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Kiran Desai runs out of ideas

GALLE: Winning one of the world's most prestigious literary awards put her in a pantheon of celebrated novelists, but Indian Booker prize-winner Kiran Desai worries she may not have another book in her.



It took 35-year-old Desai seven years to write *The Inheritance of Loss*, a tale that examines the darker side of immigration which is set in the Himalayas and New York, that scooped her the 50,000 pounds Booker prize last year.

And for now, as she travels between literary festivals, she says has nothing left to tell.

"Right now it's just emptiness, so you wonder if you'll have enough in you to fill it," Desai said on Sunday at Sri Lanka's first international literary festival in the historic southern port town of Galle.

"I don't know if I can do it."

"Writing this book. I drew so much on my family history and on growing up in India," she added. "I've written about that now, so it's just a new stage of what I'm doing. It certainly worries me. It takes time for a story, for a narrative to develop." "I hope I tap into something," she said.

Desai, who joins Booker winners such as Salman Rushdie and Ben Okri, wrote much of her novel in India and the United States, but also spent around three years in Brazil, Chile and Mexico, where her mother Anita - herself nominated three times for a Booker - was writing a novel of her own.

"I don't know how I'll do it, whether its going to be a book between India, divided into a group of families or between countries or whether I'll be able to bring in a Latin American experience too. That was a revelation to me," she said, saying the core would likely remain the issue of immigration.

"And then I think maybe it's a matter of writing a different kind of book -

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just to play more," she added. "Good writing doesn't come from being happy and winning prizes, it comes from doubt. It comes from a difficult place."

Beautiful Desai

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Desai left India at the age of 15, accompanying her separated author mother first to Cambridge for a year and then on to the United States, where she aborted an undergraduate science degree to focus on writing. The Inheritance of Loss was only Desai's second novel, and made her the youngest woman ever to win the Booker. reuters

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