

English. Teaching materials should guarantee that activities regarding language variations, styles, multiculturalism, variations within the language and the international use of English are incorporated into them. The teaching materials and the curricula as a whole should aim at not only making learners fluent users of the language but also informed users of it. This could be achieved by giving them opportunities to listen to a wide variety of Englishes. Authentic materials such as radio and TV programmes from around the world could be fruitfully tapped for the purpose. Journals and literary works from different countries are also a rich source to introduce the global use of English.

The global use of English also implies that one should be aware of the varying pragmatics of the language use in different cultural contexts. However, the present day teaching materials seldom prepare learners in pragmatic competence. Literary works such as poems and scholarly essays eschew such opportunities. This was acceptable when English teaching was primarily taken as a means to access western science and technology. However, in the present day context, the focus is also on communicative competence. This cannot be achieved merely through memorizing vocabulary items and grammar rules. As it is, there is a disparity between grammatical competence and pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence is based on the knowledge of social and cultural conventions, which are to be followed in particular situations. The above-mentioned disparity stems from a lack of knowledge of these conventions. Thus, it is imperative that the teaching materials also include various activities to develop the learner's pragmatic competence. This can be achieved, as Edwards and Csizer (2004) suggest, by enriching classroom input with real world materials. They may include films, TV and radio programmes, etc. There should be activities aimed at explicit teaching of speech acts in various English-speaking communities (p. 17). For example, learners can be asked to compare how two strangers start a conversation in two different cultures. They can be asked to translate such a conversation from their mother tongue to English and then compare and contrast them. Each activity may focus on one or two speech acts such as openings and closings, inviting and accepting or rejecting invitations, etc. An awareness of the differences will enable them to become more competent communicators in English. As Harlig and Taylor (2003) critique, a serious pitfall in the traditional second language/foreign language curricula is the failure to address the pragmatic aspects of language and language use (p. 37). Learners need to be aware of how language use differs in various English-speaking communities. They need to know about the pragmatics of speech acts, conversational implicature, conversational management, discourse organization, sociolinguistic aspects of language use such as choice of address forms. Teaching/learning materials need to incorporate necessary language activities to achieve this.

Conclusion: Gone are the days of linguistic purism and imperialism. Varieties of Englishes do exist and will continue to exist for vary many reasons. Not only the heterogeneity of English is irreversible but the non-

native speakers of English who use these heterogeneous varieties have outnumbered the linguistic puritans. Turning a blind eye to this socio-linguistic reality will only result in loss of business and marginalisation. Academics and all involved in the teaching/learning process need to consider the present day realities while carrying out their responsibilities.

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Estrangement, Isolation and Alienation: A Study of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*

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Abstract: Diasporic writing has become a major concern of the contemporary Indian novelists and they have perfectly delineated the themes of estrangement, isolation and alienation as a general phenomenon of their writings. In this present paper, I would like to emphasis only on Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* as these two novels are widely popular and critically acclaimed for representing the themes of estrangement, isolation and alienation. In these two novels, both have shown the global scenario and multiculturalism and vividly represented the homelessness or social exclusion of the displaced or disgraced people of the contemporary world. Here I would also like to explore how all the characters suffer from estrangement, isolation and alienation and find a peculiar way life. Their characters face an anxiety or tension to adapt a new environment of the migrant land or adjust new customs or norms and at the same time seek to keep contact with their motherland. The plots of these two novels are written in such a way that they enhance the two novelists to move on the right path. They have minutely described the traumatic experiences of the immigrants- looking their history backward and forward. Their characters are torn between their present life and past memories and the influence of globalization or immigration compels their characters to live in an atmosphere of exile and social exclusion. They have established another fact that the immigrants not only feel isolated, alienated and marginalized in a foreign country but also people realize those mentioned things in their own country.

Keywords: Estrangement, Isolation and Alienation, Immigration, Identity crisis, Gorkha and Naxalite Movement.

The contemporary Indian novelists, such as Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, V.S. Naipaul, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, have enriched the field of Diasporic literature and they often deal with the themes of globalization, marginalization, immigration, displacement, loss of identity, clash of culture, economic inequality, poverty, racial discrimination, insurgency complicated human relationships, cultural or communication barriers and so on. Though their representations of such themes are quite distinguished from each other, everyone has perfectly delineated the themes of displacement, isolation and alienation as a general phenomenon of their writings. A distinguished feature of these novelists is that they have written their own experiences and problems that they have faced while setting on the new land. In this present paper, I would like to emphasis only on Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* as these two novels are widely popular and critically acclaimed for representing

the themes of estrangement, isolation and alienation. In *The Inheritance of Loss* and *The Lowland*, both Desai and Lahiri have shown the global scenario and multiculturalism and vividly represented the homelessness or social exclusion of the displaced or disgraced people of the contemporary world. All the characters depicted in these two novels suffer from estrangement, isolation and alienation and find a peculiar way life. The plots of these two novels are written in such a way that they enhance the two novelists to move on the right track. *The Inheritance of Loss* is set in the Nineteen eighties - partly in Kalimpong and partly in New York while *The Lowland* is set in Nineteen seventy and onwards - partly in Tollygung of Calcutta and partly in Rhode Island of America. Kiran Desai, a prolific Migrant writer, is the youngest woman who wins the prestigious Man Booker prize in 2006 for her second novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. The existential philosophers like Jean Paul Satre, Albert Camus and Soren Kierkegaard have immensely influenced her and her mother Anita Desai, a well known Indian novelist has also paved the way of her writing. She has vividly shown the bitter experience of an immigrant in a foreign land as she has undergone a similar experience. Some scholars claim that it is K.Desai's own inheritance and disinheritance that she had talked in her novel. In an interview with Sophie Rochester, she has clarified- 'America might give me half a narrative but I had to return to India for the other half of the story, for emotional depth and historical depth' (Rochester,2014). Jorge Luis Borges's poem *The Boast of Quietness* is very appropriate for the epigraph of Lahiri's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* and it clearly serves as an exposition for the novel. In an interview, she said that she has selected this poem because it reflects the souls of the characters in her novel. The feeling of estrangement and identity crisis is clearly depicted here - 'My name is someone and anyone/I walk slowly, like one who comes from so far away he doesn't expect to arrive'. (The Epigraph of *The Inheritance of Loss*) An eminent critic Michael Carnea claims that "Displaced people confront eight main risk of impoverishment, landlessness, homelessness, marginalization, morbidity, food insecurity, loss of access to common property assets and social discrimination" (qtd in Mathur,2009). In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Jemubai Patel has faced most of the problems which Carnea has mentioned. He has gone to Britain to study law at Cambridge University. There he becomes a judge and spends most of his time but he feels uncomfortable for his black skin and Indian heritage. He realizes that he becomes a stranger to himself and has lost his essence- 'he grew stranger to himself than he was to those around him, found his own skin odd colored, his own accent peculiar...He felt barely human at all' (Desai,2006) . But when he has returned to India, he realizes the same situation. His pretension of being an Englishman moves him into the world of isolation and alienation. Uma Jayaraman explains that- 'The Judge's inability to accept the real presence of his native culture and his political presence in the much coveted English culture leaves him in the luminal position between borders with an irreversible sense of loss.' (Jayarajan,2011).

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Biju is the second character who has extremely

faced the consequences of estrangement, isolation and alienation. At first he thinks that America is full of possibilities and it is such a land which can provide him anything that he desired. But when he reaches there, he understands that the whole picture is totally different. He, then, recalls his past memories-'How peaceful our village is. How good the roti tastes there! It is because the atta is ground by hand, not by machine...Fresh roti, fresh butter, fresh milk still warm from buffalo...' (Desai,2006). Actually he is caught in such position where he feels that he is powerless, meaningless and culturally isolated. He becomes frustrated —'It is a whole world of basement kitchens...they call this first World??? Ekdum bekkar!' (Desai,2006). In *The Inheritance of Loss*, we have seen that a love relationship between Gyan and Sai is affected by the influence of Nepalese Insurgency. After the break up, Sai finds no ray of hope and she felt terribly isolated and alienated in Kalimpong. On the other hand Gyan, a math tutor, is caught in a socio-political dilemma. The emerging racial conflict shatters his mental equilibrium. He realizes that the Gorkhas are isolated and suffer from the loss of identity and they are deprived of the fundamental necessities of life. They could not receive proper education and as a result, they are kept at the level of servant. The social and economical disparity compels him to join Gorkha National Liberation Front and agitates- 'We are stateless...it is better to die than live as slaves. We are constitutionally tortured. Return our land from Bengal'(Desai,2006). The cook Panna Lal thinks that his son Biju becomes a successful man in America but when he knows the real fact, he laments *Humara kya hoga, hai hai humara kya hoga.. Hai hai* what will become of us'(Desai,2006). In *Cho Oyu*, the master servant relationship alienates him or creates a separation between the Judge and him. Regarding his life, he expresses his meaningless existence - 'What is my life? It's nothing...he had none, he'd never had one' (Desai,2006). The minor characters like Nimi, Father Booty, Harish Harry and Lola are also confined within the periphery of estrangement, isolation and alienation.

Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the most acknowledged writers in the field of Diasporic literature. She has won Pulitzer Prize for *Interpreter of Maladies* in 2000 and deliberately describes the lives of both first and second generation Indian migrants. Actually she has revealed the psychological intricacies and complexities of her characters who now live in the West but their parents are born and raised in India. Her latest novel *The Lowland* continues those themes and it is based on a tragic incident which she heard in India. In an interview with Lynn Neary, Lahiri remarks-'I first heard of it, when it was described to me, was so troubling and so haunted to me – and ultimately inspired me to write the book'(Neary,2013). Stephanie Merritt remarks that “*The Lowland* is a sweeping, ambitious story that examines in intimate detail the intersection of the political and the personal, encompassing nearly 50 years of Indian and American history through the lives of one family.” (Merritt, 2013). Lahiri narrates that the two brothers-Subhash Mitra and Udayan are inseparable and their face is so similar that people often mistake them for twins. But their personality is totally different from

each other. Subhash is cautious, dependable, conventional and passive where as Udayan is charismatic, adventurous and politically active. Subhash 'had no sense of himself without Udayan. From his early memories at every point, his brother was there'(Lahiri,2013). When he heard the news about the Naxalite Movement, he was shocked and speechless but never considered that an imported ideology could solve the problems of India. The fact of Subhash's displacement and isolation began to start when he gets a scholarship to settle in Rhode Island for his research. There he breathes a sense of freedom and begins to live without the voice of his family members. Though he fully concentrates on his study of oceanography, he recalls his past memories of Udayan and seeks to know more about his involvement in the movement and his wife Gauri. After Udayan's death, Subhash marries Gauri and takes her in Rhode Island in order to give her an alternative chance or academic prospect which she has longed for. Though he marries her, she does not accept him as her husband and she takes it as a means of staying connected to Udayan. As a result, a feeling of isolation grows in between them and finally she has left him leaving a farewell letter on the table. He takes Bela as his own daughter for the sake of Udayan but she also leaves him alone when she comes to know about her real father. Though the final two chapters describe Subhash's marriage to Elise Silva, he is always frequented by the feeling of isolation and alienation for his parents, Gauri, Bela and specially of Udayan and their past memories in the lowland. Udayan's deep involvement in the Naxalite Movement creates a separation from his elder brother. When Subhash decides to leave Calcutta, he insists him not to go-'It's without you I am nothing. Don't go...(Lahiri,2013)'. But Subhash leaves him and his departure has affected Udayan profoundly. In spite of that, the latter hopes that the former would come back after his study for the sake of his country. But the reality is totally different. Now Udayan takes active part in the Movement and begins the act of charity. Though he is engaged in those works, he has extremely realized the absence of Subhash. His isolation is clearly reflected in his letter which he addressed to him- 'The days are dull without you. And although I refuse to forgive you for not supporting a movement that will improve the lives of millions of people (Lahiri, 2013)'.

In *The Lowland* Gauri, the main female protagonist has also experienced the traumas of displacement, isolation and alienation throughout her life. When she marries Udayan, the parents of Udayan do not accept her as it is not an arranged marriage. After Udayan's death, her father and mother in law's passivity forces her to drive away from the house. She accepts Subhash's suggestion to marry him and move to Rhode Island where '...no one would bother her, she could go on with her studies'(Lahiri,2013). She marries Subhash not for love but for an opportunity to remind the presence of Udayan and hence there is a gap between her and Subash. As the days have passed, Gauri has been withdrawing little by little from her role as a mother to Bela. She considers her as if 'She is too withdrawn too aloof to be a mother' (Lahiri,2013). She has left Bela and Subhash and gets settled in California where she has taken a