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Reflection of Ecocriticism in Kiran Desai's *Hullabaloo in Guava Orchard*

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Abstract:

Nature is invincible, and man makes futile attempts to conquer it. In fact, man is dependent on nature for everything. In literature, man and his surroundings are reflected against the backdrop of the natural environment. The study related to the relationship between literature and the environment is called ecocriticism. It also attempts to study the relationship between humans and their environment. Environmental criticism believes that a literary work should examine humans as a part of the ecosystem. Literature should attempt to examine humans as an integral part of the ecosystem. In the novel *'Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard'*, Kiran Desai portrays nature as an invincible and forgiving force. Desai suggests that man should not attempt to conquer nature, but rather learn to live in harmony with it. He should consider himself a part of the entire ecological system. The protagonist of *'Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard'*, Sampath, becomes disillusioned with the chaotic urban life and flees the city to seek refuge in a natural environment. He climbs a guava tree in an orchard, where he can experience the freshness of the greenery around him.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Ecology, Environment, Hullabaloo, Nature, Orchard, Pollution.

Introduction

Kiran Desai, one of the great novelists who has received global critical acclaim, is the youngest woman to win the prestigious Man Booker Prize in 2006. Born in 1971 into a wealthy family in Chandigarh, India, she moved to England at the age of fourteen and later to the United States, where her creative talent blossomed. She has a particular interest in Indian novels written in English. In particular, she has a great fondness for the novels of R.K. Narayan.

Despite being the daughter of internationally renowned author Anita Desai, Kiran Desai has carved out her own distinct identity. In her debut novel, 'Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard', the flame of fertile imagination spreads from one page to the next. Salman Rushdie, in his book 'Minor Work: An Anthology of Fifty Years of Indian Writing', profusely praised her style, voice, psychological and social insight, imagination, and narrative skill, describing this 'impressive' first work as a 'highly original book' and 'richly and intensely imagined'. Emphasizing the novel's superficial excellent humor and profound brilliant satire, one critic called it "a funny story with Rushdie-esque undertones." Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's unbiased praise of this satirical novel, flawlessly crafted with precise vocabulary and heartwarming language, is noteworthy: "A delicious blend of the human and the magical, humor and wisdom, and unexpected poetry, Kiran Desai's language will delight you long after you turn the last page." For this novel, she received the "Betty Trask Award," which is given by the Society of Authors for debut novels by citizens of Commonwealth countries under the age of thirty-five.

In her rare book, 'Halla Bol in the Guava Orchard,' brimming with humor and artistry, she unveils the commonplace and eccentricities of Indian life in a fictional style and with a playful approach. While providing a true sense of India's social fabric, she sheds light on the beliefs of simple villagers with a tone of satire and farce. Her vivid imagination and remarkable descriptive

skills lend a humorous touch to the novel, creating captivating intrigue among readers. The novel reflects on 'alternative realities' of life, the animal kingdom, and the supreme power of man, who gains the vision to see beyond the realities of everyday life. Nature in this novel is a powerful symbol, representing a fantastical world that man not only constantly desires but also exploits. The author objectively analyzes individual cultures, societies, and their relationships, specifically in the context of myths, history, and society in post-colonial India. A deeper study of the novel's dramatic progression reveals interesting new connections, which are seemingly mocked to enhance the satirical humor. 'Halla Bol in the Guava Orchard' paves the way for her confidence to flourish in her second novel, in the creation of a mosaic narrative and the portrayal of constantly struggling beings caught in the flow of apparent attraction.

Ecocriticism is an environmental movement that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary study of ecology and literary criticism, also known as literary environmentalism or green literary studies. Greg Garrard, in the introductory chapter on 'Pollution' in the renowned Routledge Guide to *Ecocriticism: The New Critical Idiom*, defines ecocriticism as follows:

‘The study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term ‘human’ itself’

(Garrard 5).

Desai presents nature as a fundamental element of human life. The novel begins with a description of a terrifying aspect of nature. The intense heat causes people and their surroundings to wither. People try to find various artificial ways to bring rain to alleviate the heat, but to no avail, which underscores the supremacy of nature. Mr. Chawla is reading a report about the

drought in Shahkot in a newspaper. After reading the report, Mr. Chawla becomes engrossed in trying to find the possible causes of the drought:

'Problems have been located in the cumulus that have become overly heated', read Mr. Chawla from the newspaper. *'It is all a result of volcanic ash thrown up in the latest spurt of activity in Tierra del Fuego. And a little later he reported to whoever might be listening: 'The problem lies in the currents off the West African coastline and the unexplained molecular movement observed in the polar ice-caps.'* And, *'Iraq attempts to steal monsoon by deliberately creating low pressure over desert provinces and deflecting winds from India.'* (Desai 1)

The novel 'Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard' uses satire to expose the darker side of human nature in various aspects of Indian life. Satire is one of the most frequently used genres to reveal social evils, moral dilemmas, eccentric behavior, religious fanaticism, and harmful old customs and traditions in society. Unlike earlier satirists such as Swift, Fielding, or Dryden, Kiran Desai, as a postmodern novelist, highlights the darker side of human nature through the interplay of imagination and reality. She presents a multifaceted picture of Indian culture, traditions, and values, the diverse strata of society and lifestyles, and the hustle and bustle of life here, which has captivated the Western world for ages. However, the India in her writing is not like Rushdie's 'imaginary homelands,' which most expatriate writers attempt to recreate in their works. The story's plot unfolds in a small town called Shahkot, where the weather is unbearably hot. Many people suggest various possible solutions:

Mr. Chawla himself submitted a proposal to the forestry department for the cutting and growing of vegetation in elaborate patterns; the army proposed the scattering and driving of clouds by jet planes flying in a special geometric formation; the

police a frog wedding to be performed by temple priests. Vermaji of the university invented a giant fan which he hoped would attract the southern monsoon clouds by creating a wind tunnel moving north toward the Himalayas. (Desai 2)

Kiran Desai ridicules people who are truly wolves in sheep's clothing. These people are openly hypocritical and possess a cunning, deceptive charm, caring not at all about their own conscience, morality, honest commitment, or social responsibility. As Leo Tolstoy said, "Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself." Most of the characters in 'Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard' succumb to evil forces, and when there are no constraints on one's actions, one reveals their ugly side. The heat is increasing day by day in Shahkot, but there is no hope of rain. The lack of rain has created a serious crisis. The situation in the city has worsened due to the absence of rainfall. The Red Cross Society has set up relief camps in the western part of Shahkot. Ration shops are failing to distribute sufficient rice and pulses, and the prices of essential commodities have skyrocketed. Both human and natural causes are being cited for this situation. During this terrible crisis, Sampath was born as an auspicious sign to the Shahkotians.

Curtains billowed white out of every window. Bits of news paper and old plastic bags turned cartwheels in the indigo streets. The air thinned and stirred in a breeze that brought goose bumps out upon her arms. 'Look!' Kulfi shouted. 'Here comes the rain!' (Desai 9)

The indirect connection between natural rain and Kulfi is best understood when Kulfi is seen thoroughly enjoying the rain. Sampath's 'birth' and the 'birthmark' on his face are considered symbols of spirituality. Sampath's birth is considered a means of liberation for the drought-

stricken land. Sampath's birth is considered a miracle that will save the people and the land from drought.

Attempting to include Kulfi in their high spirits, the neighbours assured her that her son was destined for greatness, that the world, large and mysterious beyond Shahkot, had taken notice of him. 'Look! Even people in Sweden have remembered to send a birthday present.' And: 'Let's name him Sampath,' they said. 'Good fortune.' (Desai 12-13)

When Sampath Chawla became a young man, he couldn't accomplish anything remarkable either at home or at work. He was an eccentric and lazy man who wanted to live life according to his own ideas and whims. While working at the post office, he devises some tricks that free him from the troubles created by his boss and family members. He was tired of the monotony of work and the boredom at home. He always dreamt of escaping the chaos of city life and finding refuge in a secluded and deserted place. One day, he runs away from the city and reaches a guava orchard. He climbs a guava tree in the orchard, where he finds peace of mind and feels the freshness of the greenery around him. He wonders how the orchard harmonized with the ideals of his life. The orchard fills his entire mind, and he wonders whether he will find satisfaction in this experience. 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. (Desai -51)

In nature, all the living and divine elements necessary for life and energy exist in their pure and unadulterated state. In a peaceful and beautiful natural environment, any ordinary person can easily attain spiritual knowledge. Sampath escapes from the world of responsibilities and enters an orchard for peace and contentment. The orchard is extremely beautiful and tranquil. He feels that a prayer-like silence pervades the branches. When Sampath climbs a guava tree, he feels his breathing slow down and a wave of peace and contentment washes over him.

‘All about him the orchard was spangled with the sunshine of a November afternoon webbed by the reflections of the shifting foliage and filled with liquid intricacy of sun and shadow. The warmth nuzzled against his cheek like the muzzle of an animal and, as his heartbeat grew quiet, he could hear the soft popping and rustling of plants being warmed to their different scents all about him. How beautiful it was here, how exactly as it should be ‘[Desai 50]

Sampath is enchanted by the peaceful and picturesque atmosphere of the garden. For Sampath, climbing the tree symbolizes freedom; the tree represents a complete break from the civilization he has rejected. To preserve his freedom, Sampath builds his home on the tree given to him by his father, as he no longer wants to come down. But now, the people of Shahkot do not let him live in peace in that secluded garden. They follow him into the forest and call him 'Tree-Baba'. The people of Shahkot disturb the tranquility of the forest by constantly coming there to seek solutions to their problems. They settle there, creating tension between themselves and the forest. Sampath is respected for his ascetic nature and simple lifestyle, and his speech, demeanor, and the atmosphere of the garden transform him into 'Tree-Baba'. Sitting on the guava tree, Sampath

resembles a hermit in his arboreal hermitage. The garden is transformed into a religious and sacred place. But Sampath's father, Mr. Chawla, is commercially exploiting his son's popularity to amass wealth for his family. Sampath's fame continues to grow until the monkeys arrive in the garden. When the monkeys first appear, Sampath turns their own dirty tricks against them: he shouts, screams, and rolls his eyes, which impresses the monkeys, and they begin to recognize Sampath, "as the nucleus if this bountiful community they had come upon"(Desai 124).

Upon reaching the mountain, the Shahkotian people first exploit nature and assert their dominance, taking control of it and viewing the land and ecosystem from their own perspective. Their encroachment on the natural habitats of animals often leads to conflict between humans and animals. The Shahkotian people encroach upon these parts of the forest and assume the role of the dominant force. When monkey catchers arrive to tame and capture the animals for zoos, the animals are forced to flee to the deeper parts of the forest.

when the monkeys developed an insatiable craving for alcohol and reverted to their old habits in the marketplace, the situation changed completely. As a result, a serious law and order problem arose in Shahkot, a religiously significant town, where two factions emerged. One group advised removing the monkeys to save the revered 'Monkey Baba' and the sanctity of the place, while the other wanted to protect these sacred animals. Sampath felt that if the monkeys were removed from the garden, all the fun, mischief, and games in his life would disappear. But eventually, a day is set to capture the monkeys and send them to a distant place from where they would not return and would not have access to alcohol.

Sampath realizes that his life in the garden is in danger and that the atmosphere in the garden has deteriorated, as the peaceful evenings are now a thing of the past. He receives no help from anyone and reflects on how much things have changed since he first arrived in the garden. The

garden is becoming more and more like the place he left behind; noisy, chaotic, and disorganized. The clamor and commotion of angry voices remind him of his life in the city, which is once again encroaching upon him. Sampath considers himself, his mother, and the monkeys as a group, and he is not ready to let this bond be broken. TheA 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? (Desai 181, 182)

Thus, Sampath reflects the degradation of nature from its glorious state. He, who was once happy in his garden environment, later regretted its distorted transformation. On the day appointed for catching the monkeys, Sampath was asked to climb down from the tree. But he realized that if he climbed down, he would not be able to climb back up again. Eventually, Sampath understood that he was trapped and needed to escape. Earlier, Sampath had left his home in search of peace and solitude, coming to the garden where he could experience oneness with nature, but his family and later the crowd followed him. Now he was unwilling to climb down from the tree and was unsure if he would find a better place than the garden, which had initially seemed inspiring to him and perfectly suited to all his ideals.

Conclusion:

Sampath lives solely on guavas, like the birds in the sky and the monkeys. He is completely one with nature and is more 'civilized' than the inhabitants of Shahkot, who cruelly try to catch the

'monkeys' merely for fun and space. Sampath expresses his love for nature, his oneness with it, and ultimately his empathy for the degradation of nature in the garden. This novel sheds light on humanity's fickle attitude towards nature, which fails to understand its value and the need to protect and preserve it. Desai conveys the message that true human happiness lies in preserving nature and living in harmony with the natural environment. Sampath's environmental sensitivity will bring about a positive change in the city dwellers. The behavior of the people of Shahkot in the garden brings to the forefront many environmental crises and their consequences, such as global warming. This poses a threat of extinction to life on Earth. It shows that every species plays a crucial role in maintaining the ecosystem. The climate change in the Arctic region is a clear example of the rapid changes in the environment, which are dangerous for all species. Thus, eco-critical studies create awareness among people about the need to preserve nature and bring about improvements in human life.

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