

## THE INTERNALIZATION OF WESTERN HEGEMONY IN THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS (2006) BY KIRAN DESAI: A POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

*This article examines the internalization of Western hegemony in Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) through a postcolonial lens focusing on Homi K. Bhabha's notions of hybridity, third space, mimicry and ambivalence. The novel explores the aftermath of Colonial rule and its effect on characters such as Jemubhai Patel, Sai and Biju. Through these characters Desai illustrates how colonized people adopt Western norms and ideology leading to third space that brings cultural alienation and identity crisis that is neither western nor the native culture. The study employs qualitative approach that provides a closed textual analysis to investigate language, institutions and economic structures, reinforcing the Western dominance over marginalized societies. Bhabha's theory of mimicry reveals how colonized people desire the life of colonizers and adopt their norms that create ambivalence. This research study deconstructs the themes of colonial legacy and internalization of Western dominance, that contribute to postcolonial literary criticism. This study discusses the powerful critique of Western dominance by highlighting the struggle of colonized people who remain trapped by the colonizers.*

**Keywords:** Post colonialism, Western Hegemony, Mimicry, Ambivalence, Colonial Legacy.

### INTRODUCTION

This research study will explore the colonial legacy through internalization of Western hegemony in *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) by Desai, her Booker Prize winning novel. Desai's work is deeply influenced by postcolonial literature; she blends Indian, Western and Immigrant narratives to explore the struggles of identity. The novel represents how colonized people adopt Western norms at the cost of their own cultural identity that result in alienation from their native culture. The novel is set in Kalimpong, India, during 1980's. It portrays colonial history and its impacts on the lives of characters. Through different characters of the novel such as the Jemubhai Patel, Sai and Biju, Desai examines how colonial rule leads

individuals to internalize their Western hegemony by fantasizing their ideology.

Postcolonial theorist, Homi K. Bhabha, his concept of mimicry, hybridity and ambivalence analyzes the novel's portrayal of Western dominance. Bhabha defines mimicry as the colonized subject's attempting to imitate the colonizers but in doing so they remain "white but not quite". This imitation leads to ambivalence where colonized individuals admire and imitate western cultures simultaneously but never fully adopt perfectly, that creates a third space that is neither western nor the native. The novel represents the characters who admire colonial ideology and attempt to internalize western norms but struggle with cultural alienation.

### Research Objectives

To analyze how *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) represents the internalization of Western hegemony through the character of Jamubhai Patel

To investigate the impacts of colonial legacy through the concepts of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity

To explore how language, power, culture, institutions and economic structures in the novel reinforce the superiority of West

### Research Questions

How does the *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) represent the internalization of Western hegemony through the character of Jamubhai Patel?

In what ways the colonial legacy impact through the concepts of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity on colonizers?

How do the language, power and economic structures in novel reinforce the superiority of West?

### Significance of the study

The study is significant as it provides a deep understanding of internalization of Western hegemony during colonial legacy in the 1980s. Through the notion of Bhabha's mimicry, hybridity and ambivalence, this article highlights how colonial ideologies continue to impose Western dominance. The study contributes to postcolonial literary criticism by illustrating and exploring the complexities of colonial rule. It will provide in depth analysis of Desai's novel by exposing structures of western dominance.

### Literature Review

This study deals with the internalization of Western hegemony in Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). This literature review proposes to describe the works of those analysts who are particularly focused on the concept of postcolonial analysis and gave reviews about the novel in their research articles. The articles on *The Inheritance of Loss* explore aspects of colonial legacy, cultural alienation, migration and resistance. The novel highlights how colonial history continues to influence Indian society. Bhabha's theory of mimicry and ambivalence is based on third space where different cultures

interact and clash with each other creating a new hybrid identity.

Kaur (2012), explores in his work, *Orientalizing the Postcolonial Nation-State: A study of The Inheritance of Loss*, the nation state in postcolonial analysis, concentrating on themes of exclusion, marginalization and unequal power dynamics. It examines displacement, identity crisis, globalization, migration and economic disparity. The research emphasizes the social and psychological effects of postcolonial structures through the experiences of Biju. Furthermore it explores how political movements influence interpersonal relationships and the challenges faced subaltern individuals to be assimilated in postcolonial societies.

Ilahi, Rawaha and Karam (2025), analyze trauma and identity crisis in their article *A Psychoanalytical Study of Colonial Trauma and Identity Crisis in the Character of Jemubhai Patel in Kiran Desai's novel The Inheritance of Loss*. This study explores Jemubhai Patel's character focusing on Freud's notions of identity crisis and repression. It looks at how the trauma of colonialism informs the psychological condition of Jemubhai, causing him to disown his Indian culture and attempt assimilation into British culture. This leads to an identity crisis, emotional isolation, self hatred and troubled relationships. This study argues that colonialism's psychological impact transcends history, impacting the post colonial psyche and social relationship.

Jackson (2016), represents in her article *Globalization, Diaspora, and Cosmopolitanism in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss*, exploring the themes of cosmopolitanism, nationalism, globalization, class exploitation, colonialism and diaspora. This article argues that the novel is a strict classification of postcolonial diaspora because it challenges the Identity crisis. Some scholars suggest that globalization has given rise to new accounts of friction such as Cosmopolitan rather than Postcolonial issues in that Kalimpong. It transcends cultural boundaries by fantasizing Western customs and neglecting poor inequalities in colonized regions. From this perspective this novel critiques the interconnected historical forces that perpetuate the generational loss.

Shrestha (2022), discusses the postcolonial identity crisis in her article postcolonial identity in the inheritance of loss the fractured postcolonial identity of indian immigrants like biju son of cook, emphasizing their struggle with cultural displacement, mimicry, hybridity, and racial segregation, characters like biju and jamubhai patel suffer from identity crisis while attempting to access western privileges and customs. Colonialism reshapes immigrants' experience customs and privileges. This analysis includes bhabha's notion of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity, frantz fanon's concept of desire to become white through relationships and stuart hall's ideas on identity and diaspora.

Pokhrel (2021), explores in his article Eco-Cosmopolitanism and Cultural Identity in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* Presents the colonial history with the colonial rule, illustrating how immigrants suffer from labor and social exclusion in global subaltern politics. In New York, the narrative focus on immigrant struggle in Kalimpong. It presents Nepali Indian resistance for a separate Gorkhaland, the GNLF movement, to demonstrate the intersection of landscape. It focuses on marginalized communities and migration.

Rizvi N.F. and Khalnawat (2022), examine in their collaborative work *Lost cultural identities and the dynamics of class in post-colonial India: A study of Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss*, how colonialism continues to influence postcolonial India not through direct force but through cultural and linguistic Imperialism. It analyzes how the colonization ingrained a deep seated inferiority complex among the colonized to reinforce by globalization. Desai's novel critiques this phenomena by depicting the characters who feel humiliated by the native identities and try to strive for acceptance by superior West. Characters like Jemubhai Patel and Sai, expose the lingering effects of colonialism and futility of mimicking the colonizers.

Nija(2019), provides a nuanced exploration of cultural displacement in her article *The Inheritance Of Loss: An Exploration Of Postcolonial Angst* that underscores how colonialism continues to shape immigrants to make them lose their identities. The novel portrays social exclusion, racism and lingering

impact of colonial rule through exploitative nature of capitalism. The novel illustrates various impacts caused by colonial rule including trauma, resistance, migration and assimilation. The Indian state, Kalimpong amplifies further the themes of existential crisis and fractured identity for Gorkhaland insurgency.

Hassan(2002), represents in his work *The Postcolonial Condition* in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss: Predicament of Migrants and Resistance of Minorities*, this article explores Kiran Desai's *The inheritance Loss* (2006) focusing on the Desai's portrayal of migration, alienation, globalization, and neocolonialism through postcolonial theory. It argues that the postcolonial condition is a worldwide phenomenon influenced by power systems that originated with colonial capitalism. This study explores the fragmented narratives of the individual in the novel to show how transnational labor, multinational capitalism, and global imperialism support postcolonial movement, drawing on Michel Foucault's understanding of power, oppression, and resistance. This article especially highlights two key aspects: the displacement and hardships faced by third-world immigrants like Biju in the US, the resistance of oppressed minorities, such as Gyan, against neocolonial dominance in India.

Shanmugam explores in his work *Colonial and Postcolonial Diasporic Identities* in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* the concepts of diaspora by distinguishing between voluntary and involuntary diaspora highlighting how colonial and postcolonial immigrants struggle for their identity and face conflicts while maintaining connections to their homelands. It illustrates the tensions showing migrants experience, alienation and discrimination between colonizers and colonized people through racism and inferiority complex.

Existing research articles on the novel *The Inheritance of Loss* largely examines the themes of migration, class struggle, social political impact of colonial history while these studies highlight the external conflicts that arise from Western hegemony. Kiran Desai's characters, particularly Sai, Biju and Judge, provide the self perception shaped by western ideologies. This study will explore the internalization of Western Hegemony by analyzing responses of characters towards western culture, customs and privileges

through Homi K Bhabha's concept of mimicry and ambivalence.

### Methodology

This chapter deals with Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework. The goal of this study is exploratory and analytical in nature. This research is based on a qualitative approach that was most suitable for this research. It provides a detailed description and textual analysis to examine how characters, themes and narrative structures in this novel reflect internalization of Western hegemony. It examines cultural hybridity and colonial legacy by analyzing different characters such as Jemubhai Patel, Sai and Biju. It investigates how language, power and social economic structures in the novel reinforce the superior west. The data collected for this research are scholarly articles on postcolonial analysis of Desai's *The inheritance of Loss*(2006). Different digital databases have been used in data collection like JStore, Google Scholar and ResearchGate to access academic papers .

This research is grounded in Bhabha's theory of mimicry and ambivalence, in his essay *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse* in his book *The Location of Cultures*(1994). The study explores how the characters suffers from colonial legacies identity crisis and cultural mimicry. By deconstructing themes of hybridity, cultural mimicry and psychological impact of colonial rule that represents the Western dominance.

### 3.1 Theoretical framework

According to Homi k Bhabha, colonized people are encouraged to imitate or mimic the culture, language and customs of colonizers. Colonizers impose their Western norms to exploit colonized people who mimic Western cultures, languages, customs and institutions to internalize their values and standards. It creates a sense of alienation from their own traditions, cultures and languages by depending on the Superior West. Mimicry is not just a tool of domination but it is a space for resistance. Bhabha describes mimicry as; "Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce

its slippage, its excesses, its difference."(Bhabha, 1994, p.3-4) When colonized people internalize Western norms they never do it perfectly but produce a third space that is different from their own culture and from the West as well that becomes an act of ambivalence "is not simply one thing or the other, nor both at the same time, but a kind of negotiation between both positions" (p.3-2002). Ambivalence refers to the contradictory feelings or admiration and internalizations that colonized people have towards colonizers. Their desire to be like colonizers destroys the essence of their culture.

Colonizers rule over colonized people to impose their Western cultures, language and institutions to spread their ideology. In result they create a third space, Bhabha's concept of third space "is a fighting term, a theoretical weapon, which intervenes in existing debates and resists certain political and philosophical constructions"(Bhabha, 1994). Hybridity emerges when different cultures interact and influence each other that produce a space neither fully western not fully indigenous. This research is based on following theoretical assumptions:

The act of mimicry creates ambivalence, leading to sense of alienation where colonized people feel estranged from both their native and adopted culture.

The internalization of Western hegemony happens when marginalized societies adopt their dominant norms and language.

Bhabha's concepts illustrates how western hegemony is internalized through mimicry, hybridity and ambivalence. The colonized people fantasize and desire to be like colonizers who adopt the superior west and imitate their culture and language.

This research article explores the internalization of Western hegemony in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*(2006) through the Judge firstly educated in England adopts British customs and be with colonizers. Through different characters of this novel the author illustrates how mimicry ambivalence and hybridity shapes the postcolonial conditions.

### Discussion

Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) illustrates how mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity influence the postcolonial conditions by applying Bhabha's postcolonial theory.

Mimicry serves as a strategy for colonization to impose colonial authority. Colonized subjects adopt Western cultures and norms, this imitation often leads to imperfect adaptation of colonizers. This imperfection brings hybridity and ambivalence by exposing inherent contradictions. The character, Jemubhai Patel adapted British customs to fulfill the colonial standards but didn't imitate perfectly and meet limitations of mimicry by losing native identity. The ambivalence experienced by colonization resulted in psychological displacement where people feel estranged from both their native and adopted culture. This duality creates conflicted identity when they admire colonizers that lead to internal struggle that affect the sense of self. The judge's disrespect towards Indian heritage and his continuous rejection by British society left him in a state of belonging nowhere. Hybridity emerges from new transcultural identities that challenge the oppositions of colonization. The blending of cultures leads to creation of a third space. Characters like Biju who navigate between Indian and western cultures become neither fully Indian nor western.

Jemubhai Patel, the judge, attempts to imitate British norms to meet the high standards of society but remain an outsider despite his efforts. When he returned from Cambridge University, continuous rejection caused psychological displacement of self-hatred and manifest to abusive behavior towards his wife.

Sai, granddaughter of The judge, raised in Saint Augustine convent school with western upbringing, is disconnected from her native roots, the Indian traditions and norms. Her education and lifestyle by imitating west make her feel superior Indian heritage. Her desire to imitate west to fulfill the social standards of society and left her in the third space .

Biju, son of cook, migrates to United States for the betterment of economic opportunities. Firstly, he admires the west but when he realized that he was treated as an outsider that caused exploitation and discrimination. His struggle highlights the illusion of Western dominance that is the harsh reality faced by immigrants are never fully accepted by West.

Gyan, unlike other characters, is aware of colonial legacy and the power play. He criticized Sai for adopting Western customs on celebrating the Christmas. However he himself uses Western

privileges but remained against their imposing ideologies. The novel represents how west influences and deeply fractures the colonized people by making them mentally paralyzed, delimiting their exposure.

#### **4.1 The Internalization of Western Hegemony through Jamubhai Patel**

The character, Jemubhai Patel in the novel, epitomizes the internalization of Western hegemony through Bhabha's theory of postcolonialism, concepts of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity. Colonized people of marginalized societies attempt to imitate colonizers but it is always imperfect. Jemubhai Patel internalizes British norms and customs that distance himself from his Indian roots to fulfill colonial standards for social validations. When he lives in Cambridge for education he soon begins to despise his own identity "He envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he had lost" (2006) represents his respect towards his own native culture because he believes that English manners and standards will elevate him socially. This imitation will never allow him full acceptance and make him feel alienated from both cultures. His obsession with European norms and customs can be seen in his personal habits "He had learned to wash his armpit with his fingers and a single teacup of water, to sit on his toilet with his feet on the seat, English-style" (2006), reflects his excessive effort to assimilate indicating how colonial power has influenced his identity.

Jemubhai Patel, who belonged to a peasant family, married to get dowry, "The dowry bids poured in and his father began an exhilarated weighing and tallying: ugly face—a little more gold, a pale skin—a little less. A dark and ugly daughter of a rich man seemed their best bet" (2006) racism can be seen that fulfills the ideology of colonizers. Before leaving for education at Cambridge University, he had simultaneous attraction and desire towards colonizers. Their continuous repulsion towards the Judge brings bitterness and insecurity. In England, Judge suffered from inferiority complexes caused by differences in complexion from western people, accent of speaking English and way of living from colonizers. Judge's alienation in England how English perceives him though he mimicked the

colonizers even when treated as an outsider. This realization makes him psychologically upset and he starts hating himself for his Indian heritage. Judge's character is a tragic embodiment influenced by colonial legacy. He attempts to become English but is always marked by differences. He continuously admires and idealizes colonizers but suffers from identity crisis. This represents powerful exploration of postcolonial impacts of internalized Western hegemony.

#### 4.2 The Impacts of Colonial Legacy

The colonial legacy and this novel is deep seated in internalization of Western hegemony that continues to shape identity and societal structures. Colonialism imposes a sense of inferiority among colonized people leading them to self hatred and thoughts of alienation. Judge's education in England, conditions him to despise Indian identity and internalize western superiority, "He began to find his own skin odd-colored, his own accent peculiar"(2006) it represents how colonial education and institutes delimit the exposure of immigrants. The superior West, erode for his self esteem, making different ideologies through the lens of colonizers to impose there Western norms on colonized people.

When he returned from England he started hatred and cruel behavior towards his wife on wearing bangles and fulfilling Indian culture, "He took off her bangles, threw away her hair oil, and pushed her face into the toilet when he discovered her squatting on it" (2006) This brutal behavior is not personal but it reflects the colonial conditions to disrespect the Indian traditions to adopt western norms.

Colonialism creates hybrid identities, where people belong to neither the colonized culture nor their native ones. The characters, such as the Judge, his grand daughter Sai and Biju all struggle with identity crisis. Sai was the granddaughter of Judge, raised in a Saint Augustine Convent School. She feels disconnected from Indian traditions because her bringing was on English customs which isolated her from Indian customs. She adopted English norms while celebrating the Christmas and eating foods like Western do," This underneath, and on top a flat creed: cake was better than laddoos, fork spoon knife better than hands, sipping the blood of Christ and

consuming a wafer of his body was more civilized than garlanding a phallic symbol with marigolds. English was better than Hindi" (2006). Colonial Legacy in this novel is one of the fragmented cultural displacements. Judge's self hatred, Sai's alienation are the lingering effects of Colonial rule.

Gyan, teacher and lover of Sai, who also uses western privileges but refuses to feel himself trapped in colonizers ideologies, often criticizes Sai on her western lifestyle by saying, "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" and "Don't you have any pride? Trying to be so Westernized. They don't want you!!!! Go there and see if they will welcome you with open arms. You will be trying to clean their toilets and even then they won't want you."(2006) Sai tried to criticize how he himself uses western norms but refuses to accept, "It was a masculine atmosphere and Gyan felt a moment of shame remembering his tea parties with Sai on the veranda, the cheese toast, queen cakes from the baker, and even worse, the small warm space they inhabited together, the nursery talk—It suddenly seemed against the requirements of his adulthood"(2006).

The novel critiques the Internalization of Western hegemony that reveals how colonial dominance destroys their independence by making slaves through ideologies. Internalization of Western norms leads to fragmented culture that make people estranged from there native traditions also failing to gain acceptance from the west by imitating their norms.

#### Conclusion

The study explores internalization of western hegemony through the notion of Homi K. Bhabha's mimicry and ambivalence. The novel represents how colonial rule encourage colonized people to immediate restaurant language, culture, norms and institutions. Colonized people never fully achieve full assimilation to imitate western norms and remain captured in the trap of colonizers. This results in fragmented identity and self hatred connected to the native roots.

In this novel, Jemubhai Patel, the judge, is the best example of mimicry who internalizes Western values that leads him to disrespects towards his Indian heritage. His education in

England instills the feeling of deep inferiority complex, making shameful on his skin color, accent, lifestyle and cultural background. He attempts to imitate British norms to meet the high standards of society but remain an outsider despite his efforts. He was treated as a second class citizen, his experience rejection and humiliation in England to impose Western ideology. When he returned from Cambridge University, continuous rejection caused psychological displacement of self-hatred and manifest to abusive behavior towards his wife. He beats her and punishes for adhering Indian customs, asking her to speak in English and follow the Western norms and rules as he does. This highlights how colonial institutes foster the mentality of marginalized people to impose their ideology up holding the western superiority. Bhabha's notion of ambivalence can be seen in Judge's struggle. He continuously admires and idealizes the colonizers, is longing for social validations never perfectly imitate, to accept as one of them. It creates internal conflicts, a kind of third space, neither fully west nor the Indian. Hybridity illustrates the cultural in third space experienced by colonized people, characters such as Judge Sai and Biju struggle with their hybrid identities imperfectly navigating between two cultures.

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