*”.

The merits of the GNLF’s claims, although she represents the poverty of

Gyan's family sympathetically. But she portrays the GNLF as irrelevant to ethnic Nepalese, a danger to other Indians, and every bit as derivative of western influence as the Judge's jam roly-poly's. "They were just boys", notes the narrator, "taking their style from Rambo, heads full up with kung fu and karate chops" (329).

The novel speak about such divergent people, centered in the cross cultural whirl of identities that places themselves in the ambit of renegotiations after carrying and establishing the twofold concurrent objectives of the novel in the field of ethnicity. There is the loss of identity in the overall patterns of structures and its recurrent dimension, the desperate attempt of judge, Noni, Lola and Sai's crucial desire of being anglicized at least notionally. On the other hand the specific unrest of Gorkhas, Gyan's involvement and Biju's ultimate return from the foreign land to his home land unavoidably created primordial sense of 'belongingness'.

One of the explanations of the causes of Gorkhaland movement is the failed nationalism'. Indian independence could not address the civic demands of the Indian Nepalese. This ethnic minority has felt betrayed by the independence movement. When the state heroically fought the independence war Indian Nepalis were at the fore front of the war. However, after the war of dependence, economic modernization and democratization of the country could not incorporate all the citizens equally.

Chapter 4

The Consequences of the Ethnic nationality

The novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai, explores how ethnicity through the discourse of nationalism and manifests in different forms of terrorism. In the novel, masculinity acts as a driving force for nationalism. Masculinity manifests in different forms of ethnicity when nationalist politics takes place in the land in search of identity.

Masculinity has ethnic affinities in the novel. In *The Inheritance of Loss* Gorkha warrior masculinity of Indian Nepalese is challenging the hegemonic Indian masculinity. Ethnicity of Indian Nepalese is intricately bounded with Nepali language and culture and ethnicity of Muslim is bounded with religion of Islam. Sometimes ethnic interests are shadowed by the national interest.

Masculinity of Indian Nepalese draws upon discourse of military service of Gorkha soldiers. On the other hand, masculinity of Muslim draws upon Islamic history of Wahabism. In this way discourses of religion and ethnicity reinvigorate the cultural notions of masculinity.

As the nationalist politics turns violent masculinity is manifested in different forms of terrorism. In the novel use of violence becomes inevitable either as a means of enforcement or as a matter of moral standpoint. In *The Inheritance of Loss* violence is tactically used for the popular support of separate Gorkhaland movement.

Terrorism as depicted in both the novels has been used as a means of communicating threat. In *The Inheritance of Loss* violence is tactically used for the popular support of separate Gorkhaland movement. Terrorism as depicted in the novel has been used as a means of communicating threat. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, exhortation for the fund and mandatory participation in the protest programs fills people with horror and fear.

Flamboyant display of kukris and commitment to fight to death for their homeland reinforce the terror in the mind.

Nationalist politics represented in *The Inheritance of Loss* becomes a major venue for accomplishing masculinity. In the novel, Gurkha warrior masculine identity becomes the driving force in the ethnic nationalism of Indian Nepalese fighting for separate Gorkhaland.

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