

A Brief Study on Kiran Desai's Novles

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Abstract: *Among the modern Indian writers in English, Kiran Desai occupies a unique place for the diversity of presentation of plots, themes, characters and situations in her novels, 'HULLABALOO IN THE GUAVA ORCHARD' and 'THE INHERITENCE OF LOSS'. Her main feature as a writer, despite being educated and lived in the West, is her ability to depict Indianness in her novels, the survival of multiple of cultures in India. Her attack against the adverse effects of colonialism and the continuance of feudal ways of life is yet another characteristic feature in her novels. The writer aims at critically interpreting her too popular novels, 'HULLABALOO IN THE GUAVA ORCHARD' and 'THE INHERITENCE OF LOSS'.*

Keywords: *Guava tree, turmoil, alcoholic monkeys, outrageous, orchard teenage Indian girl, inheritance, Descendant.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Kiran Desai is one of the most talented writers of her generation. She won the Man Booker's prize for her novel 'The Inheritance of Loss'. Desai was born on Sept 3, 1971 in New Delhi, India. She left Columbia University for several years to write her first novel, 'Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard'. It received 1998 Betty Trask Prize from the British Society of Authors. After more than seven years of work, she published 'The Inheritance of Loss.

When she was about nine years old her family was shifted to Delhi. By the time she turned fourteen, the family moved to England. A year's later, they shifted to the United States. Kiran Desai completed her schooling in Massachusetts. She did her graduation from Hollins University and Columbia University. Her maiden novel 'Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard' was published in the year 1998. It was an amazing piece of work for which Kiran received many accolades.

2. HULLABALOO IN THE GUAVA ORCHARD A NOVEL

"Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard" Desai's dazzling debut novel, is a wryly hilarious and poignant story that simultaneously captures the vivid culture of the Indian subcontinent and the universal intricacies of human experience. Sampath Chawla was born at a time of drought into a family not quite like other families, in a town not quite like other towns. After years of failure at school, failure at work, of spending his days dreaming in tea stalls, it does not seem as if Sampath is going to amount too much? Until one day he climbs a guava tree in search of peaceful contemplation and becomes unexpectedly famous as a holy man, sending his tiny town into turmoil. A syndicate of larcenous, alcoholic monkeys terrorize the pilgrims who cluster around Sampath's tree, spies and profiteers descend on the town, and none of Desai's outrageous characters goes unaffected as events spin increasingly out of control.

Kiran Desai's Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard is the whimsical story of a young man who escapes from the comical confines of life in the sleepy, R.K.Narayan-inspired North Indian town, or city, of Shahkot for the no less comical freedom of life in a guava tree. Once there, the previously timid Sampath finds himself at the center of an adoring crowd of pilgrims who mistake his knowledge of their private affairs (gleaned from reading their mail during his previous life as a lowly postal clerk) for spiritual enlightenment. At first filled with shame, his officious father soon realizes just how profitable his son's supposed spirituality can be. His mother, meanwhile, finds

in the orchard relief from traditional Indian family life and middle-class respectability by devoting herself to creating increasingly exotic curries. All goes well until the local monkeys start to drink. Plans to rid the orchard of their unwanted hullabaloo multiply and eventually go completely awry, but not before Sampath is released from the endless cycle of demands. Transformed into a guava, he is last seen being carried towards the sacred Himalayas by the hungry monkeys.

In this sense “Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard” is a sad story. But Kiran Desai’s writing style makes the entire book come across like a big joke told by a clown. One can also read the book as an eulogy of food, of strange foods, of crisp aubergines. Kulfi (the word is used to mean Indian ice cream!), when she was pregnant with Sampath, dreams of food when she is awake, when she is sleeping. For example, “In her mind, aubergines grew large and purple and crisp, and then, in a pan, turned tender and melting”. My mother had taught me that aubergines should be firm, beans should be crips! But that was in another world, and not the one you find in Hullabaloo.

Kiran Desai obviously loves her food. Look at what might await the guest: “Pickled limes stuffed with cardamom and curmin, crepuscular creatures simmered upon the World of a scented tree, small river fish baked in green coconuts, rice steamed with nasturtium flowers in the pale hollow of a hamboo stem, mushrooms red- and yellow-gifted, polka-dotted and stripped”. If I were invited to her dining table, I would be extra careful of the food I would have to taste, particularly if mushrooms are served, mushrooms which are polkadotted!

In the Guava Orchard Kulfi finds finally the meaning of her life. She cooks. She plans, she hunts, she gathers, she simmers, she cooks. Look at another example of Kulfi’s culinary adventures: “A single grain of one thing, a bud of another, a moist fingertip dipped lightly into a small vial and then into the bubbling pot... means that were beaten to silk, so spiced and fragrant, they clouded the senses; the sauces were full of strange hints and dark undercurrents...”

The major portion of the novel comes across as if all of Sampath’s simplicity, his being an utter failure in belonging to the “normal” world of Shahkot, his finding solace on the branches of a Guava tree, his father turning this incredible incidence into a money making machinery, the upsetting of the life of Shahkot are nothing but unavoidable details used by Kiran Desai to indulge in fantasies that have to do with food.

3. THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS

The story is set in the mid-1980s in a Himalayan town in India by the foot of Mount Kanchenjunga and also New York. The story opens with a teenage Indian girl, an orphan called Sai, living with her Cambridge education Anglophile grandfather, a retired judge, in the town of Kalimpong, India, by the foot of Mount Kanchenjunga. Sai is romantically involved with her math tutor, Gyan, the descendant of a Nepali Gurkha mercenary, but she eventually recoils from her obvious privilege and falls in with a group of ethnic Gurkha/Gorkha insurgents. In a parallel narrative, we are shown the life of Biju, the son of Sai’s grand father’s cook, who belongs to the illegal immigrants in New York and spends much of his time dodging the authorities, moving from one ill-paid job to another.

It’s a great story about loveless isolation, the concept of ‘dislocation’, told a neutral narrative format which made me shiver. With brilliant writing style it is a commentary on class, on nationality, and on identity. Kiran Desai’s use of the ‘aware and active’ point of view has the naturalness of Tolstoy, Rushdie or even Garcia Marquez. Some might find the book bit disturbing, there is no happiness, no unconditional love, no resolution, no redemption for any of the characters. Kiran Desai pleasingly unselfconscious about the topic of immigrants, joking (again from the outside, as if she isn’t personally involved) about the various kinds there are: “those who throw up their hands at the difficulties – and, at the other end of the scale, those who are expert at playing the ethnic card, accentuating the character traits, they are expected to have, and thereby making a success of their lives”. Like Biju’s wordly-wife friend Saeed, one of the many characters in inheritance she would have liked to give a bigger stage.

4. DISCUSSION

Kiran Desai’s extraordinary new novel manages to explore... just about every contemporary international issue: globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and

terrorist violence. There are post-colonial elements present in the novel. Here the prefix post may be said to imply a chronological sequence and the aftermath of colonialism. Not just Biju may be related being as, the post-colonial Indian, but also that what takes place in Kalimpong too. Both the situations address the international audience of English speakers. The novel also refers to centuries of economic and cultural power of the subjugation of the West. There is a structural unity in the novel. The novel starts with the description of the five speaks and ends with the five peaks. There is chaos in the novel, from the theft in Cho Oyu to the revolution. Kalimpong had become a ghost town from beauty and plume. But, again the five peaks of Kalimpong turned golden. And that seemed the apparent truth. But, at last it ends towards silence and routine. There is hope and optimism by the end of the novel. Father Botty tells Sai to always look at the horizon that always helps. Congress of hopeful frogs continued to sing. May be, like many entire nations, Gorkhaland would also appear overnight and give relief to the desires of the natives of the place. The damp wood was not giving right fire, when lit by the cook in the beginning of the narrative. In the end, the soggy match was tried to be lit by Sai and at last, it lit and flared. Fire also may be said to mean life and civilization. The beginning of the novel and the end with it shows an aright structure put up by the writer. The juxtaposition of qualities in the images and the symbols also speak volumes of the ability of poetic conversions in the famous novel by Kiran Desai.

5. CONCLUSION

These two novels are very famous in the world literature. "The Inheritance of Loss" gave good name to her. Desai's presentation of human emotions like love, hatred and expectation get a new twist in the novel. Through Sai, she defines love in a series of phrases. According to her, "Love must surely reside in the gap between desire and fulfillment, in the lack, not the contentment. Love was the ache, the anticipation, the retreat, everything around it but the emotion itself" (2-3). To Uncle Potty, 'love was tapestry and art'; the sorrow of it, the loss of it, should be part of the intelligence, and even a sad romance would be worth more than any simple bovine happiness". Years ago, as a student at Oxford, Uncle Potty was an avowed romantic like any romantic poet of England, and looked at himself as a lover of love. Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard is a light hearted work told in the faux-native style of the literary folktale. This story, by the daughter of novelist Anita Desai, works best when the pacing is as fast as the author's touch is light, as it surely is in the final thirty or so pages. When it drags, stylistic tics become annoyingly apparent, the narrative too slenders to support even a novel of this type, and this talented author's indebtedness to other writers, from Narayan and Salman Rushdie to Italo Calvino, Jerzy Kosinski and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the sign not of postmodern play but of youthful derivativeness. These two novels are very famous in the world literature. The inheritance of loss, a master piece work it received man Booker's Prize. Desai's novel is galore with plenty of metaphors like "India is a sinking ship", "a perturbed harem of sulfurous hens being chased by a randy rooster" and "a messy map".

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