

CHAPTER - III

THEMES IN THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS

THEMES IN *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

Kiran Desai has focused on all the modern issues in her novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. There are several themes expounded in it. Desai manages to deal with issues like– globalization, multiculturalism, modernization, terrorism and insurgency. With the help of tapestry of colourful characters, Desai has managed to portray her themes in a very elegant manner. Theme of Terrorism, Loss, Immigration, Economic Inequality, Human-Relationship and Marginalisation are the themes that Desai tries to explore.

Theme of Loss

The theme of loss is a major theme that Desai explores in *The Inheritance of Loss*. The theme of loss is indicated in the title itself and through the Epigraph from George Luis Borges. True to the title, each and every character sketched by the writer suffers loss in some or the other way, which is its own 'dubious inheritance'. The loss each character bears varies in magnitude and its intensity is also very different, but the loss is inevitable. The characters have no alternative and no escape from it. As M.K.Naik (2008:1) observes, "The idea of 'Loss' and allied motifs are stressed in the Epigraph. The Epigraph is, "My humanity is in feeling we are all voices of the same poverty ... My name is someone and anyone. I walk slowly, like one who comes from so far away he doesn't expect to arrive These lines would appear to stress the idea that man's only inheritance in this life is one of 'poverty' of various kinds, material and spiritual for instance, and in the end, one can only strive for, but never actually attain fulfillment".

The title possesses the twin motifs of 'Inheritance' and 'Loss' which in a vivid manner depict the shape of the life of each of the major character in the novel. Sai, the protagonist inherits loss right from her childhood. Her father, an Airforce officer about to become the first Indian to fly into space,

is killed in a road mishap along with his wife (Sai's mother) in Soviet Russia. Sai who is just six becomes an orphan. Loss of parents is what Sai bears at a very tender age. She has been put into a Convent School. She hates the Convent keeps on telling herself that, 'I am an orphan, my parents are dead,' (TIL:27). Moreover Sai's father, a Parsi boy is also an orphan, brought up in Zoroastrian charity for orphans. Sai's mother, daughter of a well-known judge Jemubhai Patel is disowned by him as she married outside her caste. Sai's mother elopes away with Mr. Mistry (Sai's father) despite the denial of her parents. With the loss of parents, Sai bears rootlessness and thus has to live alone. As there is no one to pay for her, she is sent to live with her maternal grandfather, Retired Judge Jemubhai Patel. Sai has never been to her grandfather's house. Even the judge finds his life disturbed by the arrival of Sai. He finds himself very upset. He is unable to sleep in spite of taking a sleeping pill. But he lays awake, thinking of his own journeys, he also had left the house for the first time with a black tin trunk, just like the one Sai had arrived with to Cho Oyu

Sai is quite well aware of herself and manages her new life in the crumbling Cho Oyu of her maternal grandfather, who least bothers about her. As a part of his duty, judge makes provision for her studies and Sai is entrusted to Lola for her further education. Here Sai finds relief and enjoys the company of the neighbours: uncle Potty, Father Booty, Lola and Nonita. Her life in Cho Oyu is one of prolonged listlessness. The Judge is interested in reading but seldom purchases or updates his library and stock of books. Sai has to satisfy herself with the old numbers of National Geographic Books. After Lola, Sai is entrusted to Gyan, a Mathematics tutor. Gyan's entry in Sai's life makes her life interesting. She is in her sweet sixteen. A new relation develops between Gyan and Sai. Gyan is a young science graduate, he is an Indo-Nepali without a proper job or settlement. He accepts to be Sai's tutor. Sai at first finds this tuition a compulsion on her. Unhappy with the boring present, she thinks, "she'd

have to propel herself into the future by whatever means possible or she'd be trapped forever in a place whose time has already passed'' (TIL. 74). Then she discovers that she is in love with Gyan. The two lovers play the game of courtship, reaching retreating, teasing, fleeing and calling each other nicknames. The love story of Gyan and Sai is the major core of the novel. But it is too good to last long. The Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) becomes active in the hills and Gyan gets caught up in the movement. He participates casually but finds himself destined for the same. Though romantically involved with Sai, he feels irritated with her English accent and behaviour. Half-educated, uprooted, Gyan is very keen to get a proper job and wants to leave that fussy pair, Sai and her grandfather; due to their English culture and their attitude to be English. Gyan, the Nepali lover of Sai is frustrated because of Sai's hybrid culture and he tries to bring sense in her saying. "Don't you have any pride? Trying to be westernized they don't want you! Go there and see if they welcome you with open arms. You will be trying to clean their toilets, even then they won't want you (TIL.174).

Gyan expresses his anxiety of being a Nepali in India. His lack of identity makes him realise the sense of loss. From the point of view of ethnicity, the Nepali inherits loss of identity that results in loss of opportunity. Despite his education, he is jobless. This makes him aware of the GNLF movement of 'Gorkhaland for Gorkhas' and swings himself in the movement. To achieve identity, he is ready to sacrifice his love. Here his love for Sai is shattered. He starts hating her for her westernized manners, luxury and independent thinking. Instead, he thinks these wealthy people have deprived them of their rights. Sai realises that for 'Gyan' she is not the centre of their romance. She is only the centre to herself and a small player playing her part in some one else's story (TIL.175). Thus Sai loses her lover. But tragedy strikes when Sai realises Gyan has leaked the information of the Judge's hunting guns. As a result of this, the GNLF youths intrude in the

house of the Judge and take away not only the guns also his prized possession the black tin trunk, which he carried to England. Gyan's information leads the Judge to the loss of his hunting guns, trunk full of grocery items and many more such things. Sai becomes furious and accuses Gyan of the robbery. Gyan is shocked at Sai's behaviour, so in rage he administers a sound beating to her. That horrifying beating signals for Sai, the loss of both her lover and her love. Thus Sai suffers a major loss in her life.

The next character to inherit loss are the Anglophile retired judge Jemubhai Patel and his wife Nimi. He becomes British trained man and member of the coveted I.C.S. Before going to England, he is married to a less educated village girl Nimi. In fact, Nimi's dowry helps Jemubhai to complete his education in England. But this pair is incompatible and their relation worsens with course of time. Their bridal night itself is a failure. Nimi is barely 14 years old and she scarcely understands the meaning of the proceedings. Frightened to the core, she cries out in terror, 'save me' and begins to weep. Frightened by her fright, Jemubhai is himself terrified. Unfortunately, the hapless couple continues to share this ordeal of inaction night after night. Jemubhai goes to England and returns with blind imitation of the West. This results in erosion of his autonomous individuality. On his return to India, he finds himself despising his apparently backward Indian wife. He tries to teach Nimi western etiquettes and manners but it is in vain. This leads to a monstrous behaviour of the judge towards his wife. The relation reaches to a worst height when he finds her footprints on toilet seat in her squatting on the toilet seat in Indian fashion. This enrages him to such an extent that he lifts her up and immerses her face into the toilet bowl. Her cheeks erupt in pustules, The judge who was responsible for Nimi's infected face became more conscious of himself. He instructed his servants to wipe everything with dettol to kill the germs. Moreover he asked her to remain confined in the house. He said, "Don't show your face outside".

..... People might run from you screaming,”(TIL:173).Further the marital relation between the judge and Nimi is broken. Nimi is unaware of the effect of her act of joining the localities to welcome Nehru. She least bothers that her action would lead to block her husband, a British employee's promotion. Jemubhai is warned by his senior that no such thing will be tolerated. He will have to compromise with his career in such a situation. That night he hits her hard and that leads to end their relation. Jemubhai sends her back to her parental home. He never goes to see her Then Nimi gives birth to a baby girl but Jemubhai has become too hard to melt for his own daughter. He just sends money and that is all.

As years pass Jemubhai feels the loss. He doesn't confess but feels the guilt for his inhuman behaviour and realises that he is responsible for the loss. Desai here delineates the loss occurred due to mistake and misunderstanding. The inevitable incompatibility between two persons who are the two opposite poles in education, upbringing and values leads to the inheritance of heavy loss. Jemubhai breaks up his marital ties. Jemubhai and Nimi both have to bear the loss. In fact the mockery of all English education and high placed situation in life leads the judge to loss. Judge has to bear another loss and it is the loss of his pet Mutt, a dog who was closer to him than any human being. He is closer than his wife or daughter to him. Mutt is a human being to the judge. As the movement of the Gorkhaland gathers momentum, incidents happen in such a way that the loss of power and authority of those who occupy a position of centrality in the existing system becomes evident. Mutt is stolen by the wife and the father of the drunkard. When the judge complains of the gun robbery, the police are quite serious and consider the theft too important to be ignored and look into the matter immediately . They are successful in tracing the culprit . But now the conditions have changed. When a report is filed of Mutt's missing, the police answer that, people are being killed in large number and the way things are they cannot look for a dog. Instead they make fun of the judge

and the SDO fixes the judge with a certain gluey look that convinces him he meant to be rude. The judge is helpless and goes out of the police station. "They began to snigger. " Ha come about his dog' Dog? Ha, ha, ha Madman !" They became angry halfway through their humour. "Don't waste out time," they said "Get out." (TIL:291). The judge almost weeps and understands the world has failed Mutt. He realises that he has lost the previous power. He remembers all of a sudden and regrets "why he had gone to England and joined the ICS?(TIL:292). Lola and Noni, the wealthy Bengali sisters also have to bear loss. Lola is a widow and they both live on her pension. Mon Ami is their beautiful residence, living a peaceful life , they are satisfied but unexpectedly their life is subversed by the Nepali insurgency . The land around their Mon-Ami is illegally acquired by the GNLF youths. When Lola complains to GNLF chief she is humiliated in a bad way. His behaviour makes her realise that she is at loss. Mon Ami is a dream come true of her husband who has expected a peaceful life among the hills. It is his retirement plan but unfortunately he is not there. Lola along with the loss of property has the sense of loneliness. Perhaps she missed Joydeep a lot. This made her realise the loss, she has really inherited. She felt helpless. she calls for her dead husband. How could she and her sister leave now? If they leave within no time the army would acquire the house. " They would lose the home that the two of them, Joydeep and Lola, has bought with such false ideas of retirement, sweet peas and mist, cat and books." (TIL:245) Thus Lola watches the dream of her husband shattered to pieces. For her, he seemed to be fool who thought the world was firm beneath his feet and never suffered a doubt.

The next to bear the loss is Father Booty, Sai's neighbour. He is the worst loser, who has been in India for decades. Father Booty is a Swiss man. He owns a dairy, has some cows, produces milk and milk products. In this agitation he is found to be residing illegally in India. He considers himself more an Indian than a Swiss citizen. So he hasn't renewed his stay permit.

He knows he is a foreigner but considers himself an Indian foreigner. He is asked to leave Kalimpong. It sounds like an earthquake to him. No one acquainted with him are ready to help him. The people who have regular trips to his dairy also are helpless. " But now, all those who in peaceful times had enjoyed his company and chatted about such things as curd, mushrooms and bamboo are too busy or too scared to help " (TIL:221). Uncle Potty consoled Father Booty that he would look after his property and cows and when atmosphere cools down he can come back. But Uncle Potty is a drunkard and it would be a great risk. Thus, there is no alternative. Father Booty is forced to leave for the Siliguri airport. Having lost everything it is only his memories he can take with him. He remembers the time, he had given lecture on how dairies might create a mini Swiss-style economy in Kalimpong and his proposal was greeted with a standing ovation. He feels the loss of his property, friends and everything. He left his friend Uncle Potty in mourning and drinking with all the mess no one to care for. Loss becomes the lot of Biju, who overcoming the hurdles reaches New York to test his luck. The career of Biju the cook's only son, is again one of loss gaining something by fraud and losing it to threatened violence. By improper means he manages to reach America but is at loss without a green card. He has to undergo humiliation and insults. Biju being an illegal immigrant the owners are indifferent towards him. He is harassed and he wants to return to India. Through Biju's character, as observed by Satendra Kumar (2007:51), Desai portrays " The fact of exile and how that exile affects the notion of home, how it colours perception and how it heightens the sense of wanting to belong are strong currents that run through this novel." Biju decides to come back to India. However he succeeds in reaching Siliguri bus station. But as the Liberation movement is activated, there was no bus to Kalimpong. Biju hires a jeep, unfortunately it is GNLF jeep. These people strip Biju off everything he brought from America. This is severe blow that fate hit him M.K. Naik states (2008:4), " The unkindest cut of all is that he has lost all his dollars which he has hidden

under the fake sole of his shoes, with which the insurgents seem to be particularly fascinated. Biju's loss is thus total" Even the dog mentioned previously suffers loss. Mutt is stolen by two itinerant beggars. Mutt is more human than a dog. Her closeness to the judge is seen in the following incident, " He overturned the beetle on the table with his knife, it stopped buzzing and Mutt who has been staring at it with shock gazed at him like an adoring spouse."(TIL:160) She enjoyed status like a human being, in fact as if she was the spouse of the judge. But fate hits her hard. The judge becomes very sentimental after her missing. Mutt adds to the sad fraternity of loser in the narrative. Compared to other characters in the narrative she suffers more for she has to pay the ultimate penalty of death.

After studying the loss of individual characters, the insurgent Indo-Nepalis are also at loss. Under GNLF they are fighting for independent state. Their argument is that inspite of their majority they are treated as minority. They have never been offered good jobs. Inspite of being educated, Gyan is deprived of the opportunity of job. Even fighting for the British Army and then for the Indian Army they are given low paid jobs, that the meagre pension hardly meets both the ends .They try to subverse the government but fail to do so.

Thus the theme of Loss is all pervading. It is present in the life of all the characters. It appears to govern the life of all characters. The novel describes a world where people are forgetting their cultural of heritage and are biased about caste, creed and religion. This leads to a world of agonies, pairs despair and desperation. In the age of globalization the world has become a global village, but humans are separated. The unity is lost, integration is lost, this loss is the fatal loss that people are inheriting.

Theme of Terrorism

Terrorism has spread its tentacles all over the world. India has been facing the pangs of terrorism for many years. Even in the present context, it faces

the threat of more violence in the Kashmir valley and some parts of the country. As M.G.Chitkar observes(2002:1), "Terrorists can never win an armed conflict with the state but they always hope to weaken the state's resolve to fight them. They bank on the civilised society's aversion to violence, its desire to resolve an impasse through compromises. They will not give anything away but grab whatever they can extort and resume their war of nerves. Every concession, every respite is used to recuperate and regroup".

The theme of terrorism is also one of the major themes of the novel '*The Inheritance of Loss*'. "Charlotte Richardson in her review says that Desai's Booker Prize – winning novel explores the roots of terrorism and the inexorable process by which karmic chickens come home to roost"(Website). Terrorist activity is shown by the writer in the first chapter itself, The GNLF youths intrude in Cho Oyu and unnoticed enter the Judge's house. They come through the forest. As Cho Oyu is in isolation, there is no one near by to be called for help. The nearest neighbour is Uncle Potty who would be drunk on the floor by this time. So there is no one to come for their rescue. This terrorists are in search of any types of weapons. Anything they could find –kukri sickles, axes, kitchen knives, spades any kind of firearm. They come for the judge's hunting rifles. They not only grab the guns and rifles of Jemubhai, the judge, but also give him humiliating treatment. They ask for tea and snacks. They ask the judge to make the table arrangement for them. Then they demand the key and snatch the liquor bottles that the judge has in his possession. The terrorists make the judge, Sai and the cook repeat the slogan, "Say Jai Gorkha, "Gorkhaland for Gorkhas" (TIL:7). Through the above scene Desai portrays the point of view of the terrorism that prevails in Kalimpong. The world of globalisation, the differences occurred due to political, social, religious, cultural and economic sources are said to be responsible for contemporary terrorism. They fight under the leadership of Gorkha National Liberation Front, which

demands a separate state for the Nepalis. M.G.Chitkar(2002:VI) states, "Terrorism manifests itself in political, religious and socio-economic inequalities and exploitation. It thrives on grievances real or imaginary when the state or the ruling oligarchy fails to redress injustices, infringement of rights of oppression. Terrorism has most commonly become identified as individuals or groups that have destined to destabilize or overthrow the government or the ruling party." The reports of the dissatisfaction of the Nepalis gather insurgency in the hills. They blame the government and the people because they are treated like the minority when they are in majority so this time it is Indo-Nepali agitation rising in the Eastern hills. Even after the robbery of the guns people are unaware of the agitation. But now there are posters in the market and slogans scratched and painted on the side of government offices and shops. "We are stateless," ' It is better to die than live as slaves,' "We are constitutionally tortured" (TIL:126) . The so-called revolutionary activity is considered to be an agitation of a handful of students. The seriousness is realised when a group of fifty young boys, the members of GNLF gather at Makhaldara to swear an oath to sacrifice themselves for the cause of their homeland . They call themselves as Liberation army. The author portrays the insurgency as an important event in her novel. The readers become conscious of the agitation when Gyan—the hero— Maths tutor of Sai, her companion, boyfriend gets himself involved in the movement. He becomes witness to the procession followed by a speech. In that speech the agitator makes people aware of the past history. He says in 1947, British leave India for Indians, grant Pakistan for Muslims, grant special privileges and provisions for the schedule caste and tribes, and give every one they demand. But the Nepalese are ignored, left uncared. In fact it is the Nepalese who fight for the British and also fight for Indians. They are the loyal soldiers who dedicate their lives for the cause of freedom. But they are not rewarded justly. They are given compensation and nothing else. " According to M.G. Chitkara (2002:20), "It shows us that the cause that the terrorist espouse is driven by a 'sense of

injustice', as when a nation does not have independence in the family of nations , or where a minority feels that it's rights are being trampled upon." Gyan here recalls his experience of the last interview. Besides being educated he is jobless. He is convinced of the fact that in his own country, youths like him are not far better than slaves. The picture needs to be changed, he thinks the change is expected from the GNLF youths. The GNLF are expected to change the situation for the better. The GNLF promise every thing that is lacking. Thus Gyan who is by chance in the procession comes under the sway of the movement. He finds that the fervor has affected him. He even hates to recall the moments he has with Sai, the tea parties, the cheese toast etc. He now voices an adamant opinion that the Gorkha movement should adopt any route to achieve the target.

One can observe that the terrorist activities involve violence or threat of violence. The violence is generally directed towards civilians. The civilians are held at target, the motives are political. The actions are carried out in such a way that they should achieve maximum result. Gradually the Gorkha movement envelops the whole of Kalimpong. The citizens are harassed by the GNLF members. The changes badly affect the lives of the innocent people. Lola and Noni are two wealthy sisters. They live in a spacious house "Mon Ami" and have lots of land around the house. These sisters are of Bengali origin but fascinated by western style of living. They lose their social standing. Their land too is encroached upon. They are pressurised, victimised and made fun of. One morning the two sisters wake up and find that,during the night, a hut has come up like a mushroom on a newly cut gash at the bottom of the Mon Ami vegetable patch. They watch with horror as two boys calmly chop down a bamboo from their property and carry it off right in front of them.They rush out to tell that the land belongs to them, but they are given a very rude and flat answer.

"It is our land".

"It is unoccupied land".

"We'll call the police".

"They shrugged turned back, and kept on working" (TIL:240).

Lola goes to complain to the chief of the Kalimpong wing of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) called Pradhan. He seems to be a very cruel and mischievous fellow. First he asks her the name of the property. Finding out that it is a French name, he remarks: 'I didn't know we live in France. Do we? Tell me Why don't I speak in French then?' (TIL:243) He ignored her papers. He bullies her and tells her that their people need the space. When Lola tries to persuade him he becomes indifferent :

"I am the raja of Kalimpong. A raja must have many queens. He jerked his head back to the sounds of the kitchen that came through the curtained door

"I have four, but would you," he looked Lola up and down, tipperd his chair back head at a comical angle. A coy naughty expression catching his face. "dear Aunty, would you like to be the fifth?" (TIL:244) "And you know, you won't be bearing me any sons at your age so I will expect a big dowry. And you are not much to look at, nothing up" he patted the front of his khaki shirt – "nothing down" he patted his behind, which he twisted out of the chair. "In fact, I have more of both! (TIL:244).

Thus Lola and Noni have no alternative but to accommodate them. These insurgents are against the outsiders they hate the Bengalis for being wealthy, and they think the Bengalis have become rich depriving them of their own wealth and force them to live below poverty line.

The next incident is that the army accusing Father Booty for taking a photograph of a polka dotted butterfly on the bridge. The Army is trying to curb the agitation and they are in search of the terrorists. Sai, Lola, Noni along with father Booty are on their way to the library to exchange books and get some necessary things. The insurgents make their life worse. It is

revealed that Father Booty, who is a Swiss citizen has been residing in India illegally. He is asked to leave the state immediately. Father Booty goes running to every one he knows. He hopes they may help him. He also goes to the police chief and the SDO who make regular trips to the dairy for sweet curd. But all those who in peaceful times have enjoyed his company and chatted about such things as curd, mushrooms, and bamboo are now too busy or too scared to help. Father Booty becomes totally nervous. He feels his heart would fail at the thought of leaving his cows. He is more shocked when one day a Nepali visitor, a doctor comes to him and offers to buy his property at a very low price. The dialogue between the doctor and Father Booty runs like this,

"That isn't even the cost of the shed, let alone the main house."

" You will not get any other offers"

" Why not?"

" I have arranged it and you have no choice. You are lucky to get what I am giving you. You are residing in this country unlawfully and you must sell or lose every thing.: (TIL.:222)

Kiran Desai presents an authentic picture of the motive force of the Gorkha insurgency, its uncertain beginning, the course of its rapid development and its final emergence into an organized terrorist force, playing havoc in the lives of people. It reminds one of Yeats' terrible pronouncement, "After us, the savage God". Desai has a keen eye for detail and more than adequate skill for transforming contemporary political experience into fictional art. She gives as much attention to analyse the social and psychological reasons for the rise of the ethnic Gorkha movement as she gives to evoke the grisly effects of its terrorist activities.

The worst affected by this Nepali movement, however, are the two young people, Sai and her Nepali tutor Gyan. Sai is interested in Gyan.

Though the atmosphere is of unrest, Gyan also gives response to Sai and their romance flourishes. But as Gyan is involved in the terrorist movement of GNLF. He starts hating Sai and her grandfather, for their luxury their westernized style of life. Their relation is shattered when Sai tries to tell him how they enjoy Christmas. He criticises her in a bitter way, "I am not interested in Christmas!" he shouted. "Why do you celebrate Christmas? You're Hindus and you don't celebrate Id or Guru Nanak's birthday or even Durga Puja or Dussehra or Tibetan New Year." "You are like slaves, that's what you are, running after the West, embarrassing yourself. It's because of people like you we never get anywhere." (TIL:163). Gyan who is affected by fervour of the movements hates himself and feels ashamed of spending time with Sai and so withdraws himself from her. He is in fact a misguided youth. He is torn apart in his love for Sai on the one hand and his hatred for everything that Sai represents on the other hand. Desai describes it in the following remark, "The masculine atmosphere he breathed now made him realize that the soft easy life with its 'nursery talk' is against the requirement of his adulthood" (TIL:161). "His avowal to make the Gorkha Movement take 'the harshest route possible' (TIL.:161) inevitably results in a souring of his relationship with Sai, who as a result is emotionally shattered. He is involved in both, Sai and in the 'Gorkha separatist movement'. The circumstances pull him into the movement and he cannot go back to Sai.

It is the time of unrest The whole of Kalimpong burns under the fire of separation. The GNLF fighting for the separatist state, the police hiding their own identity, rather than protecting others, the common man in a state of fear and shock and death, unexpectedly crawling over, shadowing the grand and saintly Kanchenjunga makes the atmosphere tense and full of fear. Thus Kalimpong has become a "Ghost town". The normal life of the people is totally disturbed and turned upside down. The life has now been not safe for anyone. The agitations here arranged a gathering on the

melaground to burn the Indo-Nepal treaty of 1950. At least one person from each family is expected to join the protest. Many people put forth reasons of their sickness but at least one has to go. The GNLF makes good organisation but suddenly stones are thrown and the whole scene is changed into a riot. Everyone is running helter-skelter, the unwilling participants, the perpetrators, and police. The cook, is witness to all this movement. He however manages to get away from there himself. He crying and crawling he reaches back to Cho Oyu, hiding in the bushes as he is passed by army tanks rolling down from the cantonment area into the town. Instead of foreign enemies and instead of the Chinese they have been preparing to fight with their own people. Seeing all this, a fear grips his mind, he wonders would he be able to see his son again. The incidents of horror grow. Roads are closed, There is curfew every night and Kalimpong is trapped in its own madness. People are trapped in their own houses. They are not allowed to leave the house they have to stay locked. The people are harassed, beaten badly and forced to repeat, "Jai Gorkha." It is bad for the people who are other than Nepali. People who have known them for whole life fail to acknowledge them in the street. Lola is treated indifferently even by the people with whom she is well acquainted. The shopkeeper flatly refuses to sell the eggs "All these years," said Lola, "I've been buying eggs at that Tshering's shop down the road, and the other day he looked at me right in the face and said he has none. 'I see a basket of them right there, I said "how can you tell me you have none?" "They have been presold; he said". (TIL:280). The localites even avoided to say hai, hello. In this way the people other than Nepalese are suffering humiliation. The GNLF boys burned down the government rest house by the river. The circuit house, and the house of the chief minister's niece is also set on fire. People of Kalimpong are suffering a lot. The people even men are afraid of being picked up, being tortured for any kind of flimsy excuse. The GNLF accusing them of being police informers, the police accusing them of being militants. The cook is terrified by this, after the gun robbery

and after the parade, seeing the frailty of his life here as a non- Nepali, he is unable to manage himself and so Sai has to go the marketing and search for if any shop is open at the back door doing a secret business. The cook always feels a sinister presence looming around him. Now he only thinks of Biju. Sai and judge are forced to eat deshi food for the first time in Kalimpong.

Desai portrays the climax of the terrorist activities in return of Biju for which Charlotte Richardson comments " Karmic chickens come home to roost." From Mr. Iype Biju learns that Eastern India , particularly Darjeeling is in trouble. Nepalis are being so troublesome that the whole hillside is shut down. Biju recalls he didn't have any letters for a long time. But he thought that must be because of the usual disruptions – bad weather incompetence leading to the break in his father's correspondence. Biju makes a phone call to his father but when the call is over, the emotions that he hoped to dispel are reinforced. Biju being restless decides to return back to India. He goes on purchasing lot of things. Biju steps out of the airport into Calcutta and he comes to know that there is no bus to Kalimpong. Then he takes a private vehicle. Unfortunately they are GNLF youths who rob Biju. All his belongings along with his clothes are snatched Biju is left only on his inner wears. It is very pathetic. He tries to save his life. Somehow he manages to reach Cho Oyu. "Again the gate rattled I'll go, said the cook and he got up slowly, dusted himself off. he walked through the drenched weeds to the gate. At the gate, peeping through the black lace wrought iron between the mossy caanonballs, is the figure, in a night gown " Pitaji"? said the figure. All ruffles and colours. Kanchenjunga appeared above the parting clouds, as it did only very early in the morning during this season." Biju!" whispered the cook ." Biju!" he yelled, demented Sai looked out and saw two figures leaping at each other as the gate swung. (TIL:324). Terrorism thus leads to the loss in all senses .

Human Relationship

Human Relationships also forms a core theme along with the other themes in *The Inheritance of Loss*. Desai proves to be a skilful observer. She has delineated the theme from various perspectives. Desai presents a kaleidoscopic view of man-woman relationship. It throws light on the sensitive and serious issue of an Indian woman's plight within marriage. Nimi, the wife of Jemubhai Patel, is a victim of injustice as she is deprived of her rights as a wife. Nimi, a village girl of a rich father, is married to Jemubhai. Jemubhai a scholar child is perhaps the first from his community to get higher education. As he is from a poor family, it is the fat dowry brought by Nimi makes it possible for him to go for ICS in England. He completes his education successfully, but he is anglicised as he acquires western manners and cultures. Jemubhai returns to find himself despising his apparently backward wife. He does not like his wife's face. He nurtures feelings of hatred towards her. Patel thinks the Indian girl can never be as beautiful as an English one. Nimi accompanies Jemubhai to his work place. Jemubhai hires a companion to teach Nimi English language, style and manners. Nimi fails to withstand Jemubhai's expectations. This is taken as her stubbornness and hence Jemubhai is prejudiced against her. Mr. Patel becomes indifferent towards her. He ignores the fact that Nimi is his life partner and it is her dowry that facilitates his journey to England. Jemubhai becomes insolent and cruel towards her. The height is reached when she becomes a part of the crowd welcoming Nehru and she is held responsible for blocking his promotion as a British Employee. He hits her and sends her away to her parental home never to return. Thus Jemubhai does not treat her as his equal in man-woman relationship. She is treated as an inferior woman and she has to suffer from injustice. She is marginalised. Love, understanding, respect and equality are the four pillars of marriage. Kiran Desai shows through the man-woman relation between Jemubhai and Nimi that marital relationship not based on compatibility, equality, freedom, love

and understanding leads not only to unhappiness but also to the violent and disastrous end of the partners especially of woman in marriage, in a male dominated society. Man-woman relationship between Jemubhai and Nimi's is devoid of these values. It is mainly responsible for this. He doesn't treat his wife with love. He is not able to understand her condition. She is harassed most of the time as Jemu is not happy with her. One of the major issues Desai thrashes out in man woman relationship relates to power, and person's desire to dictate direct actions without thinking of others. Patriarchy gives power to the male and female is made to suffer. The woman is exploited. Nimi's suffering has no end. She has to leave her husband. She goes to live with her brother-in-law. She is at his mercy. He takes disadvantage of her helplessness. Finally she dies.

The romance of Sai and Gyan fails to develop into man- woman relationship as it dies before its birth. Gyan is Sai's tutor of Mathematics. . Gyan is a science graduate. They fall in love with each other. Their relationship is in budding stage that does not bloom into a flower. Then Gyan joins the liberation movement of the Indo-Nepali insurgents. He is carried by movement's fever. He condemns himself for having his relation of love with Sai. He hates her, for her western manners, luxury and other things. Sai also begins to hate him when she finds out his association with the resurgents. Thus the relation between the lovers is estranged and the romance dies before it blooms. Desai shows that socio-political situation can adversely affect the relationship between the lovers.

Sai the orphan child has nowhere to go. So she is sent to her maternal grandfather's house after the sudden death of her parents. Jemubhai leaves the impression of a dry, emotionless grandfather, he is rather disturbed at the arrival of his grand daughter. In fact he has to take a dose of calmpose for a sound sleep. The nature of relation becomes quite clear when the cook learns that Sai has returned not from a foreign country but has come all the way from Dehra Dun.

“Dehra Dun” devastated “Kamal Hai” said the cook. “Here we have made so much fuss thought you’re coming from far away and you’ve been in Dehra Dun all along. Why didn’t you come before? (TIL:25)

To make the relation more explicit Desai rightly describes “Oh, Grandfather more Lizard than human. Dog more human than dog.” (TIL:32) The only thing of resemblance is that Sai being brought up in a convent by English nuns has westernized manners and the same accent like that of her grandfather. Jemubhai’s savage like behaviour with his wife and cold attitude towards his grand daughter, undoubtedly show that he makes mockery of all his English education and high placed situation in life. Yet paradoxically enough, he is the man who loves his dog Mutt and is ready to sacrifice anything for her sake, to keep her with him. “His deep attachment to the dog certainly poses an enigma to the baffled reader! If some redemption comes to him through his kindness redemption for the dog, nemesis also befalls him the same source for all his crimes against his wife when he loses his pet. (TIL:20) At the loss of dog he is so grief stricken that, however driven by sorrow he asks himself in a mood of self introspection whether “he has killed his wife for the sake of his false ideals stolen her dignity, shamed his family, shamed hers, turned her into the embodiment of their humiliation” (TIL:308)

Contrary to the relationship between grandfather and grand daughter, we find a loving and cordial relation between a father and son tightly woven despite their poverty, which forms no barrier for the love and affinity the cook has for his son. Thus this father-son relationship is also an important part of the human relationship. Biju is the only son of the cook. The cook brings him up, as his wife dies, when Biju is five years old, she slipped from a tree while gathering leaves to feed the goat. The cook is very proud of his son. He exhibits it in the following way, “What a naughty boy,” the cook would always exclaim with joy. But basically his nature was always good. In our village, most of the dogs bite, and some of them have teeth the size of

sticks, but when Biju went by no animal would attack him. And no snake would bite him when he would go out to cut grass for the cow. He has that personality, “the cook said brimming with pride. “He isn’t scared of anything at all. Even when he was very small he would pick up mice by the tail, lift frogs by the neck---(TIL:14). Biju works in New York. It is a thing of pride to his father. Biju belongs to the shadow class of illegal immigrants. In fact his life is miserable there. He has to move from one ill-paid job to another. He there tries to eek out an existence without being caught in an alien culture which is not kind to him. But the cook, unaware of the fact, tells every one” He works for the Americans”(TIL:14). The cook reports the contents of the letter to everyone in the market. Biju is also too much emotionally involved in his father. His filial reaction makes him to be determined not to let his father down. Some times he feels frustrated at the state he is engulfed in. He has to face humiliation, as an illegal immigrant. He is paid low and no body bothers about him. No body is there to help these immigrants, no one to show humanity. Desai presents a realistic picture of a warm relation between father and son through the cook. Biju gets the news of insurgency in hills, he gets disturbed. The cook is also worried about his son. At this movement a fear over takes him. He thinks that he might never see his son again. The letters that have come all these years are only his own relief. Biju decides to return back though he is warned not to leave. The true love is exhibited, when all dangers and losing every thing Biju reaches Cho Oyu. The cook is overwhelmed with joy. He greets him despite his loss. Thus Desai very effectively delineates the relationship between father and son. The cook is a foil to the judge. He stands in contrast to judge and emerges as a typical Indian father who loves his son and is proud of him. Biju embodies also typical Indian son who has high respect for his father and loves him too.

One more human relationship portrayed by Desai is the Master-Servant relationship. The Judge is the master and the cook is his employee.

Right from the beginning of the novel we see the character of cook, an inevitable part of Cho Oyu. He has probably been serving the judge for a long time. The judge is a peevish, eccentric person. He has hardly any emotional feeling for the servant. The judge who has almost inherited the English manners and style expects to be treated like an English man. The English leave India, even after this he is unable to adjust without a soup when he sits for dinner, so the cook has to prepare it. The cook carries in two bowls of sour and peppery tomato soup, muttering, "No thanks to me for anything ... see what I have to deal with and I'm not young and healthy anymore--- terrible to be a poverty – stricken man, terrible, terrible, terrible".....(TIL:34). The cook grumbles for his meagre pay. But the judge is too stiff to yield. He tells the cook that all his expenses are paid. The cook adopts illegal ways to raise money for the sake of his son. The cook compared himself with other cooks and maids, watchmen and gardeners who are well paid and well treated by their employees, but he never let the judge down. He neither criticises him nor complains about him. Instead he talks lies, fanning a rumour of the judge's lost glory, and therefore, his own. No matter how much the cook cares for the judge, the judge is indifferent towards him because he criticises every thing that is Indian. Living in a large decaying house, the judge considers himself more British than Indian far superior to hard-working poverty stricken people. Being an officer in British regime, he doesn't understand the cook's feelings, rather he keeps him under his domination. Desai induces fun and comic in the relation of the judge and the cook. Ironical presentation of their relation appears in the concluding pages of the novel. The cook confesses his guilt. That night the cook comes in drunken state and says, "If I have been disobedient," he slurred, approaching the foot of the judge's bed with unfocussed eyes, "beat me." "What?" said the judge, sitting up in bed and switching on the light, drunk himself.

He on Whiskey.

. "What?"

“I am a bad,” cried the cook, “I’m a bad man, beat me, Sahib punish me.”

How dare he - (TIL:319)

Then the cook falls at the judge’s feet clasping one of them and weeping for mercy. The judge insists on his quitting him but he holds tighter and weeps. The judge begins to beat him harder and harder to get him to let go. He kicks him out. “The surge of anger was familiar to the judge. He said “you filth you hypocrite. If you want punishment I’ll give it to you” yes” “wept the cook, “that is right, It’s your duty to discipline me. It’s as it should be”. She very skillfully portrays realistic yet pathetic predicament of suffering of the cook. Desai seems to be a keen observer of the relations that pervaded through out the novel. She has tried to create relations that are quite real with a lot of ups and downs. Desai succeeds in depicting human relations against the background of the character in view of their religion, race, class and gender. She shows how they influence human relationship in unpredictable ways.

Theme of Immigration

Desai illuminates the life of immigrants by delving deep in the lives of the characters, perhaps it may be the experience of the author, who as an Indian immigrated to the West. The West has always been a centre of attraction, glamour, to the third world countries. The youths of these developing countries try to seek fortune by going to Western countries like England, America. *The Inheritance of Loss* documents painful and tormenting emotions of being an immigrant and exile. She has given vent to the character’s nostalgia by exhibiting their restlessness and sense of displacement. Very powerfully she depicts the feelings of a person who is caught between two continents, two cultures that make him realise the immigrant’s loss that he has inherited. Autobiographical details of Kiran Desai run like this, her family has a summer house in Kalimpong in the Himalayas, where they used to live. Might be this makes her have a feeling of inheritance. But at the same time she has the painful feeling of loss

because of her stay in the foreign land as an immigrant. Now she could only carry the memories of her life in Kalimpong with her. Exploring the international issue of Immigration, she has realistically portrayed the pathetic life of legal as well as illegal immigrants. The character of judge Jemubhai represents the legal immigrants who go to alien lands for higher education and Biju, son of a poor cook migrates to America, New York in particular for better fortune. He represents the younger generation that try to go through illegal ways. East or the third world countries have always been deprived of their worth by the colonizers. Even in the post colonial era, the orientals migrated to the Western parts of the world to experience the discrimination made by the Western people. Desai presents a live and sensational picture of the multi-problematic lives of the immigrants in foreign lands.

Biju is the son of the cook of a retired judge. The cook is a poverty-stricken man, who dreams of bright future for his only son. He feels that his son would prosper only if he could go to America. For that he spends his hard earned savings and sends Biju to America, no matter illegally and to do whatever petty jobs that might come to his lot. Biju uneducated prefers illegal way to go to America. Hence he is the representative of many of them who from all over the world rush to America for better fortune. Through his story Desai sketches the theme of migration and human exploitation as well as the pains of self-imposed exile. Biju's despair and pathetic predicament is pointed out with the modern problem of migration. She lively sketches how the agencies tempt the younger generation by showing them opportunities in foreign land. But many a times the young are deceived by those agencies. Biju has also has faced this tragedy in his first attempt of going to America. But next time however he succeeds in migrating to America. Biju being a poor fellow has to switch from one job to another. Instead of a settlement, he finds himself tossed from one place to another. Thus he feels at loss in an alien land and nobody cares for him or

even to talk a few words of sympathy. The same thing happens with many youngsters because they are forced by themselves and their parents to go abroad to seek fortune. The parents force them not to return. But these parents are unaware of the immigrant- problems. The boys are unable to expose their desperation or exploitation to their parents. They are torn apart and lose all glamour and hopes about their future. They even have no identity as they don't belong to either country. They don't have the green card to be the legal citizen. Biju is also the sufferer. He has to face the problem but cannot tell the truth to his father who thinks it is a pride that Biju is made waiter there and is called upon to prepare '*Angreji khana*'. In fact, Biju's father thinks it to be Biju's progress, promotion from Indian food maker to Angreji Khana maker. Biju's existence without a green card is self imposed exile. At last he takes a job at the cafe of Harish Harry but has to undergo inhuman treatment. He is treated like a slave. Biju's situation is absurd in America and has to experience the cruelty and insolent behaviour of his American masters. Being treated like a slave he becomes conscious of his isolation. The feeling deepens when Biju requests his master for a green card, Biju has broken his leg and to get himself a treatment from the doctor, the green card is must. Biju's request is ignored by the master, instead their indifferent behaviour convinces him that he is lonely, homeless in far off. The author writes, "The spirit of these men he worked with amazed Biju, terrified him, overjoyed him and then terrified him again"(TIL:15). Through this Desai wants to portray a aninsensitive and indifferent behaviour of the Americans. Biju is cruelly exploited by Harish-Harry. They pay him low wages without providing any facilities. Like Biju hundreds of illegal immigrants are suffering in America, but their parents and relatives in India are proud of them for being in foreign countries. Thus exile has become Biju's lot without having any social standing. The following paragraph make us realise Biju's pathetic condition in a country like America where according to the cook there was lot of room and enough food for all. "Biju put padding of newspapers down his shirt- left over copies

from kind Mr. Iype the news agent and sometimes he took the scallion pancakes and inserted them below the paper, inspired by the memory of an uncle who used to go out to the fields in winter with his lunchtime parathas down his vest. But even this did not seem to help, and once, on his bicycle, he began to weep from the cold and the weeping picked a deeper vein of grief, such a terrible groan issued from between the whimpers that he was shocked, his sadness was so profound.”(TIL:51).

As Biju is an illegal immigrant he has to work on very low wages. His appeal to Harish-Harry to sponsor him for green card is very pathetic. One can observe in the following dialogue, “Without us living like pigs, “said Biju, ‘what business would you have ! This is how you make your money paying us nothing because you know we can’t do anything, making us work day and night because we are illegal why don’t you sponsor us for our green card?” (TIL:188). Kiran Desai in *Biju* sketches a person caught between two continents experiencing the loss of identity, exile, rootlessness and alienation. She records the experience of uprooting in Biju, who, because of his illegal immigration in the US, has to eek out his existence in one hellish kitchen after another, exploited, poor and terribly lonely and homesick . Biju’s life is no more better than a slave. Biju is almost isolated, lonely and homeless. His lost self without any identity forces him conveniently try to escape from the land of immigration, New York. Desai portrays how in response to advertisements published in a local paper for waiters, vegetables choppers, toilet cleaners, a huge crowd of shabby people assemble for interview, the Indians rush forward and make us realise that Indians are ready to bear humiliations to get in U.S. “In this room it was a fact accepted by all that Indians are willing to undergo any kind of humiliation to get into the states. You could heap rubbish on their heads and yet they would be begging to come crawling in ... (TIL:184)

As soon as Biju gets the news of trouble in Kalimpong, he takes a momentous decision to leave. But Biju is trapped in a nightmare. He has to

endure deplorable conditions as soon as he sets his foot in Siliguri. Biju fails to settle himself in the alien land and returns home dejected.

Parallel to Biju the Swiss dairy owner Father Booty meets the same fate for being an illegal immigrant. He has developed a relation with the soil of Kalimpong. To leave Kalimpong is a shock to him. It creates a great vacuum in his life. He tries to plead his innocence but he is helpless. From decades he has been there. This disaster collapses on him when he least expected it. He was pushed into the jeep for Siliguri. This was the forced exile Father Booty experienced as an immigrant. He has to leave everything behind. The author rightly says he can carry only the memories with him.

The judge, Jemubhai Patel has also experienced the pangs of immigration. His immigration was through proper way. He had gone to England for joining ICS to become the most powerful person in India, as dreamt by his father. A point of prestige to the Indian relatives, their son doing ICS in Cambridge University, is perhaps the most recognised one. When he reached England and was in search of a room, he was turned down by twenty two homes. To his knock when they opened their doors they said "Just let", "All full", (TIL:38). Mrs. Rice on Thornton road offered him the room not out of courtesy, but she needed money and her house was on the other side of the train station from the university. She felt that she wouldn't find a lodger at all. Moreover he experiences humiliation, and marginalisation of his class. For entire days nobody talked to him at all, he felt his throat jammed with words unuttered. Even the hapless blue haired, spotted faces like collapsing pumpkins – moved over when he sat next to them in the bus. The kindness to be accepted from younger and beautiful was out of question. Instead they held their noses and giggled "Phew, he stinks of curry!" (TIL:39) He forgot to laugh and could barely manage to give a smile and if ever he did he would hold his hand over the lips to cover his gums and teeth. This all has a deep influence on his personality. As an immigrant being treated like an 'other' he became so self conscious that to

the end of his life he would never be seen without socks and shoes and would prefer shadow to light. He was suspicious if light might reveal him.

His exile hardly kept him a human, of which reflections are seen in the latter life. He adopted the Western style and manners. He became an English with Indian blood. He was inhuman to his wife and daughter. He even cut off relations with his own family and men. Thus after retirement instead of living with his fellowmen, he choose an isolated residence in the Eastern hills. Perhaps he has developed a liking for exile. Learning foreign manners and style he grew a stranger to himself and a butt or ridicule to others. In the blind pursuit of lucrative career in the colonial system he sacrifices his marriage ignores his relatives and indulging in powder degrades himself as a human being. "The Judge could live here, in his shell, this skull, with the solace of being a foreigner in his own country" (TIL:23).

Sai the granddaughter, Indian by birth remains a immigrant. As a westernized Indian, brought up by the English nuns, she feels estranged in India. Like her grandfather, she is well versed in English but her Hindi, as the author says "Pidgin Hindi" makes her a stranger in her own country. Her western manners become a reason for shattering her love affair with Gyan. She is interested in celebrating Christmas which Gyan dislikes. After Gyan's dismissal she develops a feeling of rootlessness in Kalimpong. She feels herself caught up between two extremely different cultures, the Indian and the Western. Thus the immigrant Sai undergoes metamorphosis and allows herself sucked into the tides of change as her Mathematics tutor Gyan is a Nepali. But Sai's hybrid culture shatters their relationship never to be mended.

Similarly, the Indo-Nepali insurgents are the immigrants who become aware of their majority and fight for their own state called Gorkhaland. Gyan joins the movement to fight for the motherland. They oppress the residents, and try to subvert the government. Perhaps Kiran Desai who

experiences the pains of exile, immigration powerfully portrays the contemporary immigrant life spanning from Kalimpong to New York.