

Plight of Women: A Comparative Study of Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*

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Abstract: *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri and *Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai both are women centric novel. In both the novels female has to suffer. Oppression of women is sometimes due to patriotic society and sometimes due to social customs. Gauri is an ambitious and courageous woman she suffers due to her own decision. Nimmi is the most pathetic female character who suffers due to the rage of her husband.

Keywords: Plight, Marginalization, Betrayal, Pathetic. Conjugal.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian women novelists have given a new dimension to the gamut of Indian English Literature. In the mid of nineteenth century many Indian women started to write in English language. Beginning with feeble attempts at being heard, women novelists have incorporated the recurring female experiences in their writing

Though the feminist writer claims women are one half of sky' but history witness anguish and agony of women. Women have been kept away from basic needs and fundamental rights, and their world have been confined to home and kitchen. They have merely been treated as an object. We have plenty of feminist theories postulated by various authors and critics. They aim at ensuring egalitarianism of opportunities and rights for women in all spheres of life. The present work Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Lahiri's *The Lowland* researches as feministic work of art' and plight of women prevalent in society.

Kiran Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri are the new women writers, who have enriched the genre of Indian English fiction but their imagination goes beyond the boundaries of their gender. They addresses themselves to an Indian culture in which there is a social pain and cultural displacement within the country as well as outside the country because of globalization and immigration. Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* won the 2006 Man Booker Prize and Lahiri's latest novel *The Lowland* shortlisted for the same prize in 2013.

Lahiri has been considered as one of the eminent voices in the present times articulating the maladies of the people situated in the unaccustomed earth of the Diaspora communities. Her narratives focus mainly on the itineraries of her subjects, especially, her female characters, facilitating them to explore their ethnicities, identities and femininities. Diasporic identities, multiple migrations, shift in locations and mobility make the female characters more free and liberate than their home country. Lahiri's latest novel, *The Lowland* epitomizes the flight and plight of her female subjects who in the international space experience loneliness, marginalization, alienation and psychological stress. As a result, they cut loose themselves from the traditional norms of man-woman relationship to find comfort in a sub-culture of their own. In the homeland the ethnic, social, political and conjugal rigidities restrict their femininities. The same characters, for instance, breathe freely in the international space. For instance, Gauri, the wife of Udayan and later on wife of Subhash distances herself from the men in her life just to discover and relocate her own self and her entity in this world. In doing so she embraces lesbian relationship with her research student, Lorna. Her mute sexuality with Udayan, her occasional sexuality with Subhash and her temporal but very poignant lesbian relationship with Lorna project her as a differently gendered person in Diaspora space.

Gauri's life had always been stretched to the extremities by choice or circumstances, while her elder sister led a normal life with her parents. She was brought up in her grandparents' house and she felt a sense of autonomy. Later, she had felt audacious eloping with Udayan, flaunting conventions. With Udayan's death, she felt, the ligaments that had held her life together had perished. Now her impulsive and calculated decision to be Subhash's wife, to flee to America with him, and with that action also to flee from Tollygunge, to forget everything her life had been, she felt even more extreme. When Udayan was killed, Subhash's mother had lashed out that Udayan would not have been killed had he married another sort of girl. Now her second marriage to Subhash, she considers it most unchaste because she was expected to honour Udayan's memory and his martyrdom.

In Lahiri's *The Lowland* pathetic woman Gauri thought her remarriage with Subhash had not been a solution that he had taken her away from Tollygaunge. He had brought her America and then like an animal briefly observed, caged, released her. He had protected her, he had attempted to love her.

Gauri gives birth to a daughter Bela, but soon begins to feel suffocated in both the marriage as well as in her role as a mother. She continues to be haunted by the memories of her first husband Udayan, the real father of her daughter.

When Bela turns five, Gauri is desperate to get out, to find time for herself after years of almost continuously staying at home and looking after the baby. But, Subhash refuses,

saying that on principle, he didn't want his daughter to be looked after by babysitters while Gauri joined classes at the university. Gauri begins to resent Subhash for this. She takes it as a betrayal of what he has said when he'd asked her to marry him. Though he had encouraged her to visit library in her spare time.

Grown up Bela started a series of jobs on farms across the country, some close by, others far, when she used to come to her father she talked to him why people still died from famines, why farmers still went hungry. She blamed the unequal distribution of wealth.

In *Inheritance of Loss*, the most touching and pathetic female character is the wife of judge, Bela Patel. Traditional, naïve, and submissive, She is unable to understand the ferocity and rage of her husband. When the judge was extremely abusive towards his wife.

Nimmi is the wife of Jemubhai but he never loved her. Ultimately, he abandons her. Even her name is changed after her marriage just as in care of Jaya in that long silence and like many more Indian women, for sake of traditions. The changing of name shows the complete devoid of individuality of a woman. Then she suffers silently while the judge does not even bother to take care of her and his daughter Jaya. She dies by fire with not an eyebrow being raised as to the true nature of her death. Born out of this loveless marriage and into painful silence of her mother. Judge's daughter grows up without the affection of her parents. Judge never cares to fulfill his sole as a father. He only provides financial assistances.

Mrs. Mistry's daughter and the granddaughter of Nimmi and the judge is Sai. Unlike her mother and grandmother she is lucky to be accepted into the life of the judge due to the unavoidable circumstances. Her character is neither docile as Nimmi, nor negligible as her mother she is the face of the modern woman who is innocent, sensitive, naïve but bold enough to break free of the mould she adjust in every situation but not restricted by her class or position and relates to her environment and the people.

From above it is evident that Gauri, Nimmi, Sai and Bela are the pathetic women who are facing many types of social discrimination, miseries, suppression and sometimes they are made voiceless. They are compelled to live in suffocating environment.

REFERENCES

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