

Alienation in KiranDesai’s Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard and The Inheritance of Loss



M.Arunadevi, M.Thamizhmani,
M.Phil. Student^{#1}, Research supervisor^{#2}
Department of English
PRIST University, Thanjavur Campus, India

ABSTRACT

This article is going to explain the theme of Alienation in the novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of loss*. In these novels, characters are alienated because of their family situation. Their pathetic conditions and sufferings are well expressed in this article. Through this novel Desai vividly expounds the problem of the common people. It brings out a pictorial picture of the mental sufferings which the people undergo.

Keywords: Alienation, Immigration, Desai, Indian, Indifferent

I. INTRODUCTION

Kiran Desai is one of the most talented writers of her generation. She is the daughter of well-known author Anita Desai. Kiran Desai left Columbia University for several years to write her first novel *Hullabaloo in theGuava Orchard*. She took Seven years to complete her second novel *The Inheritanceof Loss*. She won the man Booker’s prize for her novel *The Inheritance of Loss*.

Alienation in Kiran Desai’s *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and*The Inheritance ofLoss*

Alienation and Immigration are the main themes of Kiran Desai’s novels. The theme of alienation has been recurrent in the Indian English fiction. *Hullabaloo in theGuava Orchard* (1997)depicts the sense of alienation and unhappiness in life. Each of the major characters the protagonist Sampath Chawla, his father Mr.R.K.Chawla his mother Kulfi, and his sister Pinky suffer from alienation, isolation and loneliness. All are alienated and

isolated not only because of their distress in life but also of their inability to understand and respond to one another. The treatment of these character’s show Desai’s interest in complex, disturbed and alienated personalities.

The protagonist of the novel, Sampath Chawla is an alienated and self-estranged person who has little sense of a meaning in life. He feels disconnected and fragmented. He is often scolded by his father, Mr.R.K.Chawla (a clerk in local Reserve Bank). Chawla is a opportunistic Indian and wants a change in the nonchalant attitude of his son. Sampath has a large brown birthmark on his face.

Sampath’ssense of alienation is more aggravated when all his classmates got job. “even the ones with report cards that were just like his” (Desai, HGO 23). This was only sampath that left idle. “in the tea stalls and singing to himself in the public gardens” (Desai HGO 23). Mr. Chawla manages a government job as a clerk in the local post office for his son. But sampath performs miserably at his job as a mailsorter. He is a nonchalant, mad person as an employee and feels claustrophobic in human company. He spends his days in the post office by opening private letters and involving the lives of the villages. He feels suffocated in the environment and longs for freedom. His disassociation from his family members and society forms a state of alienation and he feels lonely and rootless. Frustration overpowers him when sampath loses his job in the post office after performing cross – dressing at the wedding of his boss’s daughter.

Through Sampath hated his job anyway that loss is a big blow to him. He loses his job. His sense of alienation developed into “a never – ending flow of misery. It was a prison he had born into” (Desai, HGO 43). On being fired from his post on account of rukus he create at the wedding, Sampath decides to settle down in abandoned orchard far from the village with an urge to alienate himself from society. He runs away from his hometoo. His resolution to isolate himself from the life is a bold step to cope up with the feeling of alienation. Sampath’s existential dilemma is that he thinks differently from everyone else.

Desai’s Sampath is the best example of alienated people who are suffering from mental illness or can be read symbolically as the imprisoned citizen in a harsh, capitalist society. This is evident from the self-reliant mannerism of both the characters. At first his family and townfolk thought that Sampath had gone mad when his family came to know about his presence through the headlines of local news papers “Post-office clerk climbs tree” (Desai, HGO 67) reached the place to take him back to town. Sampath was not convinced and dclared that he is happy in the present place, “I am adopting a simple way of life. From now on I have no relatives” (Desai HGO 54), and Mr. Chawla was compelled to fix a cot onto the tree. His habit of stealthily rcading others’ mails in the post-office provided him with an opportunity to behave like a saint who could reveal the personal details of others like a fortune teller. At one point Sampath asks Mr. Singh Ji, the brothers-in-law of a neighbor in Shakhot, “Is your jewellery still safely buried beneath the tulsi pant?” (Desai, HGO 65).

Eventually, Sampath’s flight from society due to his alienation is thrust back into the sea of humanity, but this time crating a hullabaloo like never before. Sampath answers the questions of devotees as if he had been a great scholar with excellent reading and knowledge. Sampath had an aura around him. Each word of his speech reflected deep meaning and was taken as a wise suggestion. His

answers were interpreted symbolically concerning the secret life of devotees as if he had been their master, friend, philosopher and guide. At one occasion, a lady, worried about the bad company of her son sought his advices. Sampath replied in an exceptionally sociable manner “Add lemons to milk and it will grow sour” (Deasi, HGO 74). His mythicdal sentences were inspiring and they drew people “moth will go to the lantern” (Desai HGO 76). Sampath’s exile provides him a prestigious identity both in society and family.

Mr.Chawla’s sense of alienation became quite acute when he feared that all his wishes will be shattered soon. The fact that he cannot control the forces of nature confused him completely. His temporary happiness shattered, as the monkeys disrupted his plans. He tries to get rid of monkeys, a solution that even the District collector finally agrees to implement. He never brothers to ask his son what he would like to do; He decides what is best for his family’s name, disregarding everything else. Mr.Chawla is both smart and stupid and he knows how to overcome alienation, but at the same time, alienation is his destiny and he cannot avoid it. It is evident that Mr.Chawla, throughout the course of novel, pursues this dreams, trying to fulfil his own desires through the momentary success of his son.

Sampath’s sister, Pinky, also experience the same sense of alienation, as she tries hard to achieve social ties but feels as an outsider in the community, She is unable to find a shared interest and finally lead an insignificant life of meaninglessness. She lacks moral strength. The primary cause of her alienation is a feeling of estrangement from the social norms. She goes through a transformation and then returns to her original state of thought. She is transformed by love, but when that love of hers goes awry, the thoughts ingrained in her head by her father and grandmother about class and society immediately return. One day in the bazaar, she fell in love with the ice cream – seller. However, she falls in love with him while wearing=

a drab uniform that her father had forced her to wear, and upon returning home, she bursts into tears:

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard is too serene to touch on riots. The characters in the novel seem suffocated, alienated, indifferent, divided and unfriendly. When Sampath feels cornered at the novel's end, he pukes on his cot, and then, like the fabled Indian performing his rope trick, he vanishes into thin air. His mother Kulfi keeps on cooking and is bent upon completing her quest to find a monkey to put in her pot.

Thus, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* reflects the problem of alienation, search for identity, turmoil in relations, isolation from society. Desai seems mature enough to explore her characters' sense of alienation within and beyond the sordid world all around them. Everyone finds himself or herself eventually alienated and separated even barred in the hostile and confining environment.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai tells the story of Sai who lives with her grandfather Jemubhai, a retired judge, in Kalimpong on the Indian side of the Himalayas and in the foot hills of Mount Kanchenjunga. At the same time, Desai reveals the life of Biju, the cook's son in the judge's household, who works as an illegal immigrant in New York. The novel provides vivid descriptions of multicultural societies and alienated individuals living in them. The two Bengali sisters Lola and Noni yearn for their past, and both are presented as frail human beings in search for love and happiness. Furthermore, the character of Gyan in the novel introduces the reader to some of the history of Nepal.

This is the place where Sai's sense of alienation, separation is confirmed. Her cultural alienation comes to light when she experienced identity problems in postcolonial India. It also confirms the difference in class between the privileged Indians who are influenced by the West and the others. Naturally, Sai's background and surroundings influence her life and personality. When Sai

was only sixteen, she met a young student of accounting, a descendent of a Nepali Gorkha merchant. Gyan is employed by her grandfather to teach her Science and Maths. Sai attempts to remove her feeling of alienation by loving her young Mathematics tutor Gyan. This love affair helped her to cope up with her alienated feelings. Jemu's granddaughter Sai, who suffers from cultural alienation she was sent in a convent school after her parents (whom author does not give names) were killed in a traffic accident in Russia. Sai is sent to Kalimpong with "a visiting nun who was studying convent finance systems, on her way now to Darjeeling" (Desai 28). It is pathetic to note that nuns send an eight-year-old girl all alone in a taxi on a dark evening.

The illegal immigrants have no rights in the American society, and they have to accept the jobs, the pay and the poor lodgings and facilities which are offered to them. In order to keep their jobs, they must never complain or disagree. They have to be in the alienation. Hiring undocumented labour is beneficial to the owners and managers, as workers from the Third World are low-cost labour.

The racial difference does not make one race superior and the other inferior, it does not make one forward and the other backward; it does not make one naturally privileged and the other deprived. It is only a man's personal thought based on his personal profit and loss, which produces radicalization and makes racial discrimination an inner fact of nature. (Singh 16)

This novel exposes the theme of alienation. Each character is deliberately trapped in the culture of another country. The major characters such as Sai and Biju are totally alienated from their own culture and language. It is the story of longing and belonging. After a long period of pain and humiliation Biju books his return ticket. He

determines nothing but his own soil make him happy in an alien world. With the help of Mr.Kakkar at the Shangri – la travel agency. He has taken a ticket and purchased the things which he dreamed of.

Migration creates the desire for home, which in turn produces the rewriting of home. Homesickness or homelessness, the rejection of home or the longing for home become motivating factors in this rewriting. Home can only have meaning once on experiences a level of displacement from it. (Shameem 51)

Desai gives a very poignant as well as caustic account of the judge's emotions while delving deep into the psychological explanations for the judge's uncanny behavior. She elucidates that though he had much love for his people within his heart, he always felt uncomfortable about their being uneducated and being up-to-date. He was basically a weak and mentally insecure person who lacked the will to assert his own self. Therefore, instead of holding on to his own individuality and convictions, he rather chooses to embrace an alien culture and thus, subsequently lost his own self completely.

II. CONCLUSION

Alienation brings happiness to Sampath in the novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. He finds solace there in the Guava orchard. He wants to escape from the regular life and responsibilities. He wants a tension free life. Whereas in the novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, Biju struggles because of alienation. He cannot find a better job as a illegal immigrant. He does not have a Green card. His salary is very little. He strives hard to survive. He bears all those things because of his family situation.

III. REFERENCES

- Desai, Kiran. *The Inheritance of Loss*. Canada: Penguin Books, 2006. Print.
- . *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998. Print.
- Shameen, A. "Post-Colonial Intervention of Cultural Hybridity of the Diaspora as Portrayed in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*." *The Journal of Indian Writing in English* 35.1 (2007): 49-53. Print.
- Singh, Vipin Kumar. "Racial Discrimination in KiranDeai's *The Inheritance of Loss*: A Post Colonial Study." *Contemporary Vibes* 2.8 Sep (2007): 14-16. Print.