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Nature and Ecocriticism in *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

Swati Mane

Well known critic Matthew Arnold says 'literature is criticism of life'. Life of human being depends upon nature. So nature and literature having intimate relationship goes hand in hand. Literature reflects everything happening around us. Nature is origin of all sciences. Any branch of science can't be studied without study of natural elements. Literary field is also not exception. Not any writer could keep himself away from beauty of nature and its depiction in literature. Since pre-independence period poets, novelists have been writing about nature. This nature gives life force or prana to writers by which all living entities are upheld and on manifestation nature takes on the forms of earth, water, fire and ether. Global environment crisis has made writers to think, to write on environmental matters in almost all field of science. Ecocriticism is new critical movement that studies literary representation of nature and environmental crisis. Nowadays ecologically informed critical studies have been growing in large numbers. Ecocriticism studies the relationship between literature and the science the relationship between literature and the science of ecology by applying ecological concepts to literature.

In the history of Indian English literature there are a lot of novels, poems in which writers has pictured nature as a setting or as a character. For e.g. novels of R. K. Narayan are called as 'Malgudi novels' which are also known as 'spirit of place'. Shashi Deshpande's 'The Binding Wine', 'Gita mehta's 'A River Sutra', Jai Nimbkar's 'Come Rain', Amitav Ghosh's 'A Hungry Tide', Arvind Adiga's 'The White Tiger', Arundhati Roy's 'The God of Small Things', Anita Desai's 'Cry the Peacock', 'Village by Sea', 'Fire on the Mountain' includes ecological elements and can be studied ecocritically.

In the recent fictions Kiran Desai's two novels '*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*' [1998] and '*The Inheritance of Loss*' [2006] can be studied ecocritically . She has depicted Indian as well as foreign nature and landscapes in her novels.

'*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*' embodies the ecological idea on the relationship between man and nature, between man and man, and between man and self. Kiran Desai confronts in this novel serious issue of environmental crisis. Novel begins with introducing global environmental crisis i.e. global warming and its implications. There is news in newspaper which is read by Mr. Chawla. Setting of this novel is guava orchard in Shahkot, a state of Punjab. Newspaper raises important issues responsible for rise in heat and famine.

'problems have been located in the cumulus that has become overtly heated. It is all a result of volcanic ash thrown up in the latest spurt of activity in the polar ice-caps'[Desai,1]

Highest temperature was recorded in Shahkot. There were dozen of monsoon including proposals. To bring rain various efforts were done all over the world.

‘Iraq attempts to steal monsoon by deliberately creating low pressure over desert provinces and deflecting winds from India.[Desai, 1]

‘Hungarian musician offers to draw rain clouds from Europe to India via music of his flute’[Desai, 1]

‘Army proposed the scattering and driving of clouds by jet planes flying in a special geometric formation [Desai,1]

Whenever there is natural disaster people from all strata of society try to find out solution. Their activities reflect cultural beliefs and rituals. Temple priest thought of wedding of frog to bring rain. Various creatures are commonly associated with cultural rituals. They play important role in mythology of cultures.

Protagonist of novel Sampath Chawla bored post-office clerk and dreamer runs away from home and takes shelter in guava orchard. In its pure unpolluted state nature contains all the energetic and spiritual elements needed for life and vitality. Beautiful nature helps for spiritual enlightenment of any normal person. Sampath was a eccentric person. He escaped from world of responsibilities and entered into orchard for peace and contentment. Orchard was extremely beautiful and peaceful. He observed there was silence held between branches like a prayer. As Sampath climbed on guava tree, he felt his breathing slow and a wave of peace and contentment overtook 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]

Beautiful and peaceful atmosphere of orchard hold Sampath spellbound. Sampath became well-known as tree- baba. Orchard turned into religious and holy place. He gave ‘the sermon in the guava tree. Townspeople worshipped Sampath taking him as rise spirit of unfathomable wisdom.

There were Himalayan foothills looking extremely beautiful. There were butterflies fluttered through the landscape. Tree pies and flycatchers flew from tree to tree.

‘ here and there were sprinkling of wild flowers with the colour and fragrance of fruit, flowers with gaping mouths and tongues that left the devotees tiger stripped with pollen as they passed by that waves their anthers and brandished their stamens, that sent such scents up into the air, nobody could help lowering their noses into their fragrant petals’[Desai98]

Richness of orchard made Sampath to stay there forever. Diversity of birds and other wild creatures made Kulfi royal cook of kingdom of animals and birds. She roamed on hillside in search of pheasants and wildfowl to cook it. She wandered in the deepest parts of the woods

amidst the bamboo groves, the sal forests, the towering moss-laden trees. There were wild cats, snakes, the scorpions and leeches but she was not frightened. She waded out into the muddy ponds to collect lotus stems raided birds nest. She killed birds, exploits wealth of forest, trapped birds, killed them mercilessly. After some day when there was arrival of monkeys in orchard picture of guava orchard changes. They looked upon Sampath as the strange sedentary member of another species in their usual domain with some trepidation. Monkeys who were harassing woman in bazaar became gentle. People believed that baba has subdued the beast.

When Sampath was in womb there were ecological inculcations of various spices trees, flowers, fishes and other elements of nature. All those things were deeply instilled in his mind and body. Now when he came in the company of orchard his consciousness filled with enjoying every minute elements of nature. He played with fingers created a lotus blossom with petals curling and uncurling, a swimming fish, a lurching camel. His figures wriggle like a spider to scuttle across the impromptu stage of the sun-stamped tree. In his obsession he imagined different and strange things. He imagined human beings with bird-beak noses, people with swan necks, cow eyes, bird-heart or dolphin's love for ocean, people with sea water tears, with bark coloured skin, with stem waists and flower poise with fuzzy leaf ears and petal, soft mouths. Devotees while going to a wedding came with bottle of rum at orchard which was on their way. Monkeys found bottles of rum while rifling through their bag. They drank all up. They started making noise and disturbing devotees and Sampath. In this connection one devotee's comment is remarkable 'It is not the monkey's fault. Always men are degenerate ones'. Monkeys develop unquenchable taste for liquor. They grew violent leapt on each bus, scooter, rickshaw in search of liquor. They grew more violent and aggressive. They raided Kulfi's kitchen overturned pots and pans, sent buckets rolling through orchard. Sampath's tree was thrashed in a fierce chaos of branches and leaves. In it he was tossed here and there and upside down luckily nobody was hurt by them. People started thinking about plans to capture monkeys. Two camps of devotees were formed. One was of the view that monkeys should be removed to save the tree-baba and holy atmosphere of orchard. Other group was against tree-baba who thought that tree-baba has encroached in the kingdom of animals and turned them from their rightful home. To control monkeys various plans were suggested.

There was not any impact on Sampath and Kulfi. They were lost in their world. He was not ready to leave tree. He was observing beauty of orchard. There were only mountains without trace of civilization. They were high as if tumbling from the sky, a waterfall cascaded down sylvan slopes so pale sp distant he could not believe either it is real scene or his imagination is creating picture. Everywhere there was sunlit forest and rock and rough white water. There was breeze, sound of crickets star up, frogs croaking. Sampath observed everything around him. He saw the white petals of the night flowers unfold, a speckling of bright stars appear above him. Sampath did not worry about what is to happen in the future. He carefully listened and watches every minute sounds and particles of guava orchard around him.

Army and police were given training to catch the monkeys. They entered in guava orchard with huge preparation. Mr. Chawla, the crowd of devotees they all ran wheezing, panting, desperate. Monkeys jumped from one tree to another. The tree tops were churning as if a whirlwind were passing through the pines, by a shivering of branches and foliage. Thrashing branches they jumped pell-mell from one tree to another. The forest birds flew up and scattering in alarm, their cries mingling with the voices down below. The air was full of red and blue and black satin, the golden and brass feathers of pheasants and peacocks, woodpeckers and bulbuls. There was big hullabaloo created by monkeys in guava orchard.

Kiran Desai confronts in *Hullabaloo in Guava Orchard* a serious issue of environmental crisis. Desai makes strong statements throughout the book regarding the problems inherent in man's encroachment upon the natural order of things.

Nature in '*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*' is symbol of freedom where Sampath gets peace and contentment. Orchard became source of pleasure and happy solitude. Beautiful trees, birds, coolness of orchard created a desire in Sampath to swallow all that pleasantness so that he can be permanently happy. Orchard provides ecological base and setting to this novel. All characters wander and live in orchard which is main place of all events and hullabaloo as suggested in the title. Orchard has rich ecological wealth. Kiran Desai pictures various scenes and landscapes of orchard. It plays important role in development of theme. Orchard gives Sampath identity as tree-baba. It gives monetary wealth to Mr. Chawla. Kulfi could foster her obsession of cooking by using all wealth of spices, herbs, plants, trees. Brigadier is obsessed with watching various types of birds. All eccentric characters create not only pollution but also environmental destruction. So called babas are responsible for ecological imbalance and its ruin. Man always tries to control and to overpower the nature and animals but it is impossible for him. He has always become helpless in front of mighty nature. In their meaningless efforts to catch monkeys there is a great hullabaloo in guava orchard. From ecological point of novel can be called as 'Ecohullabaloo'. It is representative novel in the field of ecocriticism which shows man's attitude towards nature. Novel reflects Kiran Desai's ecological concern and she successfully depicts that concern and draws attention to preserve it, care it and create it.

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