

Kiran's Kalimpong connection

Booker-Winner 'Inheritance' Was Penned In Hill Town: Aunt

Deep Gazmer | TNN

Darjeeling: For most people of 9th Mile and Upper Cart Road, the name Kiran Desai doesn't ring a bell. Not many may know that *The Inheritance of Loss* — her Man Booker winner — has a reference to Kanchenjunga in the first paragraph itself. But it's here in Kalimpong, in the company of her aunt, that Kiran wrote parts of her book.

Dr Indira Bhattacharya, a paediatrician who has lived in Kalimpong for the past 20 years, is Kiran's aunt and the sister of author Anita Desai. She's recounted the story often over the past few days, but her eyes light up every time she talks of Kiran's visit. "She came to stay with me when she was writing the book. She was here in Kalimpong for about two months in the mid-nineties," Bhattacharya recalls.

Kiran was looking for a qui-



HIMALAYAN INSPIRATION: Kiran Desai needed a quiet place to write and found it in Kalimpong, where her aunt lives

et house where she could collect her thoughts and put them down on paper.

"She requested me to arrange for such a place. I suggested a house on Upper Cart Road owned by a friend. It had an empty room and Kiran moved in there," she says.

Kiran has had an abiding

connection with this hill town close to Darjeeling since her childhood. Whenever she would visit India, she would make it a point to come down and see her aunt.

"Though Kiran never felt that she really belonged here, she was in love with this place. She would spend a few days

here whenever she could," she says. Kiran had briefly been a student of St Joseph's Convent.

And being her aunt, Dr Bhattacharya can give you fascinating glimpses into Kiran's mind and life — something that the whole world has been hankering for over the past few days. "Kiran is a fun-loving and warm person. She gets along well with people here. Even now, they ask me how she is keeping," she says.

Another curious reason, Dr Bhattacharya says, why people took to her so easily was because she resembles her aunt.

Kiran was particularly close to her maid Doma, who, too, is mentioned in the book. Kiran also had a fetish for local food. "She loved to eat local delicacies like churpi, ningro and kinema though I wanted to pamper her with more elaborate dishes," she says.