



KIRAN DESAI'S HULLABALOO IN THE GUAVA ORCHARD: AN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

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Abstract: Human beings are a part of nature and they are totally dependent on it for everything. Unfortunately man has forgotten it and is living his life in unnatural way. As literature is the reflection of life, the literary writers reflect man and his life in the background of nature where the writers provide description of nature, the characters love and attitude towards nature in their works. There are number of writers who put forth nature as an unavoidable part of human life. Romantic poets like Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, and Coleridge depicted nature as a source of inspiration and instructor of human beings. Like poets some Indian novelists such as Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai etc. portrayed nature in the novel and invoked readers to follow nature. Environmental study in literature is known as Eco critical study of the novel. It is need of time to make people aware about the environment; literature is the prime source to convey this thought among people. It is a social responsibility carried out by the literary phenomenon. Present paper is an attempt to study the environmental issue carried out by Kiran Desai in her well known novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. The protagonist of the novel, Sampath is fed up with the hectic town life and leaves the place to be alone feeling oneness with nature.

Keywords: Environment, Kiran Desai, Eco-criticism, Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Introduction:

Kiran Desai is a prolific Indian writer in English born in 1971 in India and most of all she is the daughter of the renowned Indian English novelist, Anita Desai. Kiran Desai was educated in India, England and the United States. *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* is her first novel, which was written in the year 1998 and it was remarked by Salman Rushdie. The Times has also commented that Kiran Desai is the most appealing voice of the new generation and also her book is fresh, funny and delicious which defies comparison with that of any other novelist. The novel has won the 1998 Betty Trask Prize, serialized in *The New Yorker* and included in the *Vintage Book of Indian Writing*. Kiran Desai's second novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, won the Man Booker Prize in 2006 and was shortlisted for the Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction in 2007. The present paper seeks to analysis the Kiran Desai's novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* from the environmental point of view i.e. eco critical study of novel. The novel deals with the importance of nature and natural disaster accrued by the human being.

The term 'Ecocriticism' is also known as ecopoetics, green studies and environmental literary criticism. *Hullabaloo in the Guava*

Orchard is the story of Sampath Chawla who was a failure at home and also at work. He was lazy and lethargic bothering about nothing and wished to live his life with his own whims and fancies. Though he was tormented at his home and also at his work place, Sampath had enjoyed his time alone with his devices which made him completely forget his work at the post office and his sleepless nights at home.

Sampath was disturbed and was quite unlike others as he was fed up with his routine way of living. To him his life was "a never-ending flow of misery" (43) since he was able to fill only little as he wished. So he always wished to explore things of his own interest. For instance in his chief's daughter's wedding Sampath was allotted the duty to fill in the serbet glasses. But he felt very boring to do the work. So he wished to look around the house where he came into a room piled with wedding finery. On seeing the fineries Sampath's heart grew light with the fragrance of rose water, scent of musk, of moth balls, marigolds and baby powder. He held the fabrics close to his cheek and swathed lengths of pink, green and yellow around himself. He examined the jeweler box of a cousin sister and wore a nose ring. As the room was dark, Sampath lit a candle to view him in his fineries and

he met morphed himself into a glorious bird where he felt far away lifted to another plane. Within this frame Sampath felt a sudden sharp longing for an imagined world which was deep within himself and at last Sampath ventured out of his room in his fineries. Encouraged by the atmosphere he felt floating in some groundless state. He waded into the fountain spraying and splashing water on the ladies. As a result there was a whole lot of confusion amidst the crowd and Sampath started disrobing his clothes mistaking the cries of the audience for admiration. Thereby he returned home jobless for his ill behavior. But Sampath did not want his job and the desperate way of living anymore. He wanted an open space and to be left alone.

Inspired by his thought to get freedom, Sampath made his way out of his town. He climbed up a guava tree in an orchard where he could feel the freshness of greenery and the air thin around him. Sampath felt that silence had held between its branches and the moment he settled among the trees, the spirits that had carried him so far and so high had melted into nothing and he was amazed that the orchard matched the imagination all his life. It filled his whole mind and he wondered if he could get enough of it. Sampath thought:

This was the way of riches and this was a king's life, he thought...and he ached to swallow it whole, in one glorious mouthful that could become part of him forever. Oh, if he could exchange his life for this luxury of stillness, to be able to stay with his face held towards the afternoon like a sun flower and to learn all there was to know in the orchard: each small insect crawling by; the smell of the earth thick beneath the grass; the bristling of leaves; his way easy through the foliage; his tongue around every name. (51) So at last Sampath believed that he was in the right place. Here Sampath love for nature is revealed in an exotic way.

Unexpectedly Sampath on the guava tree became the hermit on his tree top hermitage. He was respected for his austerity and simple life and his words, nature and the atmosphere in the orchard made him the Babe. But Sampath's father, Mr.Chawla, was commercializing his son's

popularity making his family's fortune. The reputation of Sampath grew until the monkeys arrived to the orchard. When they arrived first, Sanpath turned their dirty games back to them: hooting, howling and rolling his eyes and this made the monkeys get impressed identifying Sampath "as the nucleus if this bountiful community they had come upon"(124). But things went upside down when the monkeys developed an unquenchable interest for liquor which made them resurface their old bazaar habits. As a result there arose a serious law and order problem in Shahkot of the religious degree where there were two groups. One suggested that the monkeys should be removed to save the Monkey Baba and the holy atmosphere of the place, the other group wished to save the sacred animal. Whereas Sampath thought that all the fun, teasing and game would disappear in his life if the monkeys were removed from the orchard. But a day was set to catch the monkeys and send them to a far off place where it would not return and could not obtain any liquor.

Sampath realized that his life in the orchard was in danger and the atmosphere in the orchard had disintegrated as there were no more gentle evenings. He found no help from anybody and he had thought of that how much had changed since he first arrived to the orchard. The orchard had become more and more like the place he had left; noisy, messy and untidy. Ugly advertisements defaced the neighboring trees and smelly garbage spilled down the hillside grew larger every week. Also the cry and buzz of angry voices made him remember his town life which was creeping up upon him again. Sampath considered himself, his mother and the monkeys were a band together and he was not ready to let the company break. The narrator describes:

And now they were getting rid of his favorite company in the orchard. Didn't they know how fond he was of the monkeys? And didn't they know how little he cared for all of them? Why didn't they take their advertising, their noise and dirt, their cars and buses and trucks, why didn't they take their little minds and leave him to his peace and quiet, to his beloved monkeys, to his

beautiful landscape that was being so dirtily and shoddily defaced? (181, 182) Thus Sampath reflects the degradation of nature from its glorious path. He who once felt happy for his environment in the orchard, later regretted for its absurd transformation.

On the day set to trap the monkeys, Sampath was asked to climb down the tree. But he realized that if he climbs down once, it would not happen to climb up again. Ultimately Sampath realized that he was trapped and he wanted to escape. Earlier Sampath left his home for the orchard in search of peace and to be alone where he found oneness with nature, but he was followed by his family and later the crowd. Now he was unprepared to get down the tree and was not sure that he could find a better place than the orchard when he first arrived which inspired and suited all his imagination. So Sampath was found dead in his mother's cooking pot.

Conclusion:

It is obvious that in the novel, Kiran Desai voices out the environmental issues through her protagonist Sampath, who express his love for nature, his oneness with nature and towards the end his empathy for the degradation of nature in the orchard. The novel also highlights the irresponsibility of man towards nature who does not know the value of nature which has to be preserved and treasured. It reflects that each species have an important role to play in maintaining our ecosystem. It is a known fact that human activity is causing massive extinctions, inspire of the increased efforts on conservation, it has not been enough. The climatic change in the Arctic region is an evident of the rapid change in our environment which is threatening and quite dangerous to all the species. The Ganges pollution is another instance for the irresponsibility towards our responsibility in preserving our nature. Thus the ecocritical study of any work of art reflects the need of the hour and implies the necessity to take essential steps to preserve the nature in order to ensure the beings survival and betterment.

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