Chapter I : Introduction

1.1 Desai's Colonial Mindset

Kiran Desai is a noted non-western writer who earned high popularity through her novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. But she appears more a westerner than an eastern by disparaging the people and nationality of Nepal, China, Zanzibar, and even India. Her mastery over English, instead of being an effective weapon to fight back with and write back with correction- the colonial history of the region, seems to have become a tool for her to write and sell bizarre tales in the western centers. The novel is unequivocally a product of the mind stuffed with colonial legacies. Inheriting colonizer's perspective, Kiran Desai exaggerates and eroticizes the poverty and backwardness of the South Asian people.

Though written after six decades of Indian independence, Kiran Desai is still hypnotized by the British colonial history of India in particular and of South Asia in general. The book is about cultural identity in which Desai moves between first and third world between upper and lower class, between master and servant. Kiran Desai's main focus remains on the continents, generations, cultures, religions and races in this novel *The Inheritance of Loss.* Desai's characterization takes the reader through medley of themes ; the after effects of colonialism, immigration, multiculturalism and so on. The clash of ideals between the Indians who want change and those who wish to retain aspects of British colonialism is one of the major conflicts in the novel. And the Indians who immigrate to the United States and the conditions of their lives once they live there, is also another major conflict. In this context the novel draws critical attention from the reader regarding it's colonial portrayal of the people and their lives in post colonial era.

Kiran Desai portrays the themes like nationalism, migration, belongingness in an entirely new spin. She deals with a question whether it is the best to stay in a small place, the sweet drabness of home. If so, the question arises whether one has a right to that territory, and whether one can write objectively about the nation. These questions shape the destinies of Desai's characters. The most commonplace of them, those quite mismatched with the larger-than-life questions, caught up in the mythic battles of past and present, justice versus injustice- the most ordinary hatred was, after all, a commonplace event. It is in this context that this thesis explores the novel in a postcolonial light to see whether it has validity and viability as a genuine text.

The Inheritance of Loss talks about Gorkhaland agitation but fails to understand many facets of the movement's dynamics. It traces its root to the annexation of Sikkim into the Indian Territory and also the rising insurgencies in the north-east India. Such error on the part of author only reflects the fact she did not do their history homework properly. Ethnic discontentment in Darjeeling started long before the country saw its independence around 1947. Moreover, mention of communal divide during the agitation is totally uncalled for. There were no instances of any kind of political harassments on communal line. It was largely a united struggle against the age old state regression. At rare cases, however, resident Bengalis were suspected as agents of state and the ruling comrades, whom Gurkhas hated the most then. She, however, declares in one of her recent interviews "The political information is accurate to my knowledge and based on my memories and the stories of everyone I know there" (2).

This novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, long listed for the Man Booker Prize, produces a strange effect. It is a great work of art, a novel that stretches from India to New York; an ambitious novel that reaches into the lives of the middle classes and the very poor; an exuberantly written text that mixes colloquial and more literary styles. It dramatizes the fact that although we live in this mixed-up and messy world, our struggles are based on a deep desire for security. The novel follows the life of its characters who reside in, or once resided in, Kalimpong at the foothills of the Himalayas. It is mostly set in the town of Kalimpong in Northeast India, close to the Nepal border. Here lives an old retired civil services officer, Jemubhai Patel, with his cook and dog, Mutt. Soon his orphaned granddaughter, Sai, joins the judge in his decrepit mansion. The three are cut off from much of the world, and they lead a tightly knit life with Sai getting an occasional distraction when she spends time with a pair of Anglophile sisters down the road or her math tutor, Gyan. The central character is Sai, an orphaned young girl who shows up at the doorstep of their grandfather, a judge, to live with him and their cook. The story studies her life, the judge's, the cook's and his son who is an illegal immigrant working the restaurant circuit in New York City, and various other characters who live near them in the small town.

Sai's arrival sets the judge down memory lane and he remembers making his journey to England as a young lad leaving his hometown of Pilphit in the Western Indian state of Gujarat. The judge's solitary character, combined with his extreme shyness, is so intense that he soon evolves into a totally self-centered, cynical person: "[he] envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians, both," (23), Desai writes. Nevertheless he strikes up a tentative attachment to his granddaughter perhaps because she is a lot like him, a Westernized Indian, an "estranged Indian living in India."

In two parallel strands which eventually collide, the narrative follows Sai's life in Klaimpong and that of the cook's son, Biju, who has been sent to America by his father. Sai and the slightly older tutor, Gyan, engage in a brief crush. Soon, however, the political moment envelopes the relationship. Gyan ends up being transported by history, and finds himself rallying for the cause of fellow Nepali Indians who seek to have their own country or at least their own state. In India, during the 1980s, the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) led an often very violent movement seeking a Nepali state. Desai's book captures some of this history well.

The novel is set around the time that the local Nepalese sought a separate state in India and their village as it went from idyllic and ideal to absolute unspeakable chaos and violence. Perhaps Desai wanted it that way, because her novel is really more than just about the people and the plot in itself but about the issues that the people of India have suffered. She explains in different ways how colonialism has affected the people in different social classes and age groups. The cook’s son Biju’s storyline and reading about what it was like to be an illegal immigrant in New York City struggling to make it through.

The main portions of the book are the nuggets Desai paints of the cook's son Biju who gets by on the barest of bare from one minimum wage job to the other in New York City. “In the Gandhi café, the lights were kept low, the better to hide the stains. It was a long journey from here to the fusion trend, the goat cheese and basil samosa, the mango margarita.” (145), Desai writes when she describes one of the Indian restaurants Biju works at.

Desai's writing is languid and beautiful with delightful color of phrase. Even the forests of Kalimpong with their mists and darkness come alive in her writing. However, some of her character portrayals seem somewhat studied and clinical. At one point, Gyan looks at some revolutionaries protesting and complains: "The men were behaving as if they were being featured in a documentary about war” (157). The same complaint could possibly be applied to some of the characters- their actions and methods seem too rigid and preset, not organic. The judge remains a somewhat mysterious character till the very end. It is not satisfactorily clear why he adopts the types of life that he lives, or why he eventually abandons both his wife and daughter.

Where Desai does shine however, is not just in the detailing of Biju's life alone but in subtly contrasting his life with that of his father's. While seemingly different, their desperate bid to unsuccessfully shake off the burdens of poverty and class, are beautifully portrayed. Desai is at her best when showing how even globalization cannot solve the trappings of class. A character in the book paints the act of immigration as an act of cowardice:

> Immigration, so often presented as a heroic act, could just as easily be the opposite: that it was cowardice that led many to America: fear marked the journey, not bravery: a cockroachy desire to scuttle to where you never saw poverty, not really, never had to suffer a tug to our conscience: where you never heard the demands of servants, beggars, bankrupt relatives, and where your generosity would never be openly claimed: where by merely looking after your own wife-child-dog-yard you could feel virtuous. Experience the relief of being an unknown transplant to the locals and hide the perspective granted by journey. (299)

Biju, the cook's son, might not agree with the assessment. Biju is an illegal immigrant in New York and works in one hellish kitchen after another, exploited, poor and terribly lonely and homesick. The sections of the novel that deal with Biju's life in New York are the most powerful- and the most acutely observed. Here is Biju on a restaurant called the Stars and Stripes Diner: "All American flag on top, all Guatemalan flag below. Plus one Indian flag when Biju arrived" (21). As the days – usurped by exhaustion and hunger and ill treatment – go by, Biju comes to realize this truth: "It was horrible what happened to Indians abroad and nobody knew but other Indians abroad. It was a dirty little rodent secret" (234).

Desai's grasp on the physical details of the world is assured. Her prose lingers lovingly on the quotidian and invests it with magic. Rarely does a page pass without one exquisitely observed passage. But that is purely an artistic achievement. When one considers the novel from a political framework, it falls short showing up as a recommendable work of art. There are too lopsided representations of the nations and people from the non-west.

1.2 Review of Literature

Kiran Desai's first novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) is about a family whose son goes to America for study and suffers social discrimination over there, and eventually returns India for a relatively obscure life. Further than that, the novel throws little light as to the Gorkhaland agitation, the repressive state regime imposed by the central government of India. The novel bagged the prestigious Booker Prize for 2006. With this, the novel was catapulted to the arena of literary debate and appreciation. Some of the relevant scholars and critics are quoted and interpreted below.

First, it was a Nepali novelist poet and critic D.B. Gurung who expressed his utter shock as to how so blasphemous a novel as Desai's could be awarded such a prestigious award. Gurung detects in Desai's authorial personality "an ugly remnant of colonized mind". This is the result of the writer's hybrid situatedness in literary and practical life. To quote him:

> *The Inheritance of Loss* is the result of living a bastardized life inside and out of India that Desai seems unable to acclimatize herself either in the western milieu or of her home. The outcome is the discernible evolution of cynicism, apathy and misanthropic tendencies. (Gurung 4)

Surya Prasad Khanal, another critic, also joins the same line of argument as adapted by Gurung, and condemns the colonial perspective of the novel. He opines that the novel has been too negative while depicting the Nepali characters. As he puts it:

> My question is: Why Desai should create such ugly portrayal of Kalimpong and its residents, mostly Nepalis (not to mention anything about the Buddhists, Christians or Muslim communities) through the non-Nepali characters like Lola, Noni and Mrs. Sen? The text is intentionally and blatantly attacks on the sentiment and dignity of the Nepali community. (Khanal 4)

Despite the accusation of the above mentioned critics for the novel's lopsided representation of Nepali community, many have come up with lavish praises for the novel. Some of them are cited below for comparative study along with the critical ones above. The blurb on the novel records the opinions of some established literary journals.

Kiran Desai's new novel manages to explore, with intimacy and insight, just about every contemporary international issue: globalization, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence. Despite being set in the mid-1980s, it seems the best kind of post-9/11 novel. (*New York Times)*

Similarly, Michael Carlisle of the *Publishers Weekly* also emphasizes the issue of exile and ambiguities of post colonialism in the novel:

> This stunning second novel from Desai is set in mid-1980s India, on the cusp of the Nepalese movement for an independent state. Jemubhai Popatlal, a retired Cambridge-educated judge, lives in Kalimpong, at the foot of the Himalayas, with his orphaned granddaughter, Sai, and his cook. [...]. All of the characters struggle with their cultural identity and the forces of modernization while trying to maintain their emotional connection to one another. 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.

Arun Kumar Pokhrel, another critic, also mainly focuses the colonial perspective of the novel. He emphasizes the issue of marginality and subalternity of post colonialism in the novel:

> As the characters in the novel move between the two worlds and cultures. They also spatially and temporally positioned in the novel. Gyan and the agitating Gorkhas in Kalimpong represent the voice of the marginalized and oppressed group, who are treated like aliens in their own homeland. But what is more intriguing to me here is Desai's usage of negative stereotypes to describe Gyan and the Nepali community, therefore creating binaries between "we/us" and "they/them", insiders and outsiders, and main stream Indians and subaltern Nepalis. (Pokhrel 4)

Pankaj Mishra finds an "uncanny flexibility and poise" in Desai's prose. But another critic Champa Bilwakwesh notes that the novel is not able to provide adequate answers to the questions it raises:

> The novel raises several large, important questions. What about the dividends from globalization? What about the celebration of hybridity, the global citizen, and the spawning of new ideas? At what point does colonialism become an excuse for corrupt government? Desai answers them in a quiet voice and not all answers are complete. (Bilwakesh)

Aamer Hussein also finds the multiplicity of topics in the novel which nearly overburden it all: "Nationalism, migration, varieties of belonging: in her hugely ambitious novel, Kiran Desai gives these grand themes an entirely new spin, unearthing their resources in earlier decades". There are other topics too, such as the Gorkhaland problem, the migrants to USA and UK, the security trouble in India, the Kathmandu black markets etc. the novel tries to treat them all, but falters often in dealing with them because the writer is wiring from a distant perspective. She does not have the first hand knowledge about the issues she is dealing with.

The critics mentioned above vary in their response to the novel some are extremely critical as are Gurung and Khanal. Some mildly appreciate the novel for its Bilwakesh. And some are all praises as are the journals. My intention is to examine the novel for its alleged complicity with the western colonial discourse on the eastern people especially on the Indians and Nepalis.

1.3 Basic Assumption and Significance of the Study

This thesis rests on the assumption that literature documents the conditions and social circumstances. That is, since literature is produced in a complex social matrix, it cannot escape the contemporaneous sociopolitical realties. In short, literature does not exist in some archival vacuum. Such a view of literature discredits the transcendentalist and aesthetic schools of literature which ascribe its birth to the creative or imaginative faculty of the author. The romantics (especially, William Wordsworth) saw literature as a different world—different from the lived world—and a world sufficient in itself. Later-day aesthete Oscar Wilde went so far as to claim that it is the life world that emulates the art world, and not vice versa. In our own times, the poststructuralist position sees all texts as a ‘play of signifiers’ and busies itself in experiencing the ‘pleasure of the text’. It thus fails to take into account the historical context or situatedness of a literary work. But a sizeable portion of literary products has its genesis in a sociopolitical context, in an intricate network of power relations. In this reference, Kiran Dessai’s second novel *The Inheritance of Loss* stands apart as a flagrant case in point, for it is the product of an alienated and ill-disposed mentality, incorrigibly corrupted by the leftover effects of colonialism.

The significance of this thesis lies in the fact that though the literary world outside India and Nepal, mostly the west, came all plaudits for the Desai’s novel, the researcher serious reservations about the west’s decision to catapult the novel to the forefront of literary achievement by conferring upon it the honor of Booker Award. The writer spills her unfounded, totally biased black anger at the Nepali community through her fictional characters. The book cannot justifiably be passed off as a work of pure fiction as it is set in real Kalimpong town, and is based on real history, though exaggerated one, with close resemblances with the inhabitants and local place names of the town. The novel portrays Nepalis residents of Kalimpong as crook, dupe, cheat and lesser human beings in every way. This thesis takes trouble to question and falsify such myths as the mere products of colonized mentality of one raised in the USA who writes on such sensitive issue as nationality, regional and ethnic independence, the character of liberation movement and all the appertaining elements without so much as once having encountered the ground reality personally.

This thesis is divided into four main chapters: introduction, discussion of tools, textual analysis, and conclusion. The first chapter presents a brief introduction to the novel as a document of the clouded perspective of a west-brought up Indian who tends to depict the political situation of northern India where the Nepalese residents are the backbone of the socio-economic structure. The ways in which this thesis would be different from others and the relevance of this research are also briefly touched upon in this chapter

The second chapter discusses the critical concepts which would be employed in analyzing the novel. In particular, the terms nation and narration, colonialism and post-colonialism, New Historicism, discourse, ethnography and subaltern are clarified so as to facilitate the study of the text drawing upon the insights provided by these theoretical tools. However, the researcher will be based on the issue of colonialism and post-colonialism. The ideas and insights generated by scholars such as Edward William Said, Aijaz Ahmed and Michel Foucoult would be touched upon here.

The third chapter elaborates the contention of the thesis supporting them with the textual excerpts in their relevant context. In the main, this chapter shows how the novel, in line with the tradition of the colonial way of writing on the native or non western people, has dehumanized and debased the people of Nepali origin.

The fourth chapter concludes the thesis with a brief recapitulation of the starting premise of the thesis and asserting how that has been proved by the end of the research work. Recapitulation of the thesis statement and its supporting abstract from the preceding three chapters would be made.

Chapter II : Postcolonialism and Desai

2.1 Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse

Simply put, discourse is a unit of language, whether spoken, written or gesticulated. Formerly, it also meant a long writing or a dissertation on a subject. This notion of discourse in general and also in linguistic parlance was drastically reformulated and given a new import only recently by the French poststructuralist theorist/thinker Michael Foucault. The Foucauldian concept of discourse has nothing to do with the traditional theory of discourse. For him, it is a system of statements which makes the world (material reality) known to us. Discourse informs us of the state of affairs, so it is informative or misinformative. Discourse also tells us of the propriety or impropriety, rightness or wrongness, of something and consequently influences our attitude, opinion and behavior. Therefore it is directive too. In his treatises *The Order of Discourse* (1971), *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1972) and *Discipline and Punish* (1972) Foucault gave currency to the terms ‘discourse practices’ and ‘discursive formation’ by which he meant the kind of statements associated with particular institutions and their ways of establishing truths or reality in a given society.

Discourse is seen as present and operative everywhere, in any field of human activity, interaction, and knowledge --or wrong knowledge, for that matter-- formation. As we have the notorious example of the theory of the Nazi propagandist doctor Joseph Goyabals, even falsities come to occupy the position of truth by the mere virtue of repetition. This unmistakably indicates: truth is nothing in itself; it does not exist outside human interest. What we call truth is an effect of language; it is a discursive formation, a truth-effect produced, sustained, and propagated by language.

Discourse theory is greatly shaped by the Whorfian notion of language. As Benjamin Lee Whorf so famously puts, "we dissect nature along lines laid down by our language" (Whorf 51). What he is saying is that our understanding of the world is helped, obstructed, or affected by our language, the range of vocabulary we have. The modern theory of language as ‘constitutive’ also underlines this creative and distorting power of language. The world is not simply there; it is brought into existence by language, which, by extension, is discourse here in this context.

As Foucault writes in *History of Sexuality*, “Indeed, it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (100). To see how statements can generate realities or at least truth effects which ultimately get metamorphosed into a tradition of knowledge. Expressing his views --slighting ones, of course-- Thomas Babington Macaulay wrote in his (now notoriously) famous *Minute of 1835 on Indian Education*:

> I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanskrit works. I have conversed, both here and at home, with men distinguished by their proficiency in the eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuations of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European Library was worth the whole native Literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the western literature is indeed fully admitted by these members of the committee who support the

> Oriental plan of education…. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England. (qtd. In Said. 12)

Speaking as recently as 1945 at the University of Chicago, delivering his Haskell Lectures on “Modern Trends in Islam”, H. A. R. Gibb opened his speech with the following comment, emphasizing the point how the Arab mind is intrinsically opposed to, alien to, and abhorrent to rationality and clear thinking:

> The student of Arabic civilization is constantly brought up against the striking contrast between the imaginative power displayed, for example, in certain branches of Arabic literature and the literalism, the pedantry, displayed in reasoning and exposition, even when it is devoted to these same productions. It is true that there have been great philosophers among the Muslim peoples and that some of them were Arabs, but they were rare exceptions. The Arab mind, whether in relation to the outer world or in relation to the processes of thought, cannot throw off its intense feeling for the separateness and the individuality of the concrete events. (qtd. in Said 438)

In his classic text *Orientalism,* which traces origin and development of the discursive practice of describing the east from the westerners’ viewpoint, Said cites Anwar Abdel Malek who has aptly pointed out how the orient had been orientalized by the orientalists:

> The Orient and Oriental (are considered by Orientalism) as an ‘object’ of study stamped with an otherness as all that is different, whether be it ‘subject’ or ‘object’- but of constitutive otherness of an essentialist

> character . . . . This object of study will be . . . passive, nonparticipating endowed with a ‘historical’ subjectivity above all, non active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself (qtd. in Said 298).

As this reference to Malek clarifies, the discourse of orientalism divests the easterners of all humanity: they lack the volition to express themselves, they cannot understand the world and themselves, therefore they are to be described by somebody else. Such a concept, in effect, treats the Orientals as mere objects, objects of study. The subject, of course, is the west armed with rationality and intellect.

Discourse, as a set of inter-connected statements on a field of knowledge, shapes our ideas and opinions. Apparently, then, it valorizes some beliefs and ideas as knowledge or truth, and consigns the rest as useless or untrue. For example, the justifiability and necessary of the practice of colonialism is always at the heart of colonial discourse, central to which is the assumption that European values --such as rationality, science, civilization, high seriousness of literature – are not to be found in other societies. Similarly, in Nepali context, in all the literary productions under the caste and clan based system of ideology, noble qualities are attributed to the so called Aryan race. Therefore, the Aryans are supposed to be the rulers, preachers and administrators. Religious texts teach this, and social and even some of the state laws endorse such a view. Such concepts are disseminated by discourse by which we mean all the written and even the unwritten statements which may be laws or information bits or documents of any sort.

It is in the capacity of discourse to create truth effects or realities. Discourse creates or modifies them as and when it befits the interest of the dominant stakeholder in the power-politics of the times of its production and circulation. Herein lies the power and importance of discourse. It can easily mislead the people under its reach into believing as true what in reality may be a whopper; or, conversely, it may effectively falsify what is true. Creating concrete realities out of imagination or deliberate and purposeful manipulation of language and information has always been at the heart of the task of discourse.

As mentioned above, colonial discourse rest upon a dichotomy: the West versus the East. The West (us) is always possessed of all the human virtues that are extolled universally, whereas the colonized (them) is irrational and uncivilized. Hence, the colonizers had to take up their burden to civilize the Other. They had to go to the colonial outposts to teach the natives the decent way of life, of government of religion. And in doing so, the colonizer had to become rude even, at times. Of course, colonial discourse never questions the motives behind colonial expansion: to gain control over the global market. Was it really to civilize the backward people living in the non-western-lands? The fact is that there resources --both human and natural— were exploited to the extent irrevocable by the colonizing powers is never mentioned in colonial discourse.

Postcolonial criticism, licensed with the awareness of the insights imparted by the cultural discourse suspicion on the part of colonized people, seeks to undermine imperial subjects and themes. It has forcefully produced parallel discourses which have questioned and even subverted the since long cherished stereotypes and myths about the other. By this, westerners have become, as Said puts it in *Orientalism*, “aware that what they have to say about the history and the cultures of ’subordinate’ people is challengeable by the people themselves who a few years back were aptly incorporated, culture, and, history and all into the great western empires and their disciplinary discourses" (Said 299).

The adjective 'postcolonial' is more useful as an awakened state of consciousness of the colonized people rather than as a strict periodization. Thus, a text written in the then historical colonial time can be called postcolonial in so far as it goes against the prevalent colonial discursive practices of demeaning and dehumanizing the colonized subject. Here, if a text opposes the inhuman practices of colonialism; if it exposes its vices and dangers; it is postcolonial. The term has also been used in its hyphenated forms (post-colonial or post-colonialism) to stress the time frames and practices that came after colonialism. In any event, it is a disputation of the legacies of colonialism though the presence of the prefix ‘post’ presupposes the perpetuation of colonialism, or its effects, right into the present era.

To understand the significance and need of postcolonial criticism in its full import, one may refer to Chinua Achebe’s much debated, appreciated and talked of essay “Colonialist Criticism” (1975). As Achebe has fairly successfully shown in this provocative analysis, what the West/Europe conceives and celebrates as universal is merely European and nothing more, and therefore quite unacceptable to other cultures:

> Does it ever occur to these universalists to try out their game of changing names of characters and places in an American novel, say, a Philip Roth or an Updike, and slotting in African names just to see how it works? But of course it would not occur to them. [. . .] I should like to see the word “universal” banned altogether from discussions of African literature until such a time as people cease to use it as a synonym for the narrow, self-serving parochialism of Europe, until their horizon extends to include the entire world. (1193-94)

A postcolonial reading of a text – whether it is written in the colonial era or merely in the colonial tradition – subverts all such colonial institutions. What was formerly seen and lauded as classic now becomes merely Eurocentric and ethnocentric; whatever was valorized as having been informed by universalism is now brought to its real status as parochial and blinded by the supremacist illusion of racism.

2.2 Coloniality, Postcoloniality and Desai

Discourse, as we have seen, creates truths, negates the existing ones, or modifies them as and when it befits the interest of the dominant stakeholder in the power-politics of the times of its production and circulation. Herein lies the power and importance of discourse. It can easily mislead the people under its reach into believing as true what in reality may be a whopper; or, conversely, it may effectively falsify what is true. Creating concrete realities out of imagination or deliberate and purposeful manipulation of language and information has always been at the heart of the task of discourse. The colonialist or the Eurocentric discourse --Eurocentric, for all the colonial powers were from Europe -- which Edward Said designates as ‘Orientalism’ in his book of the same title, has always tried to create an inferior image of the Orient or the East in comparison to that of the west. A brief concept of orientalism along with its history and function is therefore due here.

One of the definitions of orientalism provided by Said maintains that it is a “western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the orient" (3). For Said, orientalism is a style of thought, a corporate project, a system of texts --of history, sociology, anthropology-- that differentiates between the West (us) and the Orient (them). It was not an act of imaginative significance only; it had (and still has) an immerse political significance for, as Said contends “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self"(3). Said also makes it clear that orientalism is not just a pack of lies or fantasies. Had it been so, it would not have endured from the ancient times down to the present. What accounts for the durability of orientalism is the fact that there has been a “considerable material investment" in the theory and practice of orientalism which has now been consolidated as knowledge. Moreover, Said’s division of orientalism into latent and manifest makes it clear how this knowledge has been absorbed even into the unconscious or deeper psychic level. Without being conscious that we are upholding the western superiority over the eastern barbarity, even we, the Orientals, will be doing so --this all because of the constant imbibing of the orientalist notions. The same is its effect on the western mind. Consequently, even people with a wide and informed state of intellect can hardly escape from being somehow indoctrinated into the divisive politics of orientalism. Some sort of fear, grudge or distrust is always present in the westerners’ psyche though they may not have come across any such experience of treachery or savagery at the hands of the Orientals.

Orientalism has always been a distinction between the west and the rest. The ontological difference is based on their geographical location: the orient lying to the east of the west, and the west lying to the west of the east. This ontological difference then leads to an epistemological difference whereby the orient becomes the object of knowledge --it is to be understood, captured, and dominated while the knower and the controller is the west, occupying the subject position. Seen thus, the relations between the east and the west are "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said 5). The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci first used the term hegemony to mean "rule by consent". Now, it is not only the orientaslists or the westerners who are informed by the oreientalist (mis)knowledge; it is the easterners too who uncritically accept as true whatever is consigned the status of truth by the discourse of orientalaism. The Orientals or easterners feel proud in following western style of thought, language, literature – lifestyle, in short -- because they feel that in doing so their status their own society is uplifted. Orientalism then is a sort of hegemony: the Orientals agree to follow as superior the ways of the westerners, thereby hoping to appear more civilized than their own kinds who are not so receptive of the western influences.

The detrimental impact of orientalism in the psyche of both the easterners and westerners is massive. What is really irritating is the fact that now, more acutely than ever before owing to quick and exaggerating machinery of information technology, news and information bits are pre-selected and annotated so as to suit the material or cultural interest of those involved in circulating the information. This premeditated dissemination of information prepares a mass ready to accept as the given and true what they are accustomed to being fed as the same. The centuries of literary and political representations of the east as incapable of rationality, logic and restraint have actually gone bone deep in acquiring the consent of the so designated people. One wonders if Said was not aware of what the notoriously outspoken Indian intellectual Nirad C. Chaudhary had written long ago in his *An Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (195). Chaudhary maintained that the Indians were incapable of ruling themselves; therefore the arrival of the Europeans, specially the British people, there in India was a historical inevitability.

The justifiability and necessary of the practice of colonialism is always at the heart of colonial discourse, central to which is the assumption that European values -- such as rationality, science, civilization, high seriousness of literature -- are superior to the values espoused by the non-European peoples. In literature, this takes the form of exaggeration where the unbearability of nonwestern climate (heat and dust of India, a flagrant instance!); presence of fatal insects; and dark, uninhabited or only-beast-inhabited lands are presented as posing threat to the westerners who go there from cool, lenient climates. Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* can well be seen as yet another contribution to the bulk of literary texts that portray the non-European or non-western land as hostile to the civilized, artistic sensibility.

As mentioned in the earlier sections, colonial discourse rest upon a dichotomy: the West versus the East. The West (us) is always possessed of all the human virtues that are extolled universally, whereas the colonized (them) is irrational and uncivilized. Hence, the colonizers had to take up their burden to civilize the other. They had to go to the colonial outposts to teach the natives the decent way of life, of government of religion. And in doing so, the colonizer had to become rude even, at times. Of course, colonial discourse never questions the motives behind colonial expansion: to gain control over the global market. Was it really to civilize the backward people living in the non-western-lands? The fact is that there resources --both human and natural --were exploited to the extent irrevocable by the colonizing powers is never mentioned in colonial discourse.

Frantz Fanon, one of the eminent postcolonial writers and critics, seems to be more radical on this issue as Said in his *Culture and Imperialism* writes that Fanon "reverses the hitherto accepted paradigm by which Europe gave the colonies their modernity and argues instead that only we are 'the well being and the progress Europe built up with the sweat and the dead bodies of Negros, Arabs, Indians and the yellow races' but Europe is literally the creation of the third world" (197). Elleke Boehmer, too, in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literatures* writes on Fanon that, "In his book *The*

Wretched of the Earth, Fanon called for the entire structure of colonial society to be changed from the bottom up violently. For him, to decolonize meant that the indigenous be forcefully substituted for the alien, in literature as in life…" That means, "the colonized had to 'insult' and 'vomit up' the white man's values" (183).

As Ania Loomba argues so convincingly in her landmark text *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (2005), it is no longer productive in a meaningful sense to argue against colonialism in the name of postcolonialism. In the book, Ania Loomba examines the key features of the ideologies and history of colonialism, the relationship of colonial discourse to literature, challenges to colonialism, and recent developments in post-colonial theories and histories in the writings of contemporary theorists, including Edward Said, Abdul JanMohamed, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. She goes on to consider the challenges to colonialism, surveying anti-colonial discourses, and recent developments in postcolonial theories and histories. Therein she delineates the association between and from colonialism to colonial discourse and material processes

The better option is, if not to entirely embrace the neo-colonial capitalist globalization, it is useful to sieve out the edifying and leave out the debilitating impacts of the colonial/postcolonial debates. As Loomba argues, in an age where there are enthuasiastic theories about global village, universal citizenship and hybridity and impurity, it may not be much useful to stick to the divide of colonialism and postcolonialism. Even then, as the Caribbean novelist George Lamming put it, "the colonial experience is a live experience in the consciousness of these people. [. . . .] The experience is a continuing psychic experience that has to be dealt with and will have to be dealt with long after the actual colonial situation formally ends" (qtd. in Loomba, 155). So, the relevance of postcolonial studies cannot be undermined.

Post-colonial theory deals with the reading and writing of literature written in previously or currently colonized countries, or literature written in colonizing countries which deals with colonization or colonized peoples. It focuses particularly on the way in which literature by the colonizing culture distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority, of the colonized people on literature by colonized peoples which attempts to articulate their identity and reclaim their past in the face of that past's inevitable otherness. It can also deal with the way in which literature in colonizing countries appropriates the language, images, scenes, traditions and so forth of colonized countries. This page addresses some of the complexities of the post-colonial situation, in terms of the writing and reading situation of the colonized people, and of the colonizing people.

Postcolonial theory is built in large part around the concept of otherness. There are however problems with or complexities to the concept of otherness. For instance, otherness includes doubleness, both identity and difference, so that every other, every different than and excluded by is dialectically created and includes the values and meaning of the colonizing culture even as it rejects its power to define. The western concept of the oriental is based, as Abdul JanMohamed argues, on the “Manichean allegory”—seeing the world as divided into mutually excluding opposites: if the west is ordered, rational, masculine, good, then the orient is chaotic, irrational, feminine, and evil. Simply to reverse this polarizing is to be complicit in its totalizing and identity-destroying power (Loomba, 91). All is reduced to a set of dichotomies, black or white, etc.

Colonized peoples are highly diverse in their nature and in their traditions, and as beings in cultures they are both constructed and changing, so that while they may be 'other' from the colonizers, they are also different one from another and from their own pasts, and should not be totalized or essentialized -- through such concepts as a black consciousness, Indian soul, aboriginal culture and so forth. This totalization and essentialization is often a form of nostalgia which has its inspiration more in the thought of the colonizers than of the colonized, and it serves give the colonizer a sense of the unity of his culture while mystifying that of others.

Postcolonial theory is also built around the concept of resistance, of resistance as subversion, or opposition, or mimicry -- but with the haunting problem that resistance always inscribes the resisted into the texture of the resisting: it is a two-edged sword. As well, the concept of resistance carries with it or can carry with it ideas about human freedom, liberty, identity, individuality, etc., which ideas may not have been held, or held in the same way, in the colonized culture's view of humankind. On a simple political and cultural level, there are problems with the fact that to produce a literature which helps to reconstitute the identity of the colonized one may have to function in at the very least the means of production of the colonizers -- the writing, publishing, advertising and production of books, for instance. These may well require a centralized economic and cultural system which is ultimately either a western import or a hybrid form, uniting local conceptions with western conceptions. The concept of producing a national or cultural literature is in most cases a concept foreign to the traditions of the colonized peoples, who had no literature as it is conceived in the western traditions or in fact no literature or writing at all, and) did not see art as having the same function as constructing and defining cultural identity. It is always a changed, a reclaimed but hybrid identity, which is created or called forth by the colonizeds' attempts to constitute and represent identity.

The very concepts of nationality and identity may be difficult to conceive or convey in the cultural traditions of colonized peoples. There are complexities and perplexities around the difficulty of conceiving how a colonized country can reclaim or reconstitute its identity in a language that is now but was not its own language, and genres which are now but were not the genres of the colonized. It can become very difficult then for others to recognize or respect the work as literature.

The term 'hybrid' used refers to the concept of hybridity, an important concept in post-colonial theory, referring to the integration (or, mingling) of cultural signs and practices from the colonizing and the colonized cultures ("integration" may be too orderly a word to represent the variety of stratagems, desperate or cunning or good-willed, by which people adapt themselves to the necessities and the opportunities of more or less oppressive or invasive cultural impositions, live into alien cultural patterns through their own structures of understanding, thus producing something familiar but new). The assimilation and adaptation of cultural practices, the cross-fertilization of cultures, can be seen as positive, enriching, and dynamic, as well as oppressive. Hybridity is also a useful concept for helping to break down the false sense that colonized cultures -- or colonizing cultures for that matter -- are monolithic, or have essential, unchanging features. The representation of these uneven and often hybrid, polyglot, multivalent cultural sites (reclaimed or discovered colonized cultures searching for identity and meaning in a complex and partially alien past) may not look very much like the representations of bourgeois culture in western art, ideologically shaped as western art is to represent its own truths (that is, guiding fictions) about itself. To quote Homi Bhabha on the complex issue of representation and meaning from his article in Greenblatt and Gun's *Redrawing the Boundaries*:

> Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. It is transnational because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement, whether they are

> the middle passage of slaver and indenture, the voyage out of the civilizing mission, the fraught accommodation of Third World migration to the West after the Second World War, or the traffic of economic and political refugees within and outside the Third World. Culture is translational because such spatial histories of displacement -- now accompanied by the territorial ambitions of global media technologies -- make the question of how culture signifies, or what is signified by culture, a rather complex issue. (520)

In addition to the post-colonial literature of the colonized, there exists as well the postcolonial literature of the colonizers. As people of British heritage moved into new landscapes, established new founding national myths, and struggled to define their own national literature against the force and tradition of the British tradition, they themselves, although of British or European heritage, ultimately encountered the originating traditions as Other, a tradition and a writing to define oneself against.

Every colony had an emerging literature which was an imitation of but differed from the central British tradition, which articulated in local terms the myths and experience of a new culture, and which expressed that new culture as, to an extent, divergent from and even opposed to the culture of the "home", or colonizing, nation. The colonizers largely inhabited countries which absorbed the peoples of a number of other heritages and cultures (through immigration, migration, the forced mingling of differing local cultures, etc.), and in doing so often adapted to use the myths, symbols and definitions of various traditions. In this way as well the literature of the hitherto colonizers becomes 'post-colonial'. (It is curiously the case that British literature itself has been colonized by colonial/postcolonial writers writing in Britain out of colonial experiences and a colonial past.) In this regard a salient difference between colonialist literature (literature written by colonizers, in the colonized country, on the model of the "home" country and often for the home country as an audience) and post-colonial literature, is that colonialist literature is an attempt to replicate, continue, equal, the original tradition, to write in accord with British standards; postcolonial literature is often but not inevitably self-consciously a literature of otherness and resistance, and is written out of the specific local experience.

Cultural tensions have always been a rich source of creativity as they involve significant issues like alienation and adjustment, dislocation and isolation, identity and crisis of faith etc. India, being the vast spatial and cultural space where people from the world over come into contact with, has remained a perennial penchant for their writings. The theme of East-West encounter has been one of the most favorite themes of Indo-English as well as Anglo- Indian writers. It presupposes an awareness of the interaction between the two cultural and geographical spheres and also an attempt to come to terms with them.

These Anglo- Indian writers have treated this theme in a different manner. Medows Tylor attempted in Seeta, Tara and Ralph Darnell wrote in the tradition of the 19th century historical novel and the theme in his hands gets a romantic treatment. Kipling tries to understand the mystery of the east in his novel *Kim*, but in his other writings there is a great deal of racial arrogance which precludes proper understanding of cultural differences, tensions or reconciliations. In *The Continent of Cerci*, Nirad C. Chaudhari says: “I often say that *Wind in the Willows* is the fable of the Englishman at home, and *The Jungle Book* that of the Englishman in India” (136). Chaudhari thinks that the “Red Dog” is a story made of a fable out of the Mutiny. According to the critic R.G. Agrawal in “Esmond in India: A Study”, “It was E.M. Forster who took up the theme of East-West encounter more seriously than any of his predecessors” in his *Passage to India* (48). Interestingly enough, what all these Anglo-Indian writers have in common --with hindsight we are able to see – is that they, one way or the other propounded the theme of the incompatibility of the two cultures for the obvious reason that the western culture is inherently far more superior to the eastern one. This shared theme consigns all these texts as a form of colonial discourse in Indian literature.

Forster’s *A Passage to India*, has been recognized, by many critics and readers, as one of the best modern classics. He has made a vigorous attempt to depict the social and political life of British-India in this novel. Some of the critics believe that his own personal experiences and impressions that he received during his stay in India have played a vital role in shaping the structures of the novel. Forster makes an attempt to understand the spirit and the meaning of India. He also tries to probe whether it is possible for the Englishmen to be friends with the Indians.

The colonial perspective in Forster’s rhetoric in the novel becomes even more conspicuous when a character named Fielding experiences a sudden sense of relief and freedom in his return journey to Mediterranean. He describes “The building of Venice, like the mountains of Crete and fields of Egypt, stood in the right place” (279). Fielding’s rejoicing of the Mediterranean, his delight in having experienced the beauty of form metaphorically suggests Forster’s own affirmation of western categories of meanings, his celebration of western norms and values.

These examples are some out of many and from all these one can safely conclude that Forster’s representation of India becomes incomprehensible and ungraspable. This is so because perception from the English perspective is almost always bund to be slanted and negative. Thus, it can be said that *A Passage to India* is an exemplary text impregnated with colonial discourse.

Yet another executioner of colonial rendition of India is an Anglo- Indian Rudyard Kipling. He has been condemned as an imperialist and a propagandist committed to promoting the image of British Empire. His Indian stories "Soldiers Three" and "In Black and White" are replete with the instances of racism and ethnocentrism. In these stories, Kipling portrays the Indians as "wife killers, scamps, betrayers of their own brothers, unfaithful wives, corrupt political leaders and gullible" (qtd. in Rushdie 75).

On the ground of dialectical level, Kipling's invention Indiaspeak is so much exclamatory. Salman Rushdie refers to it by pointing out as 'Ahoo! Ahoo!' and 'Ahi! Ahi!' and even 'Auggrh!' to suggest that the Indians are a people incapable of anything but outbursts. He writes that some of these sounds are "like salaaming exoticism of the Pantomime." (77).

The most remarkable story in this collection is unquestionably "On the City Wall" which is narrated by an English journalist who, in common will 'all the city'. Lulan tricks the narrator into assisting in the escape of the revolutionary, Khem Singh, which seems central to the story's significance and the climax. To this Salman Rushdie criticizes:

> Kipling states most emphatically his belief that India can never stand alone, without British leadership' and in which he ridicules Indian attempts to acquire the superior culture of England, leaves us with an image of inability of the sahibs to comprehend what they pretend to rule.(80)

Even his masterpiece *Kim* is criticized on the grounds of boosting colonial attitude. It is the story primarily of an Irish boy who he represents India as an exotic, mysterious, traditional and backward space. Thus he writes; “all India is full of holy men stammering gospels in strange tongues; shaken and consumed by the fires of theirs own zeal; dreamers, babblers and visionaries; as it has been from the beginning and will continue to the end” (26). Kipling here seems to generalize that all the Indians are religious and nothing more. Besides, the characterization of the Lama who attains 'nirvana' when he abandons the physical search for the river of arrow is an apex of Buddhist philosophy; that goes at the level of extremely mysterious and spiritual tendency of the Indian Buddhist. He writes about Lama:

> I took no food. I drank no water. Still I saw not the way… so I removed myself to a hollow under a tree. I took no food no water I sat in meditation two days and two nights, abstracting my mind; upon the second night, --so great was my reward --the wise soul loosed itself from the silly body and went free. (Kipling 50)

Thus, the representation of the orient by the West is being an ideological construct exerting power over the orient. Forster and Kipling’s representation of India, too, inherits the tradition of this discursive strategy of the west as they have represented Indian along with the line of long cherished stereotypic practices- Indians as unruly, effeminate, irrational and incapable of independence. It would be useful here to bring in the concept of the act of writing the monolithic history of the mainstream or dominant group while at the same time obliterating the history of the marginal. Actually, there is no single history; there are histories.

Chapter III : Colonial Vestiges and Indian Independence

3.1 Writing from Outside

A writer whose root goes back to the formerly colonized land can never hope to be free of the intricate love-hate attitude s/he enjoys as regards her relation with the country of her ancestral origin. They are disillusioned, therefore they are critical of their present plight in a metropolis where, despite their best allegiance toward the newly adopted country, they are somehow or other treated as the second rate citizens. They are often reminded of their homelands which have by now become imaginary since they are virtually out of contact with it save in family sagas and recounting of odd tale by the elder inmates about the bygone good days of yore. This dilemma, the penchant for the ancestral homeland, but the unwillingness to overtly go settle there or even to align oneself to the source as more than a fantasizer is what characterizes a colonial mindset in the first place. It may sound a bit harsh, but as Aijaj Ahmad also has stated so succinctly, the self-exiled intellectuals, the experts on the east, from the east who are now safely stationed in the western metropolis and academia, have no justifiable ground to claim the position of minority, and the subsequent privilege appertaining thereunto. Neither can they claim any commentary privilege, a writer of history of the natives back at home while themselves in the cozy parlors of the world centers. Despite this, many quack westerners, who are easterners really, whose black skins can never be sufficiently whitewashed, deploy the cheap marketplace trick of emotional blackmailing. They appear as if they are sorry to be away from their country and people, who suffered the yoke of colonialism for centuries, and pretend to invest their time and energy writing on the deserted country and its unfortunate denizens. But it does never occur to them to practically revisit and resettle their homelands. The homeland, if ever it is taken as one, would always remain a much hyped and exoticized but never so much cared or loved as to require the writer to understand its ground reality, turn out, as the orient did in the high western colonial era, to be a veritable mine for extracting odd bits of travelogues, politically shallow tracts and mythologized anthropological documentaries. No self-exiled worth their capacity as a writer dares to come to the ground reality of the nooks and corners of the once colonized, now politically, technically independent, but mentally colonized land. This proposition is borne witness to by the very epigraph for the novel, a poem by Jorge Louis Borges which includes, among other big words such as ‘humanity,’ the very much cashed ‘homeland’:

> They speak of humanity.
> My humanity is in feeling we are all voices of the same poverty.
> They speak of homeland.
> My homeland is the rhythm of a guitar, a few portraits, an old sword, the Willow Grove’s visible prayer as evening falls.
> Time is living me.
> More silent than my shadow, I pass through the loftily covetous multitude.
> They are indispensable, singular, worthy of tomorrow.
> My name is someone and anyone.
> I walk slowly, like one who comes from so far away he doesn’t expect to arrive. (iii)

The poet locates humanity in speaking of poverty in the same voice. Poverty is a much harped-on theme of the non-west to incur monetary donations from the west. The poet, as one sees, is from Latin America, comparatively poorer land than Europe or North America. Since the poem is cited by Desai, one has the license to say that it applies to condition n of Asia and Africa as well. The poet recalls the poverty back at home but, this call of humanity is unsavory: it is about poverty. Therefore he has to forge a new and vague relationship with his homeland, and it is his newly identity as a westerner to be lost in guitar, prayers, the multitudes among which she becomes inconspicuous and free of responsibility. This case is equally applicable to Kiran Desai's fate as an Indian raised up in America. She recalls her homeland, and the appertaining poverty there. One cannot help asking if India is nothing more than a vast land inhabited by poverty-stricken people who have a deeply seated desire to travel to the west to be successful in their life. Actually, it is Desai's personal strategy as a writer to gain favour in the west by writing on the east as a bizarre land, suffering from material and mental poverty.

One characteristic of the exiled writers is their self-professed veteran expertise in analyzing the political turmoil in their ancestral country. Kiran Desai does not lay behind in doing the same for India. She appears to have grasped the root or as we say the 'bone of contention' of the separatist movements gaining strength in Punjab, Jharkhand, Assam, Sikkim and many other states of India. What she does is ultimately sling some lumps of mud to her politically unfavored party or some neighbouring country for a mere surmised conclusion that they have been shelter to the insurgents. Desai's novel is replete with such childish and pat accusations against the Nepalis who are time and again referred to as the 'Neps', a derogatory abbreviation; Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, is described as the breeding bed of the northern Indian insurgent movements. The weapons are, the novel records, bought and sold in the "Kathmandu black-market" (Desai 4), easily forgetting that it is in metropolises like Bombay where hundred of people are robbed and shot dead in the broad daylight.

The anti-Nepali vehemence of Desai is beyond the comprehension of any sane reader. The distrust, it seems, stems from the fact that she did not reside in India so as to feel her relation with the neighboring countries. Secondly, she has adopted named swallowed, hook, line and sinker, whatever knowledge she gathered from the British and American archives regarding the political facets of the South Asian region. She inherited a legacy of loss; one founded on the once blooming colonial expansionist enterprise, but now come in the more subtle forms of consumer market economy and hypnotism of cultural icons such as Hollywood stars and American Idol. “They had come through the forest on foot, in leather jackets from, the Kathmandu black market, khaki pants, bandanas—universal guerilla fashion. One of the boys carried a gun” (4). Such murky descriptions as this holds no water; not one but thousands of gangsters and killers roam around the Indian big cities with an intent to commit arson, murder, robbery and kidnapping for ransom money. If an unsuspecting Nepali visits these crime beds, s/he is not likely to come back safe and un-cheated. But when the long downtrodden people organize some rebellion, it is downright condemned as mere rebellion. Desai spares no opportunity to slight and vilify the movement by presenting it in bits of scornful scenes:

> ‘Say, *Jai* Gorkha,’ they said to the judge. ‘Gorkhaland for Gorkhas.’
>
> ‘*Jai* Gorkha.
>
> Say, ‘I am fool.’ Loudly. Can’t hear you, *huzoo*r. Say it louder.
>
> He said it in the same empty voice. (7)

Instead of going into the roots of the strife and discontents, Desai’s novel makes a farfetched surmise, turns an omniscient, and assumes an attitude of the preacher to tell the reader so lightly about such issues as the annexation of Sikkim to India, the dispute over Kalimpong and Darjeeling, the complex hate-love relationship between

Nepal and India, and the much more sensitive issue of Indians of Nepali origin who are still treated more as Nepalis than as Indian citizens. The scene is one of tumult and uncertainty; the fear of abrupt conflagration of racial hatred becoming darker each moment:

> In Kalimpong, high in the northeastern Himalayas where they lived—the retired judge and his cook, Sai, and Mutt—there was a report of new dissatisfaction in the hills, gathering insurgency, men and guns. [. . .] A great amount of warring, betraying, bartering had occurred; between Nepal, England, Tibet India, Sikkim, Bhutan; Darjeeling stolen from here, Kalimpong plucked from there—despite, ah, despite the mist charging down like a dragon, dissolving, undoing, making ridiculous the drawing of borders. (9)

The northern part of India became an attraction owing to the cool temperate climate there which the colonizers, the British, were in tune with. Hence, there is their presence in this physically rugged and difficult area. There are edifices, constructions and houses built for the use of the officers and commoners from the colonial enterprise. Places which would otherwise not have been noticed are recorded and given minute accoyunt of only because the britishe settlesr had invested interest in them. How even an insignificant structure gains significance because it has been discovered, and of course, discoursed, is evident from the citation below:

> The house had been built long ago by a Scotsman, passionate reader of the accounts of that period: *the Indian Alaps and How We Crossed Them*, by A Lady Pioneer. *Land of the Lama*. *The Phantom Rickshaw*. *My Mercara Home. Black Panther of Singrauli.* Porters had carried boulders from the riverbed –legs growing bandy, ribs curving into

> caves, backs into U's, faces being bent slowly to look always at the ground –up to this site chosen for a view that could raise the human heart to spiritual heights.(12)

The house in itself is one of numerous such houses. It is not worthwhile spending pages describing them. But the writer thought it would illuminate the issue and she painted it verbally; may be in reality there was never one with such features. But anyway we accept the house was there. So what? What does the novel want to prove? To prove that by settling at the remote hilly parts of India, the colonizers contributed to education and other modern facilities there. It would be like burning down one's house and rejoicing that now one can get some sacks of coal to sell from the debris! But the real thrust of this thesis is to show how easily the writers forget the reality and come to eroticize the exquisiteness, marvel and spirituality of such a practically impossible hilly life. But what about the fact that the establishment of transport system, even education in India was primarily intended not at uplifting the life standards of the natives but for expanding the colonial trade and producing the required work force for the maintenance of this enterprise in such a vast sub-continent. The motive for expansion of education in India was so succinctly laid down by Thomas Macaulay as early as1835 in his paper "Minute on Indian Education". He says:

> I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanskrit works. [. . .] I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European Library was worth the whole native Literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the western literature is

> indeed fully admitted by these members of the committee who support the Oriental plan of education. [. . .] (12)

Among the numerous dehumanizing portraits and references pertaining to Nepalese, the one below is about a caretaker at the house of Noni and Lola. The very nomenclature of the guard is one of disparagement. The word ‘budhoo’ translates in English as ‘fool’ or a ‘blockhead’. As other discussions in the novel on Nepalis too indicate, the novel because of the jaundiced perspective of its author is marred with anti-Nepal sentiment without any palpable reason. Nepalese is are depicted as slow in brain, fit for carrying heavy loads and all sorts of manual jobs, not those which require mental skill. It is ascribed to their having much rice two times a day. The same slant against Nepalis gets expressed here in the naming of the guard: “Budhoo? But he’s Nepali. Who can trust him now? It’s always the watchman in a case of robbery.” (43) They pass on the information and share the spoils, and they talk about certain Mrs. Thondup who used to have that Nepali fellow, and who, on returning from Calcutta one year, found the house wiped clean, clean of cups, plates, beds, chairs, wiring, light fixtures, every single thing – even the chains and floats in the toilets. One of the men had tried to steal the cables along the road and they found him electrocuted. Every bamboo had been cut and sold, every lime was off the tree. Holes had been bored into their water pipes so every hut on the hillside was drawing water from their supply—and no sign of the watchman, of course. What had happened to him is reported in the novel: “Quick across the border, he’d disappeared back into Nepal” (43-44). So they once think of telling Budhoo to go away from them, but fear he would kill them for dismissing from the job.

A bitter accusation comes with calling in question the integrity, honesty of the entire nationals. Because someone reported that Nepali caretaker had allowed the robbery in the same house he was supposed to be guard of, and then he too had fled to Nepal, the sisters wonder whether their guard would not do the same with their property. The Nepalis are all alike, so Budhho cannot be relied upon. Supposing even if a particular caretaker — may be he was not treated well, or was not paid for years or something like that, which tried his patience — had robbed the house. It cannot be applied to each and all Nepali workers in India to prove their disloyalty and treachery. Their divided fear of retaining his service, and firing him from it gets an acrid form of anti-Nepal sloganeerism:

> But they had trusted Budhoo for no reason whatsoever. He might murder them in their eighties. “But if we dismiss him,” said Noni, “then he’ll be angry and twice as likely to do something. I tell you, these Neps can’t be trusted. And they don’t just rob. They think absolutely nothing of murdering, as well.” (45)

Nepalese are not only infidel; they are insensitive too to such an extent that they can come to coldheartedly murdering somebody at the slightest provocation or displeasure. This anti-Nepali streak in the overall formation of the novel sounds morbid, diseased, and unhealthy.

When the judge hires a tutor for his granddaughter Sai, they expect it to be Bengali or some body like that. Because it would not occur to them to think that a Nepali can be a tutor, an intellectual person even if it is just of a school level.

> "It is strange the tutor is Nepali," the cook remarked to Sai when he had left. A bit later he said, "I thought he would be Bengali."
> "Hm?" asked Sai. How had she looked? She was thinking. How had she appeared to the tutor? The tutor himself had the aspect, she thought, of intense intelligence. His eyes were serious expression, and

> his hair was curly and stood up in a way that made him look comic.
>
> This seriousness combined with the comic she found compelling. (73)

The conversation suggests Nepalese are ingherently incapable of intelligent jobs. Nepalis, the honest Himalayan people, are thought to be simpletons, not innocent, as this conversation indicates. But one is shocked at the unqualified generalization the novel makes here regarding the Nepalese. Why cannot a Nepali be an intellectual? Does it require one to be sea-faring people to be wise? The cook comes up with his declaration that the Bengalis, being coastal people eat fish and are much cleverer as are the Malayalis and Tamils. He goes on deliberating on the psychosomatic effect of food habits on people: “Inland they eat too much grain, and it slows the digestion—especially millet—forms a big heavy ball. The blood goes to the stomach and not to the head. Nepalis make good soldiers, coolies, but they are not so bright at their studies. Not their fault, poor things" (73). Such grossly disparaging statements are not pardonable with the excuse that they are made by her characters, not by the writer. But who created and put these statements via the characters? It is the writer. So the significance of such dictums reaches far, beyond the textual and the imaginative aspect of the novel, into the political level. Decidedly, the mind set that works on the basis of we / them, self / other dichotomy, deserves severe denouncement and refusal from an intellectual ground.

Climbing perpendicular to the sky, arriving breathless at the top of Ringkingpong hills, you’d see “LIBERATION!” scrawled across the water (126). Still, for a while nobody knows which way it goes, and it is dismissed as nothing more serious than the usual handful of students and agitators. The political turmoils have begun in the north Indian Territory. But then one day, fifty boys, members of the youth wing of the Gorkhaland national Liberation Front (GNLF), gather to swear an oath at Mahakaldara to fight to the death for the formation of a homeland, Gorkhaland. Then they march down the streets of Darjeeling, take a turn around the market and the mall. Now the war cry becomes audible everywhere:

> "Gorkhaland for Gorkhas. We are the liberation army." They were watched by the pony men and their poise, by the proprietors of souvenir shops, by the waiters of Glenary's, the Planter's Club, the Gymkhana, and the Windamere as they waved their unsheathed kukris, sliced the fierce blades through the tender mist under the watery sun. Quite suddenly, everyone was using the word *insurgency*. (126)

The novel's attempt at commenting upon this phenomenon of insurgency takes a form of dialogue between the two sisters Lola an Noni. But the sisters are not able to grasp the seriousness of the topic. They know nothing of deep importance about the issue; they have the only that every Nepali guard in those areas is thinking of murdering his masters and fleeing across the border into Nepal to enjoy the loot in Kathmandu. One cannot help asking if the novelist did not have a personal embittering experience with Kathmandu. What she writes about Nepal and of Kathmandu is all based on what she has read and heard from the filtration process of Indian media which is, as an inhabitant of this region well knows, unjustifiably biased against other countries in the neighborhood. Noni seems to find some justifying reason behind this uprising, but Lola says it is just their pretext for clearing up the Bengalis:

> "They have a point," said Noni, "maybe not their whole point, but I'd say half to three-quarters for their point." "Nonsense." Lola waved her sister's opinion away. "Those Neps will be after all outsiders now, but especially us Bongs. They've been plotting this a long while. Dream

> come true. All kinds of atrocities will go on – then they can skip merrily over the border to hide in Nepal. Very convenient". (127)

Telling more about the frightened predicament of the sisters at the cost of the prestige of the Nepalese, the novelist goes on to report how Lola pictures their watchman, Budhoo, with her BBC radio and her silver cake knife, living it up in Kathmandu along with various other Kanchas and Kanchis with their "respective loot" (127). This simple suspicion arises not so much from the heart of Lola as from the failure of Kiran Desai the expatriate writer, writing in the west for the western readership in an exotic vein for mere hype. But Desai has no grasp of the ground reality of the politics in India, Nepal and the troubled area of north-eastern India comprising several formerly independent smaller countries now brought under Indian jurisdiction. Despite this fact, the novelist is not at all ill at ease for her incompetence; rather she readily provides a formula to her mouthpiece characters to explain an event by ascribing it to the Nepalis, their aspiration for liberty and their murderous inclination.

The novel tries to give an account of how the Nepalis came to settle in Indian territory the north in search of better job and work opportunity. In this case it is Gyan's family history which goes like this:

> In the 1800s his ancestors had left their village in Nepal and arrived in Darjeeling, lured by promises of work on a tea plantation. [. . .] By and by along came the Imperial Army, measuring potential soldiers in villages all over the hills with a measuring tape and ruler, and they had happened upon the impressive shoulders of Gyan's great-grandfather, who had grown so strong on the milk of their buffalo that he had beaten the village sweet-seller's son in a wrestling match, an exceptionally glossy and healthy boy. (141)

The picture here is once again created to give the impression that Nepali youths are suitable for the profession of fighting since they have strong build and courage. But this banal conclusion every opportunity the novelist arrives at is rather disgusting. The Neps' are there only for serving others, be it the British or the Indians, in war.

Despite their historical engagement in all the national and international exploits, whether in supporting the British Raj, or after the Indians independence, in keeping the sovereignty of the Indian nation intact, the Nepalese are treated as people of a foreign land. They have become the minority among the minorities. This issue is raised by this agitating GNLF movement in the speeches and pamphlets:

> "Except us The Nepalese of India. At that time, in April of 1947, the Communist Party of India demanded a Gookhasthan, but the request was ignored…. We are laborers on the tea plantations, coolies dragging heavy loads, soldiers. And are we allowed to become doctors and government workers, owners of the tea plantations? No! We are kept at the level of servants. We fought in World War One. We went to east Africa, to Egypt, to the Persian Gulf. [. . .] Our character has never been in doubt. And have we been rewarded?? Have we been given compensation?? Are we given respect? (158)

The question put here is compelling; are the Gorkhas recognized at all for their contribution they made for the survival of the Raj and then of the nation? The sad fact is that the contributions the Gorkhas made to the British and then to the Indian empire have gone unrewarded. Instead, they have been marginalized, humiliated, obliterated from all public affairs of thy state. So the agitation of the Nepalis in Darjeeling, Assam and Sikkim sprouted:"*Jai Gorkha! Jai Gorkha*! *Jai Gorkha*!" the crowd screamed, their own blood thrumming, pulsing, surging forth at the sight of the speech giver’s hand (159). The situation was so fiery that the Gorkhas are literally moved to action, they symbolically shed blood to make their demands forceful. Thirty supporters stepped forward and also drew blood from their thumbs with their khukris to write a poster demanding Gorkhaland, in blood.

What we see here is the attempt of the novelist to capture the sentiment and reality of the agitators in coming to a critical stand against the Indian mainstream politics which is discriminatory. Since the thrust of this thesis is to reveal the danger involved in exposing the story of other by an elitist writer, we can quote a relevant citation to drive home the idea as to what is being touched upon here. In an article entitled *“Can the Subaltern Speak?”* Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak expresses her doubt whether the marginal have the power to articulate their dissenting voice. More specifically, she seems to be saying that even if the subalterns speak, their voice will not be heard and heeded by the dominant group(s). Or, the hegemony of the previously politically dominant party will continue. In this regard, one can turn to what Ranjit Guha writes:

> The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism—colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism…shar[ing] the prejudice of that the making of the Indian nation and the development of the consciousness –nationalism which confirmed this process were exclusively or predominantly elite achievements. In the colonialist and neo-colonialist historiographies these achievements are credited to British colonial rulers, administrators, policies, institutions, and culture: in the nationalist and neo-nationalist writings – to Indian elite personalities, institutions, activities and ideas. (qtd in Spivak)

Thus, even after the Indian independence the elitist discourse remains a faithful supporter of the colonial discourse. This is to say that the mainstream historiography fails to take into account the contribution of the commoners in the making of a nation. The same applies to the present story of the liberation movement launched by GNLF. Desai's attempt fails to depict it in the light of the suppression suffered by the Nepali-Indians. She tries to make a novel on the theme of Gurkha agitation but ended up with making it look like a gangster agitation and cheap sloganeerism.

Gyan takes interest, as it befits an educated youth, to claim the superiority of the first climber to Everest. In his comment the novelist also shows agreement:

> "He was the real hero, Tenzing," Gyan had said. "Hilary couldn't have made it without Sherpas carrying his bags. Everyone around had agreed. Tensing was certainly first, or else he was made to wait with the bags so Hilary could take the first step on behalf of that colonial enterprise of sticking your flag on what was not yours." (Desai155)

Sai had wondered, should humans conquer the mountain or should they wish for the mountain to possess them? Sherpas went up and down, ten times, fifteen times in some cases, without glory, without claim of ownership, and there were those who said it was sacred and shouldn't be sullied at all. But the westerners, once they have somehow climbed up to the top of the Everest, boast of their achievement. In contrast, Desai seems to be telling, the Sherpas, meaning the Nepalese locals, are not much enthusiastic about their conquering of the mountain. But she is oversimplifying simplifying the simplicity of the Nepalese. They too know climbing the Everest earns honor and fame. So, it is a mere orientalist discourse on Desai' part to write the Sherpas have no sense of thrill or achievement in conquering the top of the world.

They are not so simple as to only worship the mountain; they make their living by guiding and portering for the tourists there.

3.2 The West as Dreamland

How much enchanted the Orientals, the Indians are of the west, America? When the policemen come for rummaging the shack of the Cook to see if he had been in any way helping the insurgents, the cook starts impressing them with his son's being in the USA for work. The policemen too are dazed at least from the appearance. As the novel puts it, may be they were thinking of growing relation with this old man could be of much help in their getting to the land of plenty:

> *Angrezi khana*. The cook had thought of ham roll ejected from a can and fried in thick ruddy slices, of tuna fish soufflé's, khari biscuit pie, and was sure that since his son was cooking English food, he had a higher position than if he were cooking Indian.The police seemed intrigued by the first letter they had read and embarked on the others. To find what? Any sign of hanky panky? Money from the sale of guns? Or were they wondering about how to get to America themselves? (17)

But it is too flat a presentation. Personally any one can have enchantment for the west. But to portray in-duty personnel too are dreaming of making connection through a cook. Kiran Desai is, it seems, giving out her account of the American dream: any how you land in the wonderful land, and then your life is what it should be like or what you desire it to be like. This is westophilia pure and moronic, of which the novel, rather the novelist, cannot so easily be absolved.

For the easterners, or the non-westerners, the west holds an especial appeal, whatever be the reality. Once an easterner enters the west, the society looks upon the outsider as undeservedly lucky person. As if the very fact that one has entered the much hyped land of opportunities, one’s life is sure to be on the rise for ever. This stems from the colonial mentality which denigrates the native everything and valorizes the western everything lump sum.

But the life there is not all golden; it can be and is mostly rodent existence for the poor from India as well the less fortunate ones from Africa. Mincing no words, one can justifiably conclude that there is deep chasm between appearance, the promise and the reality. A smart fellow named Saeed too has to go through a series of disgusting work experience, as he tries to settle in the USA. His first job in America had been at the Ninety-sixth Street mosque, where the imam hired him to do the dawn call to prayer, since he did a fine rooster crow, but before he arrived at work, he took to stopping at the nightclubs along the way, it seeming a natural enough progression time-wise. The thing here is to be noted is that the easterners or non westerners for tat matter, are greatly enchanted by the west, or America. Entering the west mean the success in life, whatever may be the condition of the non-westerner there. Biju also though t the same, but found the reality too biting to be tolerable. America is not all sunshine. Despite, that people back in India are much hopeful about Biju’s success there in America.

One character name Saeed Saeed is much cleverer than his non-western friends. As the novel gives us an account, one day, with a disposable camera in his pocket, he stood at the door waiting to have snapshots of himself taken with the rich and famous: “Mike Tyson, yes! He’s my brother. Naomi Campbell, she’s my girl. Hey, Bruce (Springsteeen)! I am Saeed Saeed from Africa. But don't worry, man, we don’t eat white people anymore” (78). Fortunately for him, he is an exceptionally smart person, so much so that he can give hoodwinks to the officers at the embassy and make them think he a right type of person to inhabit America. Given below is an account of what he thought of America; and his response to the expectation of the nation:

> Saeed, he relished the whole game, the way the country flexed his wits and rewarded him; he charmed it, cajoled it, felt great tenderness and loyalty toward it. [. . .]The country recognized something in Saeed, he in it, and it was a mutual love affair. Ups and downs, sometimes more sour tan sweet, may be, but nonetheless, beyond anything the INS could imagine, it was an old-fashioned romance. (79)

Unaware of the ratty existence and rodent secrets his son was living in the USA, back at home in Kalimpong, the cook was writing numerous letters on behalf of the villagers and city dwellers, assuming the importance of one as if he were their destiny maker, or what. The Metal Box watchman had paid him a formal visit to tell the cook about his son, big enough now to get a job, but there were no jobs. Could Biju help him across to America? The boy would be willing to start at a menial level but of course a job in an office would be best. Italy would also be all right, he had added for good measure. A man from his village had gone to Italy and was making a good living as a tandoori cook.

And Biju, ashamed, would write some vague replies, change of job, American food, new environment, doing pretty well, and what not. Only the readers, the novelist, and the characters in the American drama know what it is like to be unrespectable, meaning non-white and poor, in the west. Biju could not help but fee a flash of anger at his father for sending him alone to this country, but he knew “he wouldn’t have forgiven his father for not trying to send him, either” (82). America is such an attraction: if one does not get there, one feels the sense of loss or incompleteness, and if one goes there, one is dissatisfied. This eagerness to get to America has by now gone sour for Biju. He is thinking of getting back home. The price is taxing, heavy for him to pay. Finally it breaks all the hopes and stamina that Biju initially had and makes him fly home without the least of the desire to ever get back to the dream land.

3.3 Demeaning the Native

The west-born or raised writers take up the line adopted by the colonial writers and write in a demeaning way concerning the natives. When Desai writes about the native's business, efforts to get to the west and what not, she is amused at their ignorance, shamelessness, and promiscuity even. Also, she shows how important the natives feel it to have connection to the west by some means. But all these indicate, as already contended by this thesis, that the personal prejudices of the novelist come into play, revealing the mindset of an expatriate Indian who is now neither fish nor flesh, meaning she has lost the real contact with India, and is not a westerner proper either. So, what is left to her is to weave bizarre tale of adventure, romance, and revolution so as to make her writing saleable in the west.

> The cook folded up the letter and put it in his shirt pocket. [. . .] Powders, oils, and ganglions of roots were proffered by Lepcha medicine men; other stalls offered yak hair, untidy and rough as the hair of demons, and sacks of miniature dried shrimp with oversized whiskers; there were smuggled with foreign goods from Nepal, perfumes, jean jackets, electronics; there were kukri sickles, sheets of plastic reproofing, and false teeth. (83-4)

The sundry items listed here are for creating an exotic effect in the readers, and secondly to ridicule the cooks’ simplicity that his son would be an interesting topic for the inhabitants. But nobody here would be interested in the Cook's son. At the Snow Lion Travel Agency, the cook waited to claim the manager's attention. Tashi was busy chatting up a tourist- he was famous for “charming the Patagonia pants off foreign women and giving them an opportunity to write home with the requisite tale of amorous adventure with a Sherpa” (84). All around were brochures for the monastery trips Tashi organized, photographs of hotels built in the traditional style, furnished with antiques, many of which had been taken from the monasteries themselves. Of course he omitted the fact that the centuries-old structures were all being modernized with concrete, fluorescent lighting, and bathroom tiling.

The Indians in America have to undergo various sorts of miseries and humiliation. Same happens with the Africans. Biju, an India, witnesses the similar plight one African has to cope up with as himself, and feels sort of empathy.

> Biju's sympathy for Saeed leaked into sympathy for himself, then Saeed’s shame into his own shame that he would never help all those people praying for his help, waiting daily, hourly, for his response. He, too had arrived at the air port wityh a few dollar bills bouight at the Kathmandu blackmarket . . . . (98)

The reference here once again to Kathmandu black market is obviously an intentional attack by the novelist on the socio-political aspect of the northern neighbor to India. First queries first. One wonders whether it is possible for an expatriate writer, who does not have much reliable information about India itself, to know about the secret of black market in Kathmandu. Next, one cannot see why, whenever there pops up an opportunity, she slanders against Nepal and the Nepalis. It seems that she wants gain positive response from the readers of Indian origin, at the cost of authorial honesty and reliability as a narrator, commentator and seer.

Gaining an entrance to the imperial job may be a matter of much happiness and pride. But to depict an Indian youth so overwhelmed with his success in entering the British Raj service that he confines himself for three days to weep for joy is surely a disgusting exaggeration. May be, if one wants to turn acrid, it was the personal experience of the novelist herself when she got admission to the west that she wept for joy. Anyway, the following is the depiction she has made of Jemu Bhai Patel:

> Looking neither right nor left, the newest member, practically unwelcome, of the heaven-born, ran home with his arms folded and got immediately into bed, all his clothes on, even his shoes, and soaked his pillow with his weeping. Tears sheeted his cheeks, eddied about his tormented ragged nerves. He lay there crying for three days and three nights. (117)

This is the scene after his admission into the Imperial Civil Service as the lucky candidate at the last hour as the government decided to Indianize the service by including members from all sectors of India. This is a humiliating scene in reality. It is difficult to see whether the novelist is trying to demean the native and appease the westerner in their search of the superior image of themselves at the vilification of the west.

Special references to Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal unfailingly draw the interested attention of any sensitive reader hailing from South Asia, not least from Nepal. Numerous are the instances in the novel which refer to the city as a place where daylight deceptions are acted, filthy and inhuman words are entertained, and where black markets are run without any interference by the police or the government authority, and where fake training offices are situated for cheating the throng desperately awaiting for their turn to make it to US.

Desai leaves no opportunity to slander Nepal and anything that is related to Nepal. She stoops down to condemn even as nonhuman and apolitical entities as the mountains and the temples. Two weeks later to his success at the interview which would lead to his migration to the USA, Biju traveled by bus to Kathmandu for a week of training at the recruiting agency's main office. The novel, or rather the novelist takes the opportunity here to paint a picture of the capital of Nepal, along with reporting the vicious practices there:

> Kathmandu was a carved wooden city of temples and palaces, caught in a disintegrating tangle of modern concrete that stretched into the dust and climbed into the sky. He looked in vain for the mountains; Mt. Everest—where was it? He traversed along flat main roads into a knot of medieval passages full of the sounds of long ago, a street of metal workers, a street of potters melding clay, straw, sand, with their bare feet; rats in a Ganesh temple eating sweets. (181)

One is amazed and suggested that the Everest is not there in Nepal, or that workers are at the streets. Is it not a fact that thousands of tourists come to Nepal for sight-seeing, one of them being the highest peak in the world? And are not potters and street workers a common sight in a country like Nepal, which does not differ much from its South Asian members? Then, one cannot understand what sort of satire the novelist hopes to make effective in spelling out the drabness of the capital city. She fails to achieve whatever ulterior motive she might have had in satirizing the northern neighbour to India.

Desai is more interested in humiliating the nation of Nepal in telling a fictional story about what she herself might have experienced as an Indian trying to gain entrance in the USA, with the difference that she came from a well-off and educated family. Otherwise, why, there was no need of dragging the reference to the street or the dirty talks or the swear words of the butcher as it is reported immediately to reveal the fact of Biju being cheated. An over exaggerated scene of the butchering of a goat is given along with the deception Biju was exposed to while he thought he was nearing his dream of a life time by succeeding in the interview which happened to be a fake one. The men at a murky street in Kathmandu tell him how he had been deceived. While he aimlessly ponders over the fact of his being mislead about the interview, he hears a butcher killing a goat: "Before the butcher slit the goat's throat, Biju could hear him working up his disdain, yelling '*Bitch, whore, cunt, sali,*' at her, dragging her forward then, killing her" (181). One does not believe if butchers in Katmanmdu curse at the goats before they slit the poor creatures. It is all cooked up in the crooked mindset of Kiran Desai, an Indian mind as it is said in Nepal where people think that Indian means deception and sham and giving false impression.

One night, some rebellious boys of the GNLF come to Lola and Noni's house and demand the night to be spent at their house. At that time Boohoo, the Nepali caretaker there at the house is absent. Now the sisters start unreasonably to suspect the Nepali guard:

> "I told you . . . .'' Lola said in a scorched whisper, "these, Neps! Hand in hand. . . ."
>
> "May be the boys threatened him," spat Noni.

> "Oh, come on. He's probably uncle to one of them! We should have told them to go and now you've started this, Noni, they'll come all the time." (239)

Neps, a distracting shortened form for Nepalis, is used to signify that the Nepalis are essentially inimical to the Indians; that they come to looting whenever they get a chance. The watchman, Budhoo, is missing from their house the same night the GNLF boys come for sacking the house. This occasion gives them space for suspicion that he might have been aligned with the boys. And sure enough, before a month has passed by, the boys come back one night to construct huts for the homeless ones around there on the yards of the Mon Ami villa. No effectual resistance from the sisters' side is made; they are too weak for that. The novel then goes on explaining the root cause of all this confiscation business; the hatred of the poor for the well-off, of the native for the settlers, of the laborers for the tourists. It came, it says, from an old feeling of anger that couldn't be divorced from Kalimpong:

> It was part of every breath. It was in the eyes that waited, attached themselves to you as you approached, rode on your back as you walked on, with a muttered remark you couldn't catch in the moment of passing; it was in the snickering of those gathered at Thapa's Canteen, at Gompu's , at every unnamed roadside shack that sold eggs and matches. (241)

The enmity felt by the poor locals towards the rich settlers, Europeans, is evident everywhere. The treason was the disparity between the life standard of the two groups. The two sisters, who are at the heart of the villa, consuming the beauty and the facility available only to them there, become the centre of attraction and hatred for the locals. They incite envy, but they did not know previously that the feeling would lead the poor to act against them. Now, to get the matter peacefully settled , Lola visits Pradhan, the flamboyanty head of the Kalimpong wing of the GNLF, to complain about the illegal huts built by his followers on Mon Ami property. The response of the leader is very irresponsible and childish, foolhardy even. One wonders whether Desai was not tempted into presenting a stereotypical figure of a heady but headless rebel. The description indicated to that effect:

> Pradhan said: “But I have to accommodate my men.” He looked like a bandit teddy bear, with a great beard and a bandana around his head, gold earrings. Lola didn’t know much about him, merely that he had been called the “maverick of Kalimpong” in the newspapers, renegade, fiery, unpredictable, a rebel, not a negotiator, who ran his wing of the GNLF like a king his kingdom, a robber his band. He was wilder, people said, and angrier than Ghising, the leader of the Darjeeling wing, who was the better politician and whose men were now occupying the Gymkhana Club. (242)

Pradhan might have been a rebel, and he must have been, one can conclude looking at his action of capturing the property of somebody else overnight. But to label him a teddy bear, or one who cannot negotiate, and other such entirely darkish epithets is to undervalue the liberation movement in the northern Indian regions where the locals are demanding autonomy of governance while remaining annexed to the Indian nation. One has to get at the complex politics there. It is not like Desai residing in the west and commenting upon Kathmandu black-market and the independence movement in India. She has to come, and see for herself with unjaundiced eyes what the locals are demanding for, and how the central government is responding to them. Not all the states are demanding for total political independence; no, that is not conceivable even to a simpleton in India. They are just demanding for equality in the treatment doled out to the Indian states by the central government, and also a degree of autonomy of the state hereby the locals can choose the chief minister themselves along with the civil servants, without the interference of the central government which is decidedly always again the people of Nepali and Tibeto-Burman origin.

Before Lola gets the turn of seeing Pradhan, a Marwari is presented to have his plea expressed to the leader there. His speeches tell the truth about the exact nature of Indians, if one can ever generalize so:

> When the man was ushered in front of Pradhan, he began such a bending, bowing, writhing, that he would not even raise his eyes. He spewed flowery honorifics: “Respected Sir and Huzoor and Your Gracious Presence and Your Wish my Pleasure, Please, Please Grant, Your Blessing Requested, Your Honorable self, Your Beneficence, May the Blessings of God Rain upon You and Yours, Might Your Respected Gracious Self Prosper and Might You Grant Prosperity to Respectful Supplicants. . . .” He made an overabundant flower garden of speech, but to no avail, and finally, he backed out still scattering roses and pleas, prayers and blessings. (243)

The Marwari is in control of the business of selling Tibetan objects of worship, lamps, bells, thunderbolts, plum robes, and turmeric undergarments, lotus-embossed buttons and incense etc. he wants to bring a shipment of prayer lamps past the roadblocks created by the people of Pradhan as a part of their protest against the central government. But the fawning way the businessman has acquired tells something deep about the Indian psyche: they are the worshippers of wealth in the first place, and do not hesitate to fall prostrate in front of humiliation if they can make any money by doing that! Second, they are adept at employing the tactics of threat and control if the other side is weak, but extreme flattery if the second party is stronger than themselves. These two character traits are made evident in an Indian personality, especially one coming from the business class.

The people of Anglo–European origins came to settle in the northern, cool parts of India. Settling on the outlying regions they were separated from their community. Of course they had, as the novel tells us, *The Far Pavilions* and *The Raj Quartet*-but Lola, Noni, Sai, and Father Booty were unanimous in the opinion that they didn't like English writers writing about India. Somehow their descriptions were removed from reality, or they were so vile that one did not savour reading the description. The opinion of these colonial people also is the same: "It didn't correspond to the truth. English writhers writing of England was what was nice: P. G. Wodehouse, Agatha Christie, countryside England where they remarked on the crocuses being early that year and best of all, the manor house novels" (198). The westerners writing on India can have no claim of authenticity on their subject matter. Similarly, an Indian person who is raised up in America has no control over her/his claim of objectivity and authenticity since s/he has been severed from her original land. Moreover, her comments upon and interpretations of the Nepali-Indian politics is doomed to be far from the reality as its is unduly lopsided by her sense of repaying her gratitude to her motherland at the cost of the prestige of the neighbouring country of Nepal. To be precise, considering the circumstance of her distance from the countries she actually might have known only through atlases and books on cartography, Desai has no business writing such a politically engaging novel as *The Inheritance of Loss* which ventures to deal with the northern India nationalist movements.

The mentality reflected in the novel is assuredly a colonized one. The alleged affiliation Desai has with this colonial mindset is grounded on textual evidence interspersed throughout the novel. An excerpt from the novel speaks volumes on this.

> The Indian gentleman, with all self-respect to himself, should not enter into a compartment reserved for Europeans, anymore than he should enter a carriage set apart for ladies. Although you may have acquired the habits and manners of the European, have the courage to show that you are not ashamed of being an Indian, and in all such cases, identify yourself with the race to which you belong. (199)

This is an excerpt from H Hardless's *The Indian Gentleman's Etiquette*. So, it was expected as a decent mannerism for an Indian to show respect to a European by not venturing top enter the same compartment meant for them. The Indians seem to have adopted the same obsequious thought about their relation with other South Asian people; as they used to pay homage to the Europeans, so now the neighboring countries have to look up to India.

If there is any problem, that is purely the Indian affair. But the novelist blatantly accuses Nepal of sheltering the terrorists and separatists. It seems Nepal has been interfering in the politics of India, whereas the reverse is the truth. In one description of the rising turmoil in Kalimpong this issue is lopsidedly presented. There the incidence of horror grew, through the changing of the seasons, through winter and a flowery spring, summer, then rain and winter again. Roads were closed, there was curfew every night, and Kalimpong was trapped in its own madness. The novel informs in terse terms how enclosed and controlled the life of the residents has become there: "You couldn't leave the hillsides; nobody even left their houses if they could help but stayed locked in and barricaded” (287). The coarse observation below made by the novelist is worth-citing to drive home the point being made here:

> If you were a Nepali reluctant to join in, it was bad. The Metal Box watchman had been forced to repeat “Jai Gorkha,” and dragged to Mahakala Temple to swear an oath of loyalty to the cause.
>
> If you weren’t Nepali it was worse. (289)

Such is the anti-Nepali streak of the novel and novelist. But the story does not stop here. Desai leaves no occasion unused to depict the Asian continent in its weaker facets. The description of the Gulf Air in connection with Biju’s frustrated return home in India from America seems deliberately intended so as to dehumanize and slander the poverty, mismanagement of the so-called third world service. A contrast is pictured between the service provided to the Europeans and Americans on the one hand and the Asian on the other. Whatever might have been the original motive of the writer, now that the text has become accessible to public, the interpretations can vary greatly from one another’s and from the authors as well. The contention of this thesis is that the novel is written by a person who can neither align herself with her ancestry, meaning her poor, third-wordlist lineage, nor can she completely sever her relations with her past. She is somehow entangled between the east and west tug, trying deftly and subtly to earn the sympathy and readership of both a while vowing allegiance to none. Rather by making it clear that she can smugly comment on the eastern poverty and folly, she hopes to prove herself sufficiently exalted so as not to be contaminated by the blemishes.

Contrarily, by referring, needlessly and out of the context, to the missionaries who flee India in times of turmoil to refurbish themselves at home for the missionary work in the languid peace time after riots, the business talks of encroaching Asia as the biggest world market, the failure of the judge in asking of help with the missionaries who “would have been duty-bound to help” (289) him, Desai has revealed her reviling heart that is neither a fish nor flesh. At the same time that she enjoys western, Christian freedoms, she condemns them. Too, she mocks at the olden traditions back in India without setting a line as to what she could support as her original cultural roots. Truly, the novel is the product of a mind marred by colonial legacies but uncomfortable with the national feeling too. Here is an instance of how hell-bent she is in portraying the pitiable and inhuman plight of the crew waiting for the flight of the Gulf Air:

> All the third-world flights docked here, families waiting days for their connections, squatting on the floor in big bacterial clumps, and it was a long trek to where the European-North American travelers came and went, making those brisk no-nonsense flights with extra leg-room and private TV, whizzing over fro a single meeting in such a manner hat it was truly hard to imagine they were shitting-peeing, bleeding-weeping humans at all. Silk and cashmere, bleached teeth, Prozac, laptops, and a sandwich for their lunch named The Milano. (285)

In contrast to the western life style, the eastern one is mean, miserable, and loathsome. By recurrently underlining the difference between the east and the west, Desai intend to gain favor in the west where her novel would be hailed as a true document merely for the fact that it has inferiorized the nationalist feeling of the east. All this is accounted for by the fact that Desai is the writer brought up with more than sufficient doze of colonial discourse infecting her mind in the turbulent post-colonial era.

Chapter IV : Legacy of Colonialism

The research focuses on the engagement of the novel in an analysis, albeit a faulty one, of the post-colonial situation of India. It is found that the novel is about the dislocation and the impact of colonization lingering upon the socio-political framework of India even after its independence. The novel is set in a small Himalayan community at the foot of Kanchenjunga, where a retired and reclusive Indian judge lives with his orphan grand-daughter Sai, his cook, and his dog. The judge's house is a decaying relic of the British Raj, and virtually everybody in the story has been touched in some way by the influence of colonialism which can be seen in terms of language, lifestyle, and loyalties. Thus the lingering and decaying effect of colonialism upon the Indian nation becomes the major theme of the novel, as this research has found.

The next related theme is the nationalist movement gaining momentum in the northern Indian states. The background of the novel contains the Ghorka nationalist movement, people in a land of mixed ethnicity and history trying to assert their own identity. And as a minor counterpoint, though somewhat less successful, there is the cook's son Biju, an illegal immigrant in New York, another displaced person trying to escape out a living and establish an identity. Desai amalgamates the characters from different continents, and the possible clash between them. What binds these seemingly disparate characters is her shared historical legacy of colonialism that leads her to feel impotent. The Indians are also an unwanted anachronism in postcolonial India, where long-suppressed peoples have begun to awaken to their dereliction, to express their anger and despair. For some of Desai's characters, including one of the judge's neighbors in Kalimpong, this comes as a distinct shock. Desai moves between first and third world, between upper and lower class, between master and servant. She shows how the revolution destroyed lives, but also how the colonialism that preceded and perhaps necessitated the revolution destroyed lives.

Desai's exploration of postcolonial chaos and despair leads one to suggest that colonialism doubtless was bad, but worse still is the fact that the people of the so-called third world think the first world is the fortune making furnace. The novel contains the vain, often fooled and demoralized and dehumanized aspiration of the natives of poorer countries who try to get entry to the western countries. Thus the does not allow the novelist to tell the story in a particularly enjoyable manner.

Kiran Desai misses the importance of the family in India's social structure, in terms of its contribution to happiness despite economic and other challenges. A setting where every character is missing at least a parent/spouse/child is unrealistic and makes it all the more negative. Throughout the book, she gives a distinct impression of not knowing what she is writing about. The poor light in which Indians are depicted is truly reprehensible. Still more abominable is her depiction of the fighters for free Gorkhaland for Nepalese. The references to Kathmandu black markets and rampant deception there shows her negative attitude towards India as well as Nepal. She also portrays the Indians, as well as Nepalese as hypocritical, unsuccessful, frustrated and devoid of personal hygiene. Such evidence lead the thesis to conclude that the novel, though it might have been a successful post-colonial one, turns out to be a strongly debilitated colonial novel in its depiction of Indian and Nepali characters and their lives.

The theme Desai tackles in the novel, the inability to integrate/assimilate into an alien Western world, is tremendously interesting, but she rarely produces a scene

that addresses this with any depth or originality. The novel is at its best with the story of Biju, living and working illegally in the US; but even though what he goes through as he is preyed upon by avaricious restaurant owners looking for cheap labor is horrific, there's no psychological depth in the narrative voice to emphasize the horror of alienation and express its results. Desai just touches the surface of despair in the stories of Biju in the US and the Sai's grandfather as a university student in England. Although *Inheritance of Loss* was awarded the prestigious Booker Prize, and was warmly received in the west, where Desai lives and for whom she primarily writes, it fails to leave the reader with anything other than a superficial brush against the important issues of racism,
dislocation, assimilation and postcolonialism.

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