

## Ambivalence of power relations and resulting alienation and identity crisis in Kiran Desai's the inheritance of loss

Muhammad Asim Mahmood, Faiza Noureen  
Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan  
masimrai@gmail.com

### Abstract

This research paper focuses on the ambivalence of power relations and ensuing alienation and identity crisis in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*. The intricate and inevitable nexus of power relations, which are guiding and molding most of the human considerations on their terms, ask for the demystification of the inherent ambivalence of the power relations and their psychological impacts. Drawing on the theoretical standpoints of Homi K. Bhabha and Jacques Lacan, the prime concern of this research concentrates on the idea of ambivalence of the colonial discourse in order to reveal the intrinsic complexity of the power relations and the way they determine the human psyche with its aim to unravel the human susceptibility towards them. This paper asks about the implicit nature of the correlation between both of the stakeholders of the colonial discourse and how this ambivalent and manifold relation is significant in Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* by using Bhabha's concept of ambivalence and mimicry along with Lacan's model of identity. This work also avows how the imbalanced power relations can guide towards alienation and identity crisis. To interpret the ambivalence of the power relations and the way they affect the 'self' in Desai's text the methodology adopted for this study is hermeneutics for the dialogical interpretation and deeper understanding of ambivalence with the help of the conceptual framework offered by postcolonial theory with its shared roads with postmodernism.

**Key Words:** Post colonialism; Ambivalence; Alienation; Identity Crisis; Self; Discourse; Globalization

### Introduction:

This research work seeks to interpret and understand the imbalanced power relations, their ambivalence, ramifications and effects on human psyche and self. It comes out to investigate the traces of alienation and identity crisis, which are areas of great significance in post-colonial theory. This very research paper endeavors to interpret and explore the alienation and identity crisis, while keeping in mind the contemporary postcolonial, globalized, multicultural and hybrid world, with the lenses offered by the Postcolonial theory and its mutual concerns with Postmodernism. It avows to dismantle the very notion of stable, coherent and unified meaning linked with the colonial discourse with its focus on the interpretation of the ambivalence and the prevalent effects of colonization on a post-colonial, globalized world particularly, alienation and identity crisis by utilizing Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of ambivalence and mimicry which serve as the main theoretical standpoint for this research work to explore the inherent dilemmas of the colonial discourse in Kiran Desai's 'Man Booker Prize' winner novel '*The Inheritance of Loss*'. Homi K. Bhabha's theoretical standpoint is accompanied by Jacques Lacan's notion of the development of *Self* (ego identity) in respect of the "Other". The concept of the transience of *Self* is also seminal and serves as a key point for this research by leading towards the understanding and interpretation of ambivalence of the discourses of power and their ensuing influence on human heart, self and psyche.

Alienation and identity crisis comprise of that part of literature and theory that have multiplicity of voices and interpretations or in words of Bakhtin, M. it has 'polyphony' or freedom of voices (1973, p.30). Alienation and identity crisis are dominant themes in modern and postmodern literature and theory, which, have been examined from multiple angles by utilizing distinct theoretical standpoints such as Nietzschean, Freudian, Lacanian and many others.

Over periods, Man has found himself entangled in existential dilemmas. Existential questions like Who am I? Where am I? What is the purpose of my being? Is there any importance and relevance of my existence or being? and many other queries of such sort constantly haunt and follow man who always remains entangled in a quest to get suitable answers to solace his inner self. The traces of the quest for the achievement of a coherent and stable self can be found in ancient era as well and its study is still pertinent and apt due to its compatibility with the contemporary trends in literary theory particularly, after 1980s with the commencement of postmodernism which stressed on the inclusion of culture, politics and sociology in the domain of literary theory and criticism.

The present research paper aims to interpret the ambivalent nature of colonial discourse, which says that the connection between the colonizer and the colonized is not unambiguous and simply binary relationship in nature. It is not always the colonizer who classifies the colonized as the other, the black, the savage, the orient, etc. and labels the colonized as voiceless by occupying the position of delineator of the destiny and identity of the colonized object. However, this link between the East and the West is not as smooth and simple as it seems to be. The apparently indomitable West depends upon the East for the achievement of its identity as superior authority. Bhabha dismantles the the very idea of simple binary connection between the powerful and the

powerless and articulates that it is 'ambivalent', It exhibits that there is an ongoing oscillation between 'complicity and resistance' within the colonial discourse. (Ashcroft, B. ,Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H. 2007, p. 10). Postcolonial theory is an all-inclusive theoretical approach as it encompasses almost all the areas of human life and comes out to dismantle and interpret numerous established discourses. Simultaneously, it endeavors to shatter several discourses of power and authority with its adherence towards postmodernist and deconstructionist school of thought to reveal buried truths and complexities by uncovering the polyphony of voices with the agenda to give a voice to the unvoiced/voiceless. It offers a wide range of theoretical approaches, which have close connection with postmodern concerns.

Post-colonial frame work aims to transgress beyond the superficial and so-called binaries between the Orient and the Occident by looking beyond the visible body of binary oppositions, proposed by the colonial discourse, with the aspiration of political harmony, solidity, justice, peace and equivalence. Young, R. J. C. (2006) explains Post-Colonial theory as:

Post-colonialism claims the right of all people on this earth to do the same material and cultural well-being ... a politics and philosophy of activism that contests the disparity, and so continues in a new way the anti-colonial struggle of the past. (pp. 2-4)

This research paper aims to study and transgress beyond any form of meta-narratives or meta-texts by taking a postcolonial cum postmodern position. It investigates the seemingly coherent and reasonable stereotypical views as self and other, civilized and uncivilized to reveal the inherent imbalance of power relations within the discourse of power to study their influence on human existence and psyche. The West's identity as superior and civilized being cannot retain its currency without the Other (East). Bhabha articulates as quoted by (Huddart, 2006) that the East is West's 'double' and it compels the West to "explain its own identity and to justify its own rationale" (p. 2). This ambivalence depicts that the connection among the orient and the occident is a complex blend of the immediate liking and disliking. The colonizer wants to ménage certain amount of distance from the colonized and to keep him at a lower level but simultaneously, he depends on the colonized for the achievement of his image as the colonizer and to establish his identity as a superior authority. The people who have had experienced colonization are haunted by postcolonial dilemmas; they are entangled in a fix to decide between two cultures and two identities. They are attracted towards the superior and privileged civilization of the West/colonizer but simultaneously they hate it for their love and affiliation with the native culture and identity. Post colonialism and postmodernism have a logical intimacy with reference to their theoretical standpoints as both aims to knock down the validity of the discourses of power which are mostly founded by the one in authority. Rather than looking into the past, the era of colonization, this research explores the contemporary circumstances and the challenges posed by the world that has entered into a postcolonial, hybrid and globalized phase. It aims to comprehend the effects and ambivalence of the discourse of power, in a world comprising multiple and mixed cultures and identities, as result of globalization and the predominant role of media; by investigating whether it is ready to welcome the voices of the suppressed/subaltern or it is a part of an intrigue which is working to fulfill the agenda of a distant and remote-control governance over the lives of people living in far off areas of the world. It is an advance and more dangerous form of colonization that targets at subjugating the minds of the people. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, the characters are greatly attracted towards the English/Western ways of living and they feel pride in adhering the Western culture, which is an icon of authority and civilization. But this link between them is ambivalent and their mimicry is never free from mockery as "Mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (Bhabha 1994, p. 88). It serves as a scheme of resistance to the colonial discourse. In Bhabha's views in an encounter between the colonizer and the colonized both are affected due to their intricate and "paradoxical relationship" (Bertens, H. 2003, p. 207). Bhabha's views regarding colonialism are not entangled into the past instead, he has focused on the study of the ambivalence and intricate nature of colonial discourse in a multicultural, hybrid and globalized world. Huddart (2006) in his book '*Homi K. Bhabha*' writes about Bhabha's ideas regarding Post-Colonialism as:

Instead of seeing colonialism as something locked in the past, Bhabha shows how its histories and cultures constantly intrude on the present, demanding that we transform our understanding of cross-cultural relations\_ We should not see the colonial situation as one of straightforward oppression of the colonized by the colonizer. Alongside violence and domination, we might also see the last five hundred years as a period of complex and varied cultural contact and interaction. (p. 1)

### **Literature Review**

One of the prominent feature of the postcolonial writings is their preoccupation with the themes as constant back and forth movement of time, sense of belonging and displacement, inconstancy of location and the resultant "crisis of identity into being" (Ashcroft et al., 2001, p. 9). *The Inheritance of Loss* gives an insight to these postcolonial issues and challenges. The novel portrays the characters who are the target of postcolonial dilemmas, which lead them towards alienation and identity crisis. It exhibits the sufferings and turmoil of an Indian family that is entangled into a conflict between multiple identities and cultures; regional and the Western. The characters are stuck in a state of confusion and finally find themselves incapable to understand and relate

with the things and circumstances around them. Their confrontation with the colonizer deprives them of their own identity and leaves them to live in the abyss of absurdity and confusion. This confusion has become the permanent aspect of their personality even after their return to their indigenous place, as the life of Jemubhai Patel, a retired judge, in the novel exhibits. *The Inheritance of Loss* highlights the sufferings of the people belonging to the third world countries when they are exposed, as a result of globalization, to the developed first world nations. In this way the novel throws light on the impacts of multiculturalism, globalization, socio-political and economic instability and terrorism particularly on the lives of third world dwellers and those who have had experienced colonization.

Like most of the postcolonial texts in *The Inheritance of Loss*, the protagonist confronts a struggle to achieve a stable identity; entangles in a difficult situation of simultaneous attraction and repulsion for the colonial authority. Finally, s/he finds him/herself moving between two identities/cultures: one is his/her own native cultural identity and the other is the foreign or alien cultural self. In postcolonial standpoint, a significant theme is the metamorphosis of the indigenous self into the other alien self; the characters are mostly in a conflict between the desire to submit and stick to the new cultural identity and their commitment and adherence for the native self. Erickson, E. H states that identity crisis is the failure of an individual to get *ego* identity, which leads towards confusion of roles. Ultimately, this confusion leads a person towards a distant and isolated place where he or she becomes alienated and stranger. It appears as if an unbridgeable gap has been entered between the Self and the Other which left him/ her a lost self ; distorted into fragments and eventually having no identity.

Alienation symbolizes the estrangement and separation of man from some external element, state, philosophy, believe system, etc. This present research paper comes out to understand the alienation of an individual from the external world. It focuses on the dichotomy between the inner and outer world and the way in which the inner world is affected and constructed by the outer world. Lacan articulates that the construction of self is achieved in its relation with the other. In this regard, his concept of the relative link between the *self* and the *other* is quite important and relevant here.

Iqbal has put forward valuable and deep philosophical ideas regarding the construction of human *self* from a distinct standpoint and introduced a self-explanatory and unique concept of *Khudi* through his work. Ahmad (1986) quotes Iqbal's notion regarding the harmonious flow among the different elements of life and the role of outer forces, which construct a balanced 'self' as: "Life is a passage through series of deaths. But there is a system in the continuity of this Passage" (p. 44). 'Self' is achieved through a constant process and a harmonious flow between 'self' and external forces. This external world ruptures the individual self which simultaneously modifies the self but when this balance is shattered at any reason it causes a loss of 'self'. He has asserted that childhood experiences and personality traits affect and determine individual self, throughout the life.

The efficient self is the subject of associationist psychology\_ the practical self of daily life in its dealing with the external order of things which determine our passing states of consciousness and stamp on these states their own spatial features of isolation. The self here lives outside itself as it were, and while retaining its unity as a totality, discloses itself as nothing more than a series of specific and consequently numerable states. (p. 17)

Erikson resembles Lacan when he articulates his views regarding the relational tendency of man. Erikson (1959) says that the most visible and appropriate concomitants of an exalted sense of an individual's identity are "a feeling of being at home in one's body, a sense of 'knowing where one is going,' an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count." (p. 72). Thus, when this inner conviction and 'feeling of being at home' disappears an individual is deprived of a sense of identity.

#### **Analysis:**

The study of alienation and identity crisis needs the analysis of the characters depicting the theme, at two levels. Firstly, the individual traits of their personality are focused that make them to behave in distinct ways even though the circumstances are same in which others behave altogether differently. Thus, the subjectivity and personal self of the characters is crucial and calls for vigilant study. The second aspect of personality is the outer one, the way in which an individual self is rooted in the society. This social self is also worthy of analysis as the whole social and cultural system is determined by its individuals and they themselves are shaped out of the very social and political system and values they follow. Lacan articulates that the individual and personal self is achieved when a person is exposed to the outer world therefore, for the recognition of the inner self the knowledge of the *others* and of the *Other* is of great importance. It exhibits that 'subjectivity' is achieved as an outcome of meaningful harmony and interaction with the 'others'. This interaction with the 'others' is the interaction with those people who belong to the same social background but still ménage to retain irrevocably different traits of the inner self. Whereas the interaction with the 'Other' that refers to the greater social order and its values is also noteworthy as it makes us what we are by the thorough surveillance of the social values and norms. The grand 'Other' is not is not any concrete and coherent whole rather it exists and forms the very essence and spirit that leads people to live and shape their lives consequently. The world is comprised of people belonging to diverse religions, cultures and societies and some if not all of the features of their identity shape out

of such differences. Cronin (2006) has strengthened the idea as: “If everything is the same, there is no difference and if there is no difference, there is no identity. Consequently, difference is essential to the construction of identity” (p. 50) Therefore, the focus on the both inner self and the outer self, and the connection between them is quite relevant to understand how the individuals suffer from alienation and identity crisis in *The Inheritance of Loss*.

Ashcroft et al. (2008) articulates that “the crisis of identity into being” is the persistent theme in postcolonial writings (p. 47). *The Inheritance of Loss* also exhibits the postcolonial sensibilities and dilemmas with the delineation of the characters who are often victims of the alienation and suffer from issues related to personality which leaves them perturbed eventually. Even though the formal colonization has ended, it still has great impact on the lives of people involved in the whole enterprise of the colonization. The characters in the novel exhibit the same depressing circumstances as Jemubhai Patel (a retired judge) who had suffered a great deal during his stay in England and when he returned back, he treated his native people in the same manner. Biju the who is the only son of the judge’s cook is another example of it.

*The Inheritance of Loss* is a multidimensional novel depicting complex connection between the personal self and impersonal or outer self. The characters in the novel present such conditions which make the reader realize of the fact that Western dominance has not ended with the end of colonialism rather it has altered its form and has managed to control the lives of the people. Hawley (2001) has explained the continuation of the Western control in the postcolonial and globalized cultural world as:

Culture must be seen as essential to the creation, production, and maintenance of colonial relations. From this perspective, especially in the context of the spread of a global mass culture, globalization may be seen as the continuation and strengthening of Western imperialist relations in the period after decolonization and postcolonial nationalisms. (P. 214)

Hawley has further shown the fact that right from the start of the colonization up till the twenty first century, “the structure of world power relations has remained largely the same” (p. 214). The words ‘largely the same’ gives a hint that there is some alteration in the domination, in past it was the Great Britain that was ruling over the world on physical and substantial grounds now at present United States of America has captured that position and governs the world on the behalf of its rapidly growing economy. Desai is fully sensitive towards the change of world power relations and *The Inheritance of Loss* exhibits the political mindfulness of its author. Jemubhai who has suffered a lot in the days of colonization mostly during his stay in England symbolize the domination of the Western colonizer but in the next generation belonging to the postcolonial era, Biju also has to suffer in the hands of the West but this time the position of domination is secured by the United States. Therefore, *The Inheritance of Loss* portrays a world, which has indeed a realistic depiction of the contemporary world relations that is fully up-to-date with the current socio-political and cultural concerns. Desai has expressed the inevitable and unending influence of the Western domination over the lives of people in *The Inheritance of Loss* as “Certain moves made long ago had produced all of them: Sai, judge, Mutt, cook, and even the mashed-potato car” (p. 199) so, the characters are helpless as they have no control over their lives. Past is molding the present and aiming at the future it seems as if characters have no force to guide their present lives independently rather they are slaves of time.

Borges’ poem *Boast of Quietness* which has been introduced as an epigraph of the novel can aptly be called a voice of powerlessness of an alienated man who is the victim of the assaults of the dominant authority. It speaks about the disappointment, grim and alienation of man. Especially the given lines speak about the dejection and helplessness of man.

Time is living me.

More silent than my shadow, I pass through the loftily covetous multitude.

They are indispensable, singular, worthy of tomorrow.

My name is someone and any one.

I walk slowly, like one who comes from so far away he doesn’t expect to arrive.

(Borges)

This epigraph expresses the miserable condition and feelings of the people who are swaying back and forth like a pendulum between different cultures and lands. This movement back and forth is quite similar to the characters portrayed in the novel as Jemubhi moves from India to England and Biju travels to United States and then eventually both return to India. The poem also reflects the feelings of an alienated of man who is more silent than his shadow. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, almost all the characters suffer from alienation that has become permanent and inescapable for them. The Judge suffered humiliation and disgrace only for being black thus nobody talked to him and he eventually became alienated and cut off from the society. This inhumane attitude has destroyed his personality and he has been robbed off all of his identity and honour. Thus, he forgot his culture, people and nation and exerted all his efforts to be honourable like the English man but he is left neither himself nor one like English man. In this way this epigraph presents in a microcosm the fibula and fauna of the novel.

The title *The Inheritance of Loss* is quite suggestive in this regard, as it gives a hint of the feelings of alienation and the loss of self with which almost all of the characters of the novel suffer. Jemubhai has lost almost everything even his identity. Sai, his granddaughter encounters a dilemma regarding her identity. She speaks English and celebrates Christmas while she is a Hindu girl who is completely unaware of her religion. Biju suffers the embittered feelings of loss during his stay at America where he loses his dream of success and happiness in life. The cook has lost his love and association with his native culture as he feels regret for not being able to serve a white man like his father. He always envied the white and the west. *The Inheritance of Loss* depicts the ambivalence of the colonial discourse through its characters that ultimately makes them to live with the bitter feelings of loss. Almost all of the characters of the novel are inheritors of loss in some way or the other. This research paper is focused towards the character of Jemubhai only due to the limitation of time and place. Jemubhai resides in an isolated and decaying mansion called Cho Oyu, situated on the mountains of Kalimpong, with a strong feeling of being foreigner even in his native land. Jemubhai's inclination towards the Western ways gets its depiction from his feelings of awe and respect for the Queen Victoria.

Each morning as Jemubhai passed under, he found her froggy expression compelling and felt deeply impressed that a woman so plain could also have been so powerful. The more he pondered this oddity, the more his respect for her and the English grew. (IOL, p. 58)

This attraction of Indian people towards the West despite being deprived and exploited by the West may have two reasons. The love and respect for the dominant culture is might be due to the love for the power and the desire to be one like powerful. This aspect refers to the tactics of the people to win the confidence and favours of the dominant. It can also be interpreted in another way in to the light of Macaulay's ideas put forth by him in his educational Minute in 1935. He suggested in his minute as quoted in *History of Education in India* by R.N Sharma and R.K. Sharma (1996) as:

At present we should create such a group of people who may work as a mediator between us and the common people, as class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in the intellect. It will be their duty to develop the native languages and enable it to convey the knowledge to the common people. (p. 85)

In the days of colonization, practical attempts were made to robe off the natives from the native culture and norms. As a result some of the natives submitted themselves whole heartedly to the Western culture and actually became about whom Macaulay said Indian in blood. They are left with nothing else to be called Indian as their Indian bodies have been stuffed with the Western ideas and tastes. However, a question arises here that is it a natural and a willing act of Jemubhai or he is forced to be like the English. Desai has depicted the overall situation masterfully by letting the readers to comprehend the complexity of the colonial discourse. *The Inheritance of Loss* depicts various attitudes of the native people through its characterization.

The judge seems to be happy in his early life but his growing interaction with the whites and his stay at mission school has incorporated the feelings of adherence and respect for the dignified and superior authority. His unconscious self is always there which forces him to return to his past but he does not pay heed to it as it does not seem logical to him. Consciously he is ready to sacrifice everything he possessed and eventually he did so by leaving everything far behind to merge in the ocean of the western civilization. He was hopeful regarding his future life in England but his past always revisits and haunts him.

Jemubhai's father accompanied him on the way to the ship. He was not a very educated man but he loved his son which did not matter for Jemubhai now as "the love in Jemubhai's heart mingled with pity, the pity with shame." (IOL, p. 37). He felt ashamed of her mother whose love has been a source of humiliation for him considering it "Undignified love, Indian love, stinking, unaesthetic love—the monsters of the ocean could have what she had so bravely packed getting up in that predawn mush." (IOL, p. 38).

The second phase of Jemubhai's life starts with his journey to England for higher studies in the form of ICS or the study of the Western civilization. When he entered England he felt an "enormous difference between the (boxy) English and the (loopy) Indian cow." (IOL p. 38). Undoubtedly, the first-hand experience of being colonized by the West has instilled in him the idea of the superiority of the west along with a wish to be powerful one like the dominant west. Jemubhai's attitude is somehow natural as well because this is what the colonizer did purposefully. The colonizer raised the slogan of civilization, knowledge and humanism but inwardly the aim was to produce puppets who may act according to their will.

Although globalization is a healthy sign as it brings people, dwelling in far off areas of the world closer and shares its role in creating harmony among them. Such exposure of people to one another is not always pleasant and beneficial for all. Jemubhai who always desired to learn Western ways of living has to suffer a lot in the hands of the West. Desai has projected the characters of Jemubhai and Biju to highlight the complex dilemmas present in the colonial discourse. Bhabha has highlighted the complexity of the colonial discourse with a focus on ambivalence and stereotyping which has constructed both the West and the East. Bhabha (1994) stated that:

the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures, informs the strategies of individuation an

marginalization; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which for stereotype, must be an excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed. (p. 66)

Ambivalence in the colonial discourse functions as a significant and the most powerful discursive strategy for power. The ambivalence of the colonial discourse offers complex feelings of hatred and love on the behalf of the both the subject and the object. The judge has an attraction for the western ways in spite of his feelings of subjugation in the hands of the dominant and remains loyal to the West. Nobody at England talks to him considering his blackness and his stinking body which eventually not only deprives him of his dreams associated with the West but also of his nativity and identity.

To the end of his life, he would never be seen without socks and shoes and would prefer shadow to light, faded days to sunny, for he was suspicious that sunlight might reveal him, in his hideousness, all too clearly. (IOL P. 40)

He becomes a foreigner and stranger to his surroundings and above all to his own self like the protagonist Meursault in Camu's *The Outsider*(1983). Both Meursault and Jemubhai are unable to maintain a balance between the inner and outer self and they find themselves alien to the very culture, society and to their own self. In such circumstances, Jemubhai has lost all of his courage and confidence and tried to hide himself. As "his pusillanimity and his loneliness had found fertile soil." (IOL, p.39) Jemubhai is actually at heart conscious and reluctant for being a black with an Indian pronunciation and above all with the piercing gaze of the whites. He has undergone a lot of criticism owing to his black skin that even after his return to India, in the lap to nativity he is foreigner to everyone. He has developed a habit to cover his face with powder puffing only to conceal his blackness. Back in India only women use it so he is ridiculed and mocked by his family members. One of his sisters laughed at him as "we sent you abroad to become a gentleman, and instead you have become a lady!" (IOL, p. 167) This remark reflects a bitter irony, the irony of Jemubhai's life and his admiration of the Western ways.

Lacan articulates that Individual self gets development through an unending process of signification. The individual comes across a wide range of signifiers and tries to relate them with the signified object. The process of signification is complex and circular in nature. Thus, this process of identification demands a flow and harmony for the development of identity. In case of discontinuity and failure to find any sort of fulfillment, the subject may loss its identity that leads him/her in the abyss of despair and confusion. Jemubhai associated high expectations with the whites. His decision to go to the West for brighter prospects speaks about his dreams and desires connected with his journey. But when he has nothing in harmony with his expectations he got disillusionment which has badly ruptured his self and made him estranged even to himself.

"Thus Jemubhai's mind had begun to warp; he grew stranger to himself than he was to those around him" (IOL p. 40). Jemubhai's sufferings and confusion does not end with his journey. He has entered into the depths of confusion that has altogether altered him. His metamorphosis can aptly be compared to that of Kafka's (1986) Gregor. The difference relies in the fact that Jemubhai is apparently blessed with human appearance whereas Gregor has eventually becomes an animal figure. Jemubhai's metamorphosis is emotional and psychological one rather than physical. Jemubhai has become a completely alienated man by quarantining and reducing himself within the boundaries of Cho Oyu and Western culture. He is left with no sympathy for Indian ways or more appropriately for Indians and blacks. He hates the unaesthetic and uncultured manners and love of the natives. He has no tolerance regarding any frank behavior for "he disliked the informality" (IOL, p.62). Even after the end of colonization and the departure of the West from India he is loyal to them and mimics them which makes him alienated man who is devoid of any personal identity.

### **Conclusion**

*The Inheritance of Loss* depicts what Bhabha calls ambivalence of colonial discourse through various characters mainly through the character of Jemubhai. He mimics the whites but his mimicry is never free of 'menace'. Jemubhai hates the whites but still he is attracted towards them, this is what Bhabha calls ambivalent nature of colonial discourse. Both the agents involved in the whole enterprise of the colonial discourse have certain amount of ambivalence, which is inevitable and makes the act of colonization even more intricate and ambiguous to understand. *The Inheritance of Loss* exhibits the ambivalent nature of the relationship between the East and the West in the era of colonization and the period after it. The physical colonization has ended and the world has entered in to a postcolonial and globalized phase with the anti-colonist spirits and a strong wave of resistance towards the authority and imbalance of power relations even though the relationship between them remains unaltered. Jemubhai has suffered in the days of colonization but afterwards he has to live with his internal complexes and he is left with no option other than to follow the Western ways. Lacan's proposed notion of the process of signification that is essential for the achievement of ego identity demands harmony among the inner and outer selves. In case of informality the result would be the crisis of self which has been fully exhibited through *The Inheritance of Loss*.

Almost all the characters in the novel are victims of the colonial discourse which demands a critical re-evaluation of the whole enterprise of the colonization. It lays bare the fact that physical colonization has come to

an end but the colonial discourse has managed to survive by altering its shape. The novel ends with a hope in the form of golden light that gives a hint of betterment in future as “The five peaks of Kanchenjunga turned golden with the kind of luminous light that made you feel, if briefly, that truth was apparent. All you needed to do was to reach out and pluck it.” (IOL, p.324)

### References

- Ahmad A. Dr. (1986). *Concept of Self and Self Identity: An affirmathion of Iqbal's Doctrine*. Lahore: M/s Metro Publishers.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (2001). *The empire writes back*. New York: Routledge.
- Ashcroft, et al. (2007). *Key concepts in post- colonial studies*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) London: Routledge.
- Ashcroft et al. Eds. (2008). *The post- colonial reader*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Routledge.
- Bakhtin, M. (1973). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. (Translated by R.W Rotsel). The University of Michigan: Ardis.
- Bertens, H. (2003). *Literary theory: The basics*. London: Routledge.
- Bhabbh. H. K (1994). *The location of culture*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Camus, A. (1983). *The outsider*. Translated by Laredo, J. Penguin Books.
- Cronin, Michael. (2006). *Translation and Identity*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Desai, K. (2006). *The Inheritance of Loss*. Canada: Peguin.
- Erikson, E. H. (1959). *Identity and the life cycle*. Psychological Issues 1, 50-100.
- Hawley, John C., ed. (2001). *Encyclopedia of postcolonial studies*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Huddart, D. (2006). *Homi k.Bhabha*. London: Routldge.
- Kafka, F. (1986). *The metamorphosis*. Translated and edited by Comgold, S. New York: Bantham Books.
- Noureen, F. (2014). *Alienation and identity crisis in Kiran Desai's the inheritance of loss*. An unpublished thesis of GCUF.
- N.R., Sharmaand & K. R Sharma. (1996). *History of education in India*. Atlantic Publishers and Dist.
- Young, R. (2006). *Post- colonialism: A very short introduction*. Oxford: University Press.

### Acknowledgement

This research paper is part of our M.phil thesis.