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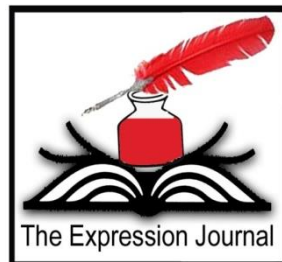
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CONFLICT OF MAN AND NATURE IN KIRAN DESAI'S *HULLABALOO IN THE GUAVA ORCHARD*

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Abstract

Kiran Desai is the daughter of an eminent novelist Anita Desai, and the voice of younger generation of the Indian English writers, who explore the technique of magic realism in her debut novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. This novel is about a maladroit protagonist Sampath Chawala. Being disgusted with the worldly life, he runs away from his home to take refuge in the guava orchard, at the top of the guava tree. It depicts the eternal struggle for personal space, and the human tendency to make profit out of any situation, and the eternal pursuit of happiness by all in their own different ways. The intrinsic relationships between nature and civilization, could be the matter of interrogation in this article. Nature and civilization cannot be dissociated from each other. The moment one is located as the other, both combines in the secondary imagination of the writer to capture the selfhood. Environment is the special text in *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* where protagonist finds space for salvation.

Keywords

Eco-Criticism, Materialism, Globalisation, Incarnations, Global Warming,
Salvation, Conflict, Man, Nature.

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Kiran Desai invites literary criticism from the lens of the ecology. M.P. Sinha defines literary criticism as an act, which is a body of principle, that defines literature and function as guidelines for an analysis and evaluation of the literary text. To solve a contemporary environment problem, a prominent principle of eco-criticism is emphasized. One of the political aspect of *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, is that writer subverts the idea of anthropocentrism and centralises nature in many ways.

Nature plays vital role in the dissemination of an art of Kiran Desai. To analyse the book, we need to understand the term eco-criticism. In the early nineties, two seminal works were published: First one is *Eco-criticism Reader*, edited by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm and *Environmental Imagination* by Lawrence Buell. Camino Gomides has defined eco-criticism, as the field of enquiry, that analyse and promotes work of art, which raise moral questions about human interactions with the nature, while also motivating audience to live within a limit that will be binding over generations.

William Rueckert was the first person to coin the term eco-criticism. His essay *Literature and Ecology* published in the year 1978. He mainly discussed about the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. It created a chain of scholars, who published works of eco-criticism emphasizing moral struggle, rather biological survivor.

But the journey remains specific and individual. It did not show any growth, when it concurred of solidarity among scholars of eco-criticism. As Glotfelty mentioned in the *Eco-criticism Reader*: One indication of the disunity of the early efforts is that these critics rarely cited one another's work: they didn't know that it existed. Each was a single voice howling in the wilderness. (Glotfelty 49)

After the failure of seventies, while raising it as a movement, the eighties has shown collective growth as scholars came together, but only in nineties it got the reputation of a specific department. Glotfelty is the first person to hold an academic position at the University

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of Niveda, Reso, USA. Several other place it took initiate regarding this field like UK, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, India (OSCE), Canada and Europe.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard is an appropriate choice for eco-critics as the purpose of the novel is critiquing the normal world, looking beyond the otherworld, which has much to offer than world of materialism.

Through the presentation of multilayered reality, like fiction of George Orwell's *Animal farm*, which has two layers of fantasy and reality, one is of animals and the other is of humans. With the jump by writer to different reality, in which social set up invites interrogation. Lamarque believes:

All writers of creative function are sub creators of secondary worlds. The secondary world of a non-fantastic writer will be as close to the primary world as his talents and the needs of all his art will allow...License is granted to writers of 'normal' creative fiction to change the primary world for the purpose of their act. Fantasy begins when an author's secondary world goes beyond license and becomes 'other'...Such a creation should, be called a Tertiary World. (*Fictional Point of View* 123)

Cheryl Glotfelty believes that nature is nothing but an alternative space for salvation. The novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* presents alternate realities of flora and fauna, to emphasize the life beyond human civilization. The way moral struggle is provided in the environment, to touch the natural landscape, it gives a special status to environment as text. Nature has been conveyed through symbolic meanings. The moral struggle constructs a perceptible change, with the progress of novel. And the natural process of destruction leads to the destruction of man. Chitra Banerjee Divakauni comments: A delicious blend of human and magic, hilarity and wisdom-and unexpected poetry. Kiran Desai's language will continue to delight you after you turn the last page. (bookbrowse.com)

The book describes man's pertinent behaviour and anxiety towards the imagined world of freedom, peace, space and solace. Something controls the humankind. And the humans are left at the centre, where the periphery forms an abandoned area. If we see the two layers: one on the surface level it is a whimsical tale of a family and at the other level, it speaks volume about the man- nature conflict. The novel depicts the drought in Shahkot, and how monsoon hits in the worst state. The existential crisis motivates Sampath to escape into the nature. After the struggle in school, college he joins post office, where his existence is challenged. Nietzsche put forward an idea of existentialism:

was the idea that men must accept that they are part of a material world, regardless of what else might exist. As part of this world, men must live as if there is nothing else beyond life. A failure to live, to take risks, is a failure to realize human potential. (en.m.wikipedia.org>wiki>existentialism)

His action in materialistic world bounds him to explore outside. But the moment, he breaks the rule and searches for freedom. An idea of freedom, is attained by an individual, is explained by Jean-Paul-Sartre: Every existing thing is born without reason, prolongs itself out of weakness, and dies by chance. (en.m.wikipedia.org>wiki>existentialism)

Sampath weakness allows him to explore outside of the materialist world and dies in the lap of nature. In this world of flesh relation, the alternative space of nature is created in fiction, to define the dominant perspective. 'Normalcy' and 'Dominance' is in trap of the resistance of society. The anxiety of humans does not remain in the trap of patriarchal system,

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where all kinds of control exist. It yearns for supremacy in the structure of social ladder, which later on, unites with the nature and asserts the selfhood. But the question remains, if nature is a matter of desire, or a form of submission to the humankind. The eating of guava by Sampath, is an abnormal act, which created stir in his mind and it led him to the tree. Desire could be defined by Plato in *The Republic*: individual desires must be postponed in the name of higher ideal. ([en.m.wikipedia.org>wiki>plato](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/plato))

The space where Sampath found himself bored is an urban space. Place like Shahkot is an urban space, a kind where cultural value is determining factor of an economic development. The networked character of city, is the dominant characteristics of the citizen, which allowed people to do gossip. It is easy for the society to pass information to each other. Events like Kulfi's pregnancy shows the gossiping society of Shahkot:

Oh dear, what is going to become of this woman?' Said Lakshmi, the Raipurs, the Bengali teacher and all of the others when they looked out of their windows, when they looked out of their windows, when they gossiped at the tea stall or sat in each other's houses eating peanuts together. There was always something odd about her, they said, 'you could tell this from the minute she entered Shahkot. (*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* 5)

Everything is passes with each other, and this kind of cultural value established economic relation, which made it easier for Sampath to get job from his father's connection. But Sampath, in spite of the adjustment within social pattern, remains alienated person:

Sampath's classmates had found employment. Even the ones with report cards that were just like his. Report cards with so many red Fs the letter seemed to have multiplied with abandon, run wild by the absence of competition from the rest of the alphabet. Only Sampath had been left idle, spending many blissful hours dreaming in the tea stalls and singing to himself in the public garden, until at last Mr. Chawla had found a suitable job for his son. (Desai 23)

The alienated Sampath lacks identification with anyone in the city. The job of Sampath, at the office is dull and inenthusiastic: He opened his lids slowly, releasing his pupils to discover the gloom, the air that resembles the shadows, the murkiness of pond water. This was summer: the landscape offering up only a few shabby colours, the senses mostly overwhelmed just by dark and light in harsh opposition. (Desai 30)

Sampath's position is of an adulthood stage, who could have grown in the social grooming of city life. His talks, with Mr. Chawla and colleagues of office like Jyotsana and Mr Gupta, suggest the knowledge, of local and national views which has to be broadened. If Mr. Chawla, picks up a newspaper, then Jyotsana bluntly tells about the creature she came across with. Sampath could have groomed under them. But young mind motivation lies in a vacuum: And by and by, between mouthfuls, without even knowing it, he started to sing: 'Sooner or later', he sang softly, 'there will come a magic hour, when I spot a princess from the kingdom of Cooch Behar. (Desai 70)

The assumption of controlling women of higher ranking, made him escapist from the society. Sexual suppression enforces him to take alternative route, and run from the society to nature. So in many ways, nature is a desire to Sampath. Kiran Desai believes, nature is an alternative space, as mentioned by Cheryl Glotfelty. But the context of alternative is fictionalised, and shows the impulsive act in a peaceful setting: Over bushes, through weeds.

Before him he saw a tree, an ancient tree, silence held between its braches like a prayer. (*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* 49)

The silent mood of trees, convinces us that alternative is the only space, Fred Pretske confirms that : knowing a true proposition one believes at a time requires being able to rule out relevant alternative to that proposition at that time.([en.m.wikipedia.org>wiki>relevantalternativetheory](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/relevantalternativetheory))

The running into the nature, is more or less an aggressive mood, to the abandoned urban world of Shahkot.

Into the Trees by Robert William is an alternative peaceful place in this world. In a folklore, forest represents the characteristics of liminality and transformation. Kiran Desai does not use the forest as a place of danger, but a yearning refuge. The forest of *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* is an open space with large trees. She has established this setting as a bigger place compare to webbed city.

After human enters among the nature, it becomes centralised place, and people shifted cultural value into the same. The Guava Orchard transformed into the destination, resembles the extension of township. Nature is misused by humans. The area around the guava tree, is filled up with an advertisement, to draw the attention of visitor, and meanwhile emphasise the culture of consumerism. The place could have drawn the attention of real estate market, but it got attention by Saint to bring everything is in control. The way Mr. Chawla used it as a market, discloses the early phase of globalisation, which has immense live to have: advances in trade and cultural relativism throughout the world.([en.m.wikipedia.org>wiki>relevantalternatetheory](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/relevantalternatetheory))

The practices of Mr. Chawla, in making the area as a modern complex, where there is an option of recreation for pilgrims, suggest the norm of small towns suffering with an idea of globalization. Maria Miles believes, that there is an inherent relationship between ecology and female: parallels between the oppression of nature and the oppression of women. These parallels include but are not limited to seeing women and nature as property, seeing men as the creators of culture and women as the creators of nature and how men dominate women and humans dominate nature. (<https://systematicalternatives.org>)

Kulfi, the mother of Sampath has been suppressed in Shahkot, by her family. Kiran Desai captured the suppression and opening of Kulfi from Shahkot to forest.

Climate change goes to worst effect in the region of Shahkot. The unavoidable heat and the situation of famine, reflects in the pregnant woman, Kulfi, who always has desire to eat something. Climate change is human caused condition, so the trait of Kulfi, her fragmentation is an outcome of the patriarch family. The way character of Kulfi portrayed, reflects the world of fantasy and dreaming of food:

But Kulfi was not thinking of the baby in her belly like a little fish. She was thinking of fish themselves. Of fish in many forms. Of fish big enough and good enough to feed the hunger that had overtaken her in the past months like a wave. She thought of fish curries and fish kebabs. Of pomferbecti, ruhi. Of shoals of whiskered shrimp. Of chewy muscles. She thought of food abundant in all its many incarnations. Of fenugreek and camel milk, yam and corn. Mangoes and coconuts and custard apples. Mushrooms sprouting like umbrellas in the monsoon season. Nuts wrinkled in their shells, brown shinned, wilky fleshed.(*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* 4)

There is a contradiction between what she likes to eat and capable to think. It is the scarcity of natural thing, which sketches the result of an oppression of nature. Kulfi is left alone and suppressed by her family. Nature is interlinked with her in terms of suppression. As Amitav Ghosh puts:

Climate change is inherently uncanny. No other word comes close to expressing the strangeness of what is enfolding around us...The uncanniness lies precisely the encounters with presence and proximity of non human interlocutors...The events set in motion by global warming have an intimate connection with cumulative human actions. They are the mysterious work of our own hands return to haunts us in unthinkable shapes and forms. They are instances of the uncanny intimacy of our relationship with the non human.(*The Great Derangement Climate Change and the Unthinkable India* 33)

The unpredictable crisis of environment, is explored skilfully by Kiran Desai. To quote Ghosh:

What we need is to find a way out of the individualizing imaginary in which we are trapped. Future generations will blame the leaders, politicians and writers for their failure to address the climate crisis. Global warming is unique in that it is simultaneously a domestic and global crisis. It holds the potential of drastically reordering the global distribution of power and wealth. (Ghose 35)

Nature and humans does co-exist in the universe, and could not be isolated. Kiran Desai with her imaginary faculty, manages to capture the trap and tension between the relationship of man and nature.

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