

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECO-CRITICAL ISSUES IN *HULLABALOO IN THE GUAVA ORCHARD*

G. Bala Krushna Reddy,
PhD Research Scholar (English),
Berhampur University, Odisha.

Abstract

Nature is omnipotent and man being a part of nature is dependent on it for everything. This paper attempts to highlight the representation of nature and the effect of nature in the lives of the characters. It also speaks about the present environmental crisis which haunts mankind like nightmare. Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard highlights the human relationship with nature. Desai in the novel describes identity and alienation with the natural environment to justify an ecological interpretation with concepts like place and dwelling. She projects Sampath who is disinterested with the monotonous city life and desire to lead life in the midst of nature (free and hassle-free). It also talks about the real identity that can be reclaimed only when one goes to the lap of nature. Man's growth with materialistic life-style made him superior and vindictive towards nature which prompted ecological sins. The paper (through the portrayal of Sampath) also tries to show how unnatural environmental crisis are on rise since the inception of man to power.

Key words: *nature, human-relationship, identity, materialistic, ecological sins.*

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Introduction:

This paper analyses Kiran Desai's *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1996) eco-critical issue, with exposed to many environmental problems and that is because of man's developing disbelief in traditional knowledge and the erosion of ethical values in his behaviour that cherish the significance and holiness of the natural world and encourage the conservation of the non-human world. Every day the newspapers report some kinds of pollutions and the damages on the earth. We are today aware of the dangerous effects of global warming and acid rain eroding the top soil. The environmental crisis today haunts mankind like night mare. It is not creating a regional problem but creating a global problem. In our planets have been damaged like land, water, air, seem to all systems. In our day to day life we find report from newspaper and social media some kinds of pollutions and the damages in the planets. Now-a-days, the pesticides contaminating food chain, the dumping of waste in ways and poisonous gases spreading villages are seen in this world. Today, we are facing of global warming and acid rain eroding the top soil. All kind of problems created a spirit of adventure in man. Most of people cut off the trees for his own purpose which is creating the global warming, melting of glaciers, soil erosion and irregular rainfall our land. Kiran Desai exposed the all kind of problems and caused over the country in her novels. The present environmental crisis is the erosion of ethical values in his behaviour that cherish the significance and outcome of our scientific, technological, economic, and culture based on western thinking and philosophy. There is a need to change this alternative ways of living. Eco-critical theory is a western thinking and philosophy. There is a need to change this alternative ways of living. Eco-critical theory is a search for such mode of living with the advent of rationalism in philosophy, renaissance, reformation, Newtonian physics, growth of technology the man became arrogant and crueller towards nature and his pride led him to commit ecological sin. Today, human beings seek to control nature for their own purposes

which are their ultimate goal of human. People believe that the whole nature permeated with the spirit of god and the same spirit is there within him also. According to Hindu mythology the earth is considered as goddess. There is a prayer in Sanskrit which all the Hindus are supposed to say this prayer every morning. The prayer is Samudhar vasane Devi, parvatasun mandle, Vishnu patni namastubhyam, Padas spars yam, ka shmasmev: In this earth is called as goddess and she reside amidst oceans has a mountain as her breast. She is called as wife of God Mahavishnu and the person who chants the prayer begs pardon from the goddess earth for touching her with the feet. But now the goddess earth is facing the eco logical crisis. Eco-criticism investigates such things as the underlying ecological values, human perception of wilderness, and how it has changed throughout history. Many writers have also written novels based on eco-criticism. Most famous among them are Salman Rushdie, Kiran Desai, and Kamala Markandeya. Kiran Desai is one of the famous writers. She portrays ecological crisis in most of her works. Her novels *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, *The Inheritance of the Loss* are examples for eco critical novels that find its remarkable place in the heart of the readers.

Eco-criticism in fact denotes the practice of studying a literary work in connection with the issue of present day environmental and ecological crises. As Oppermann mentions in one of his papers, 'Eco-criticism actually launches a call to literature to connect to the issues of today's environmental crisis' (Oppermann). Christopher Cokinos of Kansas State University, in a position paper 'What is Eco-criticism' observes eco-criticism as "the critical and pedagogical broadening of literary studies to include texts that deal with the non-human world and our relationship to it' (Cokinos 3). An Earth-centered study of a literary work is the core of Eco-criticism. Principally, it endeavors to develop a kind of ecological consciousness among human beings by studying the connections between a literary text and its environment.

In critical theory, 'the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment' (Glotfelty XVIII), is called Eco-criticism, Many contemporary Indian English novels such as Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004), Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* (2013) etc, at some level describe a condition where non-human world is taken as the other and is exploited by man. Kiran Desai's

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard is one of the finest novels dealing with ecology and its awareness. The scope of Ecology and Ecocriticism grows when there is a fair participation of human and nature:

The Routledge Dictionary of literary terms describes Ecocriticism as, “The study of literary texts with reference to the interaction between human activity and the vast range of ‘natural’ or non-human phenomena which bears upon human experience – encompassing (amongst many things) issues concerning fauna, flora, landscape, environment and weather (Childs and Fever 65).

Kiran Desai has exposed the ecological in her novels *Hullabaloo on the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss*. The novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* is practically the experience of Sampath. He is the son of Mr. Chawla and his mother Kulfi. Sampath’s suffering is twofold – not only must he live up to high expectations placed upon only sons in India, but his auspicious birth signifies he is destined for great achievements. Unfortunately for Sampath, these lofty expectations only lead to him becoming irresponsible and more disillusioned the older he grows. Sampath was leading a joyful life. He was a dreamer. His father insisted him to go for the job at post office. He was bored the job as clerk at post office and he escaped from his house and took shelter in the guava tree. In the unpolluted state the orchard seemed to be beautiful and it helped for the spiritual enlighten of a normal person. The beautiful and peaceful atmosphere of the orchard made Sampath spiritual. He became well known as tree-baba. The tree turned into religious and holy place. He gave the sermon in the guava tree. People from town worshipped Sampath raising the spirit of unfathomable wisdom. Richness of the place made him to stay there forever. His family came to stay with him in the forest. His mother cooked the birds and animals. She roamed on the hillside in search of pheasants and wild fowl to cook it. She killed the birds and animals mercilessly. In the following days the monkeys arrived in the orchard and the condition of the orchard changed. They looked at Sampath strangely. Devotees were come to worship Sampath. At once the people came with a bottle of rum at orchard which was on their way for wedding. Monkeys found bottles of rum while rifling through their bag. They drank all up. They started making noise and disturbing devotees and Sampath. Monkeys develop unquenchable taste for liquor. They grew violent leapt on each bus, scooter, and rickshaw in search of liquor.

They grew more violent and aggressive. They took all the things from the kitchen of kulfi. Two groups were formed in the orchard one to save tree-baba and one to control monkeys. But he was not ready to leave the orchard. He did not worry about the future. He carefully looked around the sounds. The monkeys created a great hullabaloo in the orchard. People ran helter-skelter and a spy came in search of Sampath who observes him vanishing from the tree. It is based on the ecological idea on the relationship between man and nature. This novel shows between the landscapes of India and America. The character Biju he tries to become the citizen of America by transplanting himself. But he did not able to survive in the different environment. The true symbol of eco-friendly stands the picture of old house and art where the people in the house can receive the nature's blessings.

Ecological crisis is well felt by Sampath. His sympathy for the monkeys of Shahkot is evident. On the other hand the novel brings forth the persisting anthropocentrism among the other characters of the novel in front of the readers. The ecological essence of the novel can be felt by two angles. First, the lush green language of the novel and Sampath's view towards the non-human reminds us of a Wordsworthian view towards the nature, that is, nature as a source of peace and tranquility. Second, the anthropocentric attitude of other characters of the novel shows how apathetic man has become towards the non-human world. In the light of an eco-critical reading, the novel very well states that Nature is still the source of the true peace; however, man is searching peace standing apart from Nature which could never lead to happiness. The language used by Kiran Desai is rich in imagery describing the pleasantness of Nature. The prevailing perturbation while the arrival of first rain in Shahkot can be experienced in these lines. The famine and lack of rainfall shows here the effect of deforestation and global warming on the society. Sampath's mother Kulfi starts to cook the wild birds in the forest for their survival. There monkeys created a great hullabaloo by drinking the rum and other alcohols bought by the devotees of sampath. The people did not able to survive even in the town later. We can find eco critical issues in *The Inheritance of the Loss*.

This pleasant essence of Nature coming from the language is apparent throughout the novel. The novel also emphasizes at the self-healing power of Nature. Nature itself corrects everything to maintain ecological balance. The earth is neither only for man nor can man

alone survive long in the absence of the non-human. Man should have a reciprocal relationship with Nature. Nature by change in climate gives a chance to everything to grow and develop. The novel describes the changes and the vitality of Nature after the rain in Shahkot; 'Soon the winged ants would be flying and lizards would grow fat on dozens of multiplying insects. . . Fungus and mould would sprout green and voluptuous and armies of mushrooms would gather in the cupboard under the sink' (Desai 12).

Human ecology in simple term is a logical study of how mankind interrelates with the home of the human species, the earth; with its soil and mineral resources; with its water, both fresh and salty; with its air, climates and weather; with its many living things, animals and planets, from the simplest to the most complex; and with the energy received ultimately from the sun (Hughes 3).

The reader can witness how the central character Sampath Chawla's feelings for nature are overwhelming quite like that of any romantic poet of the Lake. The novel expressed his desire to live in accord with Nature, his treatment of nature as a teacher and the calmness felt by him in the lap of Nature in these words, 'Oh, if he could exchange his life for there is luxury of stillness, to be able to stay with his face held towards the afternoon like a sunflower and to learn all there was to know in this orchard' (Desai 51).

Although the renaissance ended in England by the year 1660, yet globally, its central idea of 'humanism' has never been out of man's mind and his behavior, and now our present world is dealing with a distorted form of his 'humanism' i.e., anthropocentrism. For an anthropocentric, the Earth is an open place which can be exploited for the progress and development of human beings, even at the cost of each and every entity of the non-human world. Hence, Anthropocentrism can be defined as a conviction that takes human being as the most importance creature of the world. Actually, this human-centric model of life was promoted and popularized by the Greeks. The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms suggests, 'Greeks were the first to focus on 'Man-Apart' – that is humankind without reference to the physical environment in which the species subsists, as merely one element of a complex ecosystem, (Childs and Fowler 65). In the area of environmental studies, Anthropocentrism is understood as the principal reason behind the problems prevailing in the eco-system.

Currently, *Association for the study of Literature and the Environmental* (ASLE) which started in America in 1992 is an association which promotes Eco-criticism. The official website of ASLE manifests 'ASLE seeks to inspire and promote intellectual work in the environmental humanities and arts . . . committed to environmental research, education, literature, art and service, environmental justice and ecological sustainability' (ASLE). Likewise, Organization for studies in Literature- India (OSLE-India) is a forum for promoting eco-criticism, especially in India and also in other Asian countries.

It is quite interesting to note that Desai was fascinated to write an ecological study that incites her interest. She had previously heard of a story of a man who loves nature dearly and lives in nature without any tantrum. This observation of peaceful lifestyle with Mother Nature devoid of materialistic pursuit is what urges Desai to write a novel revolving around Sampath and nature:

I started with a very small idea, really. I'd read a story in *The Times of India* and heard about a character from many people, a man who was a very famous hermit in India who really did climb up a tree, who lived in a tree for many, many years until he died. He died last year I believe. So I began to wonder that it was about someone like this who would do something as extreme as to spend his life in a tree. So it started really with that character, and then the story built up around it. (Desai)

Man's selfish and materialistic motive that he is the only sophisticated creature on the globe. He is capable of using diverse natural resources for accomplishment of his economic and political goals, and social desires. However, his materialistic ravenousness has created a deteriorative effect on ecological harmony. Consequently, literature acclaimed for emulating the current issues could not stay indifferent to this perspective. The continuously increasing menace to the environment from incessant use of nature and natural resources has grabbed the interest of writers in the last decades. The consideration of the aforesaid ecological issues in writings of the eminent novelists has led to the beginning of a *de novo* literary approach, explicitly ecocriticism.

The term ecocriticism was coined by William Rueckert in 1978. The essay written by him i.e. 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism', explains the theory of ecocriticism as follows – 'the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of

literature, because ecology has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world we all live' (*The Ecocriticism Reader* 107). Rueckert's explanation of ecocriticism comprises all potential relationships that could be feasible between literature and the environmental surroundings. Some ecocritics ask how as a researcher of literature one can play a part in restoring the degrading environment beyond creating general consciousness about the imminent crisis. However, diverse theories like environmental ethics, deep ecology, ecofeminism and social ecology have come forward due to attempts of scholars to comprehend and explore the core basis of environmental deterioration, and then to devise an unconventional view of survival, which will determine a moral as well as philosophical foundation for acceptable relation with the earth.

The ecocritics want to track environmental ideas and representations wherever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place, often part-concealed, in a many cultural spaces. Most of all ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis.

Conclusion:

Eco-criticism in Desai's narrative seems to emphasize the romantic view of nature searching for the security of belonging to a place, thus highlighting the importance of the concept of globalization. This is actually used by postcolonial writers in general, who aim to reconcile experiences of dislocation: any human being as inhabitant of the global context feels the need to fulfill the desire to belong somewhere. This issue has been developed by many diasporic postcolonial writers and, as we have proven, an eco-critical approach backed up by Heidegger's notion of dwelling provides a new path towards the achievement of renewed forms of identity in the postcolonial, or rather global/ context.

Wait,' shrieked Ammaji. 'Give me that fruit. Wait! Sampath! Sampath!' But the Cinema Monkey picked up the fruit himself before anybody had time to move and, calm-eyed and wise, holding it close to his chest, with the other monkeys following in a band; he leapt from the guava tree's branches and bounded away (Desai 208).

Finally, it could be said that the interpretation of a contemporary literary work through an eco-critical lens helps western readers realize the importance of looking to different cultures, as has been shown, and reaffirms the need to (re)read postcolonial texts

in the light of new approaches that will help us recover lost universal values of existence and coexistence in the current world. Therefore, postcolonial and globalised literatures can be now recognized as an intercultural/transnational bridge.

It is evident that in the novel, Kiran Desai voices out the environmental disputes through her protagonist Sampath, who articulates his love for nature, his togetherness with nature and towards the end his empathy for the ruin of nature in the orchard. The novel also highlights the negligence of man towards nature who does not know the value of nature which has to be well-maintained and cherished. It echoes that each species has an important role to play in maintaining our ecosystem. It is a known fact that human activity is causing colossal extinctions, in spite of the increased efforts on conservation, it has not been enough. The climatic change in the Arctic region is an evidence of the rapid change in our environment which is frightening and quite daring to all the species. The Ganges pollution is another instance for the irresponsibility in preserving our nature. Thus, the eco-critical study of any work of art reflects the need of the hour and implies the requisite to take essential steps to preserve the nature in order to ensure the beings survival and progress. The fact is that wildlife is not disturbing the people but it is the people disturbing the wild life and so that it reacts against the people. People of the modern world are destroying the forests that are serving as shelter for wild animals and birds and builds' the house. He is the person who changes the forests to a concrete jungle with buildings made of cements. As the people started to capture the forests the animals started to come the cities and villages and haunt the people. The people forget to remember that wild animals are also created by the god and have got the rights to live in the earth the deforestations create a great problem over the country. The people cut off the trees for his own purpose and it creates the global warming, melting of glaciers, irregular rainfall and soil erosion as well as landslides. Kiran Desai through her novels has exposed the problems caused over the country. The only solutions for these problems are to plant trees and create awareness about afforestation among the people.

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