



GAURI S' JOURNEY FROM EXPLOITATION TO LIBERTY IN KIRAN DESAI'S *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

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ABSTRACT

Kiran Desai is considered as a staunch diasporic writer and a crusader of Feminism. She majorly takes the issues of Indian migrants and along with she explores the struggle of Indian woman. Her most endurable novel The Inheritance of Loss gives a portrayal of Gauri's fight against patriarchal society. The research paper tries to examine the exploitation and struggle of Gauri. It also shed a light on Gauri's transformation into a self-reliant and independent lady.

Key words: Indian society, exploitation and dignity.

INTRODUCTION

Kiran Desai is an eminent writer of post-colonialism and proved herself as a feminist. She is a prestigious man Booker recipient. She wrote only two books though she has made considerable place in Indian diasporic writing. Her seminal novel *The Inheritance Loss* is a tale about not merely the migratory experiences of Subhash but struggle of Gauri. The novel openly talks about the lowland, a place where Subhash and Udayan used to play. Subhash and Udayan brought up in Calcutta. Subhash and Udayan did complete their graduation and chose different path. Udayan was tempted by the naxalite movement since his childhood and finally he joined naxalbari movement. He was come under the influence of Charu Majumdar. During his college days he comes across Gauri and he falls in love with Gauri meanwhile Subhash left to United States of America to pursue his PhD. After Subhash's displacement to America Udayan got married with Gauri secretly in 1970 at register office. They spend nearly

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a week in Chelta, the house of Udyan's friend and finally brought Gauri to his Tollygunge home. He did not take consent of his parents for his marriage. Gauri was born in Calcutta and became orphan at the age of 16 years. Afterwards she lived "with two uncles, their wives, two sets of children". She had no space to cherish her privacy and the house had with "no rooms of her own" (IL55).

According to Indian patriarchal society women must follow the traditional cultural values. Gauri's new journey started as a victim and subjugated. Her mother –in law wanted to imbibe Indian traditional values into Gauri. In the name of traditional customs Gauri's humiliation is culminated. She is welcomed by whole heartily as a new bride of their home but at the same time she faces trauma of subjugation. Gauri hailed from educated family and Gauri was born in 1948. Gauri lost her parents at the age of 16 years. She has a brother whose name is Manash . She was raised under the womb of her grandparents in Calcutta. She did have her schooling education at Calcutta Boy's school. She had even completed her bachelor degree in philosophy from Presidency College. Since her childhood she was an independent and talented. She is inspired from her grandfather who was a professor. She adapts reading habits from her grandfather. Slowly she lost her freedom in Udyan's home as a married woman. Rightly Simone de Beauvoir identifies Gauri as "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. (295). Gauri wakes up at five in the morning and starts her household work. She used to serve cup of tea and biscuit to her mother-in-law. She works around the clock. She used to work under the monstrous eyes of her mother- in-law. Jhumpa Lahiri feels the sadden condition of Gauri in the following lines:

"When she grounds the chilies her palms felt as if the skin had been scraped off."(IL 290. She turned into servant, however "she hadn't complained to Udayan"(IL 290).

She loves very much Udyan. Her Husband arranges a tutoring job for her. Udyan is an intelligent young man who is inspired by Marx philosophy and he also came under the influence of Naxalbari movement thus he joined Naxalbari movement. It was the time of emergency in India and all naxalite activists were on radar. In Calcutta Police were patrolling and kept close watch on their activities. Udayan's suspicious activities also monitored by Police and finally he is killed and the death of Udayn made Gauri more silenced and shattered. She becomes widow at the age of only twenty –three. Her tragic situation is come in the light. She is derived of eating fish and meat. She had not even combed her hair. After demise of her husband she was alone to bear all types of woes and pains. The society rule harshly imposed on her and thus she leads her life:

"She did not wash her clothes or wear slippers or comb her hair. She slept on the bed, on the pillow. No one bothered her. She was aware of holding her body very still, as if

posing for a photograph that was never taken.”(IL 108).

Her identity was linked with her dead husband therefore she had to follow strictly the traditional rituals. She became very weak though she was educated. She is exploited by the name of ill traditions and customs. But after a few years Gauri leads herself towards a self-reliant woman who has created her new identity without taking any help. The character of Gauri resembles Charlotte Gilman's woman narrator who lost her husband in road accident and with the passage of time she loves her individual freedom and makes independent. She understands her abilities and leads her life on her own decisions. Gauri faces exploitation as she becomes widow. Jhumpa Lahiri exhibits the pains of Gauri in the following lines:

“She was given white saris to wear in place of colored ones, so that she resembled the other widows in the family.” (IL109).

She becomes a victim of Indian social taboo. The novelist reveals in the following lines:

“Her mother-in-law had told her, the first morning, to put away the book she'd bought with her, and to concentrate on the task at hand”.(IL 290)

Her life turns into hell. Her experiences expose that Indian women have been subject of subjugation and exploitation since a long time. But Gauri changes her angle by remarrying with Shubhash and went to United States of America. She gives birth to a baby whose name is Bela. As Indian mother she looks after her daughter in an alien land. As the times pass she gradually realizes that it is this place where she can transform and show her potentials. She had her graduation from Calcutta University. She gets an opportunity to start her remained education in United States of America. She learns to recognize her abilities and eventually she registers for doctoral program. She is very hungry for knowledge therefore she immediately “went to the bookstore and filling a basket with books.” (IL 162). Gauri gives freedom to Bela since her childhood. Bela used to play in the campus with her friend Alice. Gauri was supervised by her mother-in-law after her marriage with Udayan. Gauri nurtures Bela freely. Gauri was quite unknown about the America but she knows slowly that she has no existence without Subhash. His earnings only survive Gauri. She feels insulted when she thinks:

“She wouldn't survive without Subhash” (IL 176).

Gauri keenly reads books of Marx and Hegel. She tries to understand Hegelian philosophy. Apart from caring Bela she manages to attend every evening class of the week and study in library. She did very hard work to prepare her dissertation and finally completed her doctoral program and then after a college from California offers her a teaching job. She proves herself



as a new woman who left traditions and makes her own way. She thoughtfully accepts the job and left the home with a sending a note to Shubhash and Bela:

“I have not made this decision in haste. If anything , I have been thinking about it for too many years. You tried your best. I tried too, but not as well. We tried to believe we would be companions to one another. I have moved to California because a college has hired me to teach. Though it will be of no comfort to her, tell her that I will miss her.”(IL 211)

Gauri takes some years to stand on her feet. She breaks the labyrinth of traditional rituals. She falls in love with western culture and started to put on jeans and boots and cut off her hair. It signified her liberty. This drastic change identified “Gauri’s interrogation of her older cultural life” (Vibhuti Wadhawan 202). Gauri has experienced exploitation but she is not let her hopes and able to gain a good position in California. She proudly transforms herself from a miserable to self-reliant. She gains respect and dignity in United States of America. Gauri resists all kinds of circumstances in order to bring back her self-identity. She fights for self-right and equality.

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