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SYMBOL OF HERMIT 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 she is the voice of the younger generation of Indian English writers, who explores the symbol of a hermit in her debut novel, *Hullabaloo in The Guava Orchard*. This novel is about a maladroit protagonist Sampath Chawla. Being disgusted with 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 eternal pursuit of happiness by all in their different ways. Sampath, as a spiritual seeker, represents the values of an enlightened yogi. *Hullabaloo in Guava Orchard*, in many ways, carries the essence of spiritual text from India of the twentieth century.

Keywords

Collective Conscience, Materialism, Globalisation, Man, Silence, Peace,
Middle-class, Hermit.

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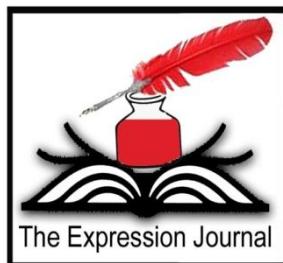
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The collective conscience is a concept developed by Émile Durkheim (1858-1917). Durkheim sees the collective conscience as a key nonmaterial social fact. All social facts, material and non-material is best understood as external to and coercive of individual, psychological facts.

Hullabaloo in The Guava Orchard represents the protagonist Sampath seeking peace. It is for this peace that he needs the freedom from the burden of the materiality of earthly existence. The rebel against the societal norms invites to attend the attention of the readers. Sampath stands as a subaltern. Edward Said in his book, *Orientalism* points out that people from the East are being represented as subalterns and people from the West represents as dominant. The current political and economic scenario changed the regular habits of the Indians. The policy of globalisation started a new wave after the partition of the nation. The postcolonial consciousness of the society prepared voices like Kiran Desai who rebelled against the society with a nature-loving Sampath.

To the author, the inspirational life of the middle class is "a prison he had been born into" (Desai 43). Sampath could not succumb to the burden of the materiality of life. The non-glamorous public sector may provide a job to many but Sampath retrieves his memory about the post office as an idle man who watches silently everything around him. He asked Mrs. Singh amidst the crowd "Is your jewellery still safely buried beneath the tulsi plant?" (Desai 66).

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On seeing Mr. Chopra, he further asked, "How is that lump in your throat that travels up and down your wind pipe whispering threats and almost bursting light out of your chest?" (Desai 66).

The joy of silence could be a matter of struggling since childhood. The childhood of Sampath could be seen as a play of the unconscious which may not be considered an interior, according to Lacan, "This exteriority of the symbolic about man is the very notion of the unconscious" (nosubject.com/unconscious). His relationship with school system reflects the failure of education and prepares him as an icon in a disguise of a hermit:

Sampath remembered how he had not at any time ever managed to solve a problem put to him by Father Matthew Mathematics, never managed to rake and weed those *forests of numbers* and letters upon the board into tidy rows following an orderly progression of arrows to a solution that matched the one on the list of answers at the back of the textbook. (Desai 45)

The symbol of peaceful hermit could be compared with the ancient text *Natyashashtra* by Bharat Muni. It is referred to as Sántamrasa. Relishing the rasas and particularly Shanta-rasa is hinted at as being as good as but never equal to the bliss of self-realization experienced by yogis.

At the end of the book, *Hullabaloo in The Guava Orchard* signifies that the ultimate goal of an individual is to get enlightenment. In a book called, *Siddhartha*, by Herman Hesse, in which the author chronicles the spiritual evolution of a man living in India. We are invited along on Siddharth's journey, experiencing his highs, lows, loves, and disappointment along with the beauty and intricacies of the mind, the natural world, and everything he encounters on the path to enlightenment. Sampath gains enlightenment in the middle phase but could not demand any other role hence after. The idea of peace and spirituality is broadened by Kiran Desai. The external image of posture develops in literature which could be understood with an idea by Lacan that "the unconscious is structured as a function of the symbolic" (nosubject.com/unconscious).

The journey of becoming a hermit could be understood in the light of Sri Aurobindo's yogic finding that silence is a prior requirement for establishing peace in humans. The novel captures the journey in the same way as Sampath is searching for a peace which, in many ways, stands as a phase of conquering inner conflict by the hermit:

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He wanted open spaces. And he wanted them in longer Swathes, in days that were clear stretches he could fill with as little as he wished.
Here a person's experience of silence and space squeezed and warped into underground forms that were forced to hide, found in only a few places that Sampath could discover. (Desai 44)

Sampath's decision on acquiring a position on a tree is difficult to be comprehended but Sri Aurobindo considers transformation as a must for the evolution of consciousness. In one of his letters on yoga he says:

This psychic development and the psychic change of mind, vital and physical consciousness is of the almost importance because it makes safe and easy descent of the higher consciousness and the spiritual transformation without which the supramental must always remain far distant. (Sri Aurobindo: *Letters on Yoga*, Part-IV 1095)

The struggle of Sampath to escape away from the mundane life which is common to run after the material glory, and seeks intellectual attainment, and that, too, for his deeper egoistic satisfaction. Kiran Desai believes that Sampath aspires to "perfect Buddha Shape" (Desai 204). The symbol of a yogi is a collective conscience which is scattered in the literature of the twentieth century. Herman Hesse and Sri Aurobindo represent the idea of a hermit in its unique way. Book like *Natyashashtra* of Bharat Muni is contemporary and relative to the society of India. As Émile Durkheim believes the image of the hermit stands as a non-material social fact.

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