



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: Crossref, ROAD & Google Scholar

Socio-Cultural issues of India in Kiran Desai's Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Dr. Ankitaben Anilkumar Desai

Assistant Professor

M.N. College, Visnagar, Gujarat

Gujarat-384315.

Contact No. 9558895864

Email address: ankitadesai45@gmail.com



Abstract:

Kiran Desai is an Indian English writer who won the Bookers Prize in 2006 for her second novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). In her stories, she portrayed Indian culture and society. She also showed post-colonial India through her novels. Her novels deal with the issue of an identity crisis, alienation, migration, globalization, etc. Desai's first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* was published in 1998. It is a story of an Indian middle-class family. The story revolves around Sampath Chawla, the protagonist, and his struggle to find his identity. The present paper attempts to study the socio-cultural issues of typical Indian society in the context of this novel. It focuses on the struggle of the protagonist and the causes of his displacement to the guava orchard. It shows how a young man displaces and becomes a hermit overnight. It also shows the protagonist's attempts to escape from his family, society, and problems. Instead of facing the issues and reality of life, Sampath-the protagonist runs from it and tries to find peace in the guava orchard.

Keywords: post-colonial, culture, identity crisis, alienation, displacement.

Introduction:

Kiran Desai was born on 3rd September 1971, in New Delhi, India. She is the daughter of renowned Indian English author Anita Desai. *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) is the debut novel of Kiran Desai. She won the Betty Trask prize for her debut novel. Her novels portray global issues such as the search for identity, loneliness, and cultural conflicts. *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* is a story of a young man named Sampath Chawla. The novel is set in Shahkot, a northern town in India. Shahkot is a fictional town that is the manifestation of typical Indian society. Desai has presented a picture of post-colonial Indian society. Shahkot is a town that is traditional and slowly moving towards modernity. The novel describes severe heat waves that prevail in Shahkot and other parts of India.

Along with depicting hot summer days, Desai has given us a humorous description of Kulfi, a pregnant woman. She is the mother of Sampath Chawla. At that time, she is pregnant with Sampath. By portraying Kulfi Chawla's pregnancy, the author has tried to show the condition and problems of women, especially during this phase of life.



Socio-Cultural Issues:

Desai tries to show typical Indian society through the novel. She has portrayed the problems of the Indian middle class in this novel. The story opens with the description of pregnant Kulfi Chawla. Because of her hunger during pregnancy, she becomes the center of attraction among the town's people. Along with the hot weather of Shahkot, she becomes the topic of discussion due to her growing belly.

“Kulfi, in these months, was so enormously large, she seemed to be claiming all the Earth’s energy for herself, sapping it dry, leaving it withered, shriveled and yellow”. (Desai, 3).

The house of Mr. Chawla is a typical Indian middle-class house. For Kulfi, it's impossible to live in a pregnant condition. She is being stared at wherever she goes. People gossip about her physical appearance. Mr. Chawla, Kulfi's husband, is also worried about her health and hunger. Mr. Chawla's mother, Ammaji, arrangements for Kulfi's pregnancy are the attempts made by her to keep her daughter-in-law and her baby healthy.

Shahkot, which has been receiving severe heat, gets relief and receives rain on the day of Sampath-the protagonist's birth. So, the townspeople also believe that Sampath, who brought the rain with him, will surely do something great. The meaning of Sampath means 'good fortune'. Therefore, his birth is considered the auspicious one.

'Look! Even people in Sweden have remembered to send a birthday present. 'And: Let's name him Sampath,' they said. 'Good fortune' (12).

As Sampath grows older and older, the real problems start. As a student in school, he is not interested in studying. Sampath feels that everything becomes blank before him in the exam. Like her mother, he can imagine different shapes in the exam rather than notes. At the age of 20, he works as a post office clerk. He is dissatisfied with his life. He prefers to work outside the post office. But, because of his father's insistence, he is doing that job. Sampath's inferiority of not having a house with facilities shows his dissatisfaction and the reality of the Indian working class. Power cuts, heat waves, and noises of household chores are some common issues in Indian society that the author in this novel depicts. Though Shahkot is a fictitious town, the depiction of the routing of people makes it the real one. Desai has skillfully portrayed the markets, mornings, evenings, and nights of the Indian towns through it.



Sampath is not interested in doing the job of a post office, nor he feels lucky to have a government job. Day by day, he becomes lazy. Because of his attitude toward the position, he does not receive any promotion. He is not making any progress in economic terms. His father, a 40-year-old, hard-working man, is not happy with such an attitude from his son. Desai has shown the importance and attraction of a government job in Indian society, especially in middle-class families. Sampath, the son of a middle-class family, becomes the victim of high expectations. His father, Mr. Chawla, works in the bank and is an Indian father who makes all the effort to settle his son. He wants to make Sampath like him. For him, Sampath is a potato who sits in the same place for a whole day. At the same time, Sampath's mother is indifferent to his carrier. Ammaji, his grandmother, always tries to protect him from the anger of Mr. Chawla. She is an optimistic lady who believes that one day her grandson will do something extraordinary as per his name. She is very positive that Sampath brought the rain with his birth to Shahkot, so he will undoubtedly do something great in his life. She used to defend him by explaining that he was born with good fortune and would be a great man.

Desai has skillfully depicted the route of Sampath to the post office. She has described the routine of the market and people from almost all classes of society. Sampath spends the day just reading emails. He lives in daydreams. He talks to himself. The depiction of post-office colleagues of Sampath and their conversation gives us an accurate picture of the system. The attitude of Sampath's boss and how he orders everyone, including Sampath, to his daughter's wedding shows the Indian bureaucracy system. Sampath, because of his behavior at the boss's daughter's wedding, has been expelled from the job. Though his father is angry with him, he is indifferent to the situation. He is not interested in doing any job. He wants to remain in his thoughts, imagination, and world.

Dissatisfied with his life, Sampath leaves his home and goes to the guava orchard. He finds peace there. He wants to live in his world. A man of 20 settles on the guava orchard to find mental peace from the hullabaloo of the outer world. He always wishes to live in the orchard in his realm. Sampath's refusal to return to his family creates problems for the family. They find a solution and try to marry Sampath to a girl. The depiction of meeting Sampath with a girl for marriage purposes is an example of Indian marriage tradition. Sampath does not agree to marry and chooses to live in the orchard, part of the national forest. Rumors spread across the town; people visit Sampath in the orchard and worship him as a hermit. People come to him for the solution to problems and to listen to him. They offer Sampath fruits and other things.



Sampath also gives suggestions on which work. The strength of the devotees of Sampath increases day by day. Sampath, a jobless, aimless young man, is now solving people's problems.

As the name suggests, Sampath-'good fortune' seems to be true. Sampath Chawla, a young man of 20 who cannot achieve anything extraordinary as a common man becomes a hermit and solves the problems of people. He lives on the tree and enjoys the status of a hermit. People offer him sweets, fruits, medicine, etc. It is interesting to note that the label of hermit also changes the attitude of Sampath's family. His father, who believes his son is useless, settles down with his family at the orchard. He thinks a hermit can earn more than a clerk in the post office.

On the other hand, Sampath is not interested in enjoying hermit status. He is enjoying his life in the orchard. He is living his dream life. He still wishes to live far from the chaos and hullabaloo.

Conclusion

Sampath Chawla, a young man who fails to fulfill his family's expectations, leaves his home and becomes a hermit. Through the story of Sampath, Desai has portrayed the social and cultural issues of the Indian middle class. Sampath Chawla is the representative of all those young men of the Indian middle class who fails to achieve their dreams and find solace in becoming a hermit.



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: Crossref, ROAD & Google Scholar

References:

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York. Routledge, 1994 Print.

Dash, Bipin Bihari. A Critical Study on Themes and Techniques of Kiran Desai's Fictions. *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*. Vol II, Issue V, Sept.2014.

Desai, Kiran. *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998 Print.

-----*The Inheritance of Loss*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2006 Print.