

An Ecocritical Appraisal of Kiran Desai's Novel Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

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ABSTRACT

Kiran Desai is a renowned Indian novelist who won Man Booker Prize 2006 for her novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. She is the daughter of famous novelist Anita Desai. She raises socio- political, moral, cross cultural and racial issues in her novels. Along with these issues, she also speaks about environmental issues in her novels. So her novels can be studied in the perspective of ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is a new branch of literary theory which studies the relationship between literature and physical environment. Ecocriticism is concerned with the depiction of nature and man- nature relationship in literary writings. It examines how environmental issues are raised in literature. Kiran Desai's novels *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss* have ecocritical elements. The present research paper is an effort to analyze and appraise Kiran Desai's novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* in the light of ecocriticism.

KEYWORDS:- Ecocriticism, nature, environment, ecocentrism, anthropocentrism, pollution

I. Introduction

We are living in an age of science and technology. Due to developments in science and technology, human life has become easier and comfortable. But these advancements in science and technology are main causes of environmental degradation. Industrialization has, no doubt, benefitted human beings by providing products which are necessary for the wellbeing and comforts of human life. Such industrial products are related to food, clothing, housing, cosmetics, transport, agriculture and luxury. But along with these products, industries are responsible for the presence of increased amount of harmful gases in atmosphere such as CO, CO₂, N₂O, sulphur di oxide etc. These gases are responsible for air pollution. Further, industrial waste causes water and land pollution. The various means of transport such as cars, buses, trucks etc. cause air as well as noise pollution. Due to the increased amount of pollutants, our environment remains no longer safe for the survival of life on the earth. Today, it is difficult to get fresh air and fresh water. The food we get is adulterated and not free from the hazardous effects of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The increased air pollution has caused global warming and ozone layer depletion, suggesting that life on earth has become endangered and ecosystems have been disturbed. So environmental degradation is a major contemporary global problem which needs to be addressed and solved for a sustainable development and better future. Literature has played significant role in the preservation of ecology and environment. It has spread ecoconsciousness. Many poets have sung in the praise of beauty of nature and preached to foster love and affinity towards nature. They have emphasized man-nature relationship. Notable among these poets of English literature are romantics such as William Wordsworth, P.B. Shelley, John Keats, S.T. Coleridge etc. The Eminent American poets in the view of eco- criticism are Thoreau, R.W. Emerson, Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost. The Indian novelists significant from the perspective of ecocriticism are Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai etc. So it is obvious that environmental issues find a literary expression too. Ecocriticism is a new branch of literary theory and criticism which studies the various approaches adopted by litterateurs in their writings about nature and physical environment. Ecocriticism judges a work of literature in its capability to raise environmental issues, to strengthen man- nature relationship and to create and spread ecoconsciousness. Cheryl Glotfelty in her famous book *The Ecocriticism Reader : Landmarks in Literary Ecology* has defined ecocriticism as a study of the relationship between literature and physical environment.

Kiran Desai, is an Indian novelist who is the daughter of renowned novelist Anita Desai. She was born in Sept. 1971 in New Delhi. At the age of fourteen, she left India and lived in England with her mother for a year and later, moved to U.S.A. She earned world recognition when she won Man Booker prize in 2006 for her novel. *The Inheritance of Loss*. She wrote two novels- *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). She deals with the themes of alienation, immigration, cultural clashes, identity crisis, multiculturalism, poverty, racial discrimination, social realism etc. Her novels also reflect her concerns of nature

and environment. These two novels have ecocritical elements and are significant from ecocritical point of view. In this research paper, her novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* will be appreciated from an eco-critical approach.

II. Objectives of the Research Paper

1. To introduce ecocriticism
2. To create ecoconsciousness
3. To critically evaluate the novel '*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* of Kiran Desai.
4. To strengthen man- nature relationship.
5. To promote environmental conservation.
6. To highlight the significance of literature in environmental conservation.

III. Ecocritical elements in Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

In the novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, Sampath Chawla is the protagonist. He is fed up with the materialistic world. He wants to live his life with his own imagined world. Once Sampath wished to be a bird to fly in to the unknown land where he could be free and live amidst nature. The bird here is associated with happiness, freedom and nature itself. Sampath went to a guava orchard and climbed up a guava tree to feel the freshness of the greenery and air around him. The silence and peace of orchard created peace and tranquility in his mind. He was fascinated and attracted towards the beauty of nature that guava orchard possessed and reflected. Sampath thought about his life in the orchard:

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 would 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 sunflower and to learn all these was to know in the orchard each small insect crawling by; the smell of the earth thick beneath the grass; the rustling of leaves ; his way was easy through the foliage, his tongue around every name.. (51)

In these lines of novel, we learn that he considered himself to be a king and rich man in the company of nature which further strengthens the view of ecocritics that man's true wealth, prosperity and progress lies not in the materialistic world but in true communion or relationship with nature. Sampath found true happiness and solace in the company of nature. Here, we are reminded of William Wordsworth, the great English romantic poet who preached that nature alone provides true happiness and peace; it can feel and communicate with us; it can teach and guide us. The materialistic world brings all kinds of miseries and sorrows.

Sampath soon becomes a hermit and leads a simple and austere life. It suggests that a simple and austere life is a natural way of living against artificial life. This kind of natural life in the company of nature can generate spiritual feelings in the mind of man. This thought is brought forward in the novel when the protagonist Sampath became hermit and grew spiritual in the guava orchard due to the influence of nature. Nature plays an important role in the spiritual development of a man. This Wordsworthian view that nature is omnipotent and has divine soul in it ; it can feel and communicate, is expressed in the novel by the writer. Sampath enjoyed the company of monkeys. Some people offered liquor to monkeys and they developed a taste for liquor.

Thus the evils associated with human world are responsible for the degradation of environment and suffering of other creatures. Sampath went in the guava orchard or in the lap of nature to find peace and happiness but soon the greed of man or his anthropocentric activities ruined the calm and joyful atmosphere of the orchard as Sampath's family commercialized his hermitism to earn more profits at the cost of destruction of the beauty of orchard. Novelist Describes:

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 dirty and shoddily defaced? (181)

Above lines indicate the anthropocentric approach of human beings whereby they exploit the natural environment for their own profits forgetting at the same time that this action is a step towards loss of happiness and tranquility, towards self- destruction. Life on the earth cannot sustain if ecological balance is disturbed.

Sampath's family came to orchard to stay with him. His mother roamed in search of pheasants and wild fowl to cook. She killed them mercilessly. This incident in the novel shows human intrusion and encroachment in the natural habitat of wild life. Due to such anthropocentric action, many species of wild animals are on the verge of extinction. Sampath's family's arrival and other people's presence in the orchard mar the beauty and peace of this place. This action of human beings symbolizes urbanization and deforestation which are major causes of the destruction of natural environment. Sampath symbolizes orchard, and in turn afforestation. Afforestation helps to bring rain. Therefore Sampath's birth was celebrated by raining. Sampath, at first, expresses his love for nature in the orchard but at last he laments for the ruin of nature in the orchard. Through the protagonist Sampath, Kiran Desai voices for the conservation of natural environment and expresses deep concerns over its destruction and degradation.

In the end of the novel, the efforts to trap and kill the monkeys are failed which indicates the fact that nature cannot be conquered by man. We learn in the novel that a man gets cooked instead of a monkey. This incident again reminds us of the fact that in the long run, man's efforts to conquer and exploit nature leads to his own destruction. So to destroy and exploit nature is to destroy ourselves. To preserve and protect nature is to save ourselves.

IV. Conclusion

Kiran Desai has been successful in creating ecoconsciousness among readers. Ecoconsciousness is the dire need of today, as it inspires human beings to be ecocentric and to be sensitive towards the environmental issues. Global warming, greenhouse effect, melting of glaciers, ozone layer depletion, climate change, and different kinds of pollution are posing threats and challenges to life on the earth. So ecocritical literature helps in creating ecoconsciousness, which in turn, is essential for environmental conservation and sustainable development. In the novel, Sampath felt loneliness and suffered alienation in the human world but when he sought refuge in the company of nature, he found infinite solace, tranquility and joy. He was now not alone but his companions were the objects of nature such as trees, birds and monkeys. Their company provided him more comfort and luxury and helped him to get rid of all the psychological diseases generated due to the suffering in isolation and alienation. So Kiran Desai, through her ecocritical sensitivity has highlighted the role of nature to cope with the morbidities of loneliness and alienation. She has shown that nature provides tranquility, calmness of mind, solace, and happiness. She has advocated for the conservation of natural environment. She, like great romantic poet William Wordsworth, has criticized materialism and too much worldliness, and preached for having a tree communion with nature and to strengthen man- nature relationship. Thus the novel has an ecocritical echo and raises environmental issues and hence is significant from the perspectives of ecocriticism.

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