

The Space Called Home in *The Inheritance of Loss*

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Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Minute Upon Indian Education", a frequently cited document, an integral part of the discussion around English education in British India, which led to the English Education Act of 1835 stated, "... We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect."¹ Jemubhai Patel, the now-retired *Judge* of Kiran Desai's novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), is this ideal Indian that Macaulay had envisaged—a member of the prestigious Indian Civil Service of pre-independence India, with a cultivated contempt for his own countrymen, including his own family, and with a devoted pursuit of British customs, which he had picked up during his lonely five-year stay at Cambridge—a brown sahib for all practical purposes.² The novel opens into the reputedly picturesque, if decaying British hill station of Kalimpong, and tells the story of a community of anglophiles, holding on to the vestiges of an empire long gone, and leading a stagnant life of reading Victorian novels, and watching British television shows. The judge lives with his orphaned grand-daughter, the sensitive, and intelligent, seventeen-year old Sai, and a cook, in an old, crumbling cottage Cho Oyu, named after the sixth highest peak in the world, originally built by a Scottish man, who was enamoured by the beauty of Kalimpong. Their closest neighbours