

**Kiran Desai's *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*: A study of its characters  
association with nature**

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**Monika chahal**

Research scholar

Department- English, Baba Mastnath University, Asthal Bohar, Rohtak

Research guide: Dr J.K.Sharma (Professor & Head of Department)

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**Abstract**

The present research paper is an attempt to evaluate Kiran Desai's first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. The novel was bestowed with the Betty Trask Award in 1998, the same year it was published. The writer gets the idea of the story from *Times of India* newspaper about the real-life incident of a famous hermit, Kapila Pradhan who climbed up the tree and lived there for fifteen years. The narrative circle around the Chawla family comprising Ammaji the head of the family, Mr Chawla his son, Kulfi her daughter-in-law, Sampath Chawla the protagonist and his grandson and Pinky the daughter of Chawla family. The novel is set in a small town of Shahkot, proclaiming how some individual are dissatisfied with one's life even after suitable fortune and how some find sheer solace in the lap of nature away from materialistic things and world.

**Keywords:** Hermit, Climbed, Nature, Fortune, Materialistic.

**Introduction**

The narrative voices of the thought-provoking human and non-human claims on the natural resources for existence and its effect on environment as well as on living beings. In *the Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* nature does not assist as an outline, but as a lively force and as a place of shelter where certain characters in the novel find meaning of their existence and feel alive and contented. The common components of the story, the natural environment and the characters in the story make it a fine example of nature writing.

The story of Sampath is the tale of a young man who is uncomfortable and unhappy with the modern world. It emphasizes on the life of an individual who tries to explore the possibilities of maturity of life. The story foregrounds the significant issue of climate change. Mr. Chawla while reading the newspaper tells that the highest temperature in the country was recorded in Shahkot and the country faces the terrible famine. During such situation people proposes various proposals such as frog wedding, growing of vegetation in elaborate pattern to

invite rain but despite all these attempts nature maintains its supremacy. The high temperature in the city affects everyone and everything including humans, plants and animals. The situation has reached such a point that the Red-Cross Society has to set up a relief camp in Shahkot. People were suffering at such extent that:

“In the market place, they raided the shops for the palm leaf fans and bought grey blocks of ice that smoked like small fires. They rested their heads against the coolness of melons before cutting them, held glasses against cheeks and foreheads between sips, fanned themselves at the stove with bunches of spinach before letting go reluctantly, for the sake of evening meal. The weeks passed, but the monsoon did not arrive”. (HGO 3)

It is during these difficult times of the delay in monsoon rains that Sampath the protagonist was born. Sampath's birth along with rain brought relief and solace for the people of Shahkot. Therefore, he was considered as a blessed soul whose birth accompanied rain in such warm weather. The rain brought immense relief for the Shahkotians in general and Kulfi in particular. Kulfi other than Sampath is the only character in the novel who is connected with nature and find consolation in the lap of nature than materialistic things. Kulfi is always lost in her own world of imagination where she imagines various food, plants, creepers which she has never seen and give vent to her feelings on walls through painting.

Sampath like his mother Kulfi is always lost in his own world he feels captured and confined in the materialistic life. He grows up as an ambitionless youth who is able to grab the job of a clerk through the influence of his father. Sampath is always a butt of laughter among his office colleagues and friends. When Sampath become restless of the monotonous life he runs to the rooftop to seek comfort watching the starry night sky. He imagines the cold and clean atmosphere of Switzerland and looks for relief from the heat at Shahkot. Both mother and son are at their best in the company of nature. The incidence of indecent exposure at his boss daughter's wedding expelled him from his job and ultimately lands him in the lap of nature when Kulfi gave him a cool and green guava. This calmness and coolness of guava under Sampath's fingertip filled him with tranquility. Thus, Sampath breaks all societal barriers and ran away from the hullabaloo of the town and settled in the guava orchard on guava trees:

“Concealed in the branches of the tree he had climbed, Sampath 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 a 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". (HGO 50)

In the new abode Sampath lives a life of peace and contentment in the company of nature. But Chawla family felt embarrassed and humiliated when they discovered Sampath's act of accommodation in the orchard, they tried their level best to bring him down from the guava tree but all in vain. While all other member of the family was against his will, it was Kulfi his mother who stands by him and appreciates his decision. Mr. Chawla his father even called doctor to examine Sampath as he thought his son has gone mad, but the doctor declared Sampath healthy without any sign of madness, some suggest to arrange marriage for him, but all efforts turn out futile as Sampath notify them not to interfere in his life as he is determined not to leave the orchard.

The news of his settlement spread like fire through a local newspaper. Sampath who is considered useless in all aspects is now attained the status of a sage. He starts getting visitors who enjoy listening his sermons but the arrival of so many visitors ultimately destroyed the peace of the place. Mr. Chawla who considered his son a lazy and useless youth, finds him a good prospect for the family. He attempts to make all efforts to attract as many visitors to the orchard in order to extract maximum commercial benefit from his son's strange unification with nature. He made all the preparation for the comfortable stay of his family in the orchard by adjoining a kitchen and bathroom. A cot is fitted on the tree for Sampath, the supply of water and electricity is provided, the path from the road to the orchard is paved for the visitors after cutting the wild grass and bushes. But Mr. Chawla's endeavour of making money out of Sampath's stay in the orchard besides human intervention with all materialistic possessions destroyed the natural beauty of the place.

Kulfi along with Sampath undergoes a transformation when come in contact with nature. She developed her passion for food using ingredients taken from wild environment brings out her inherent compassion to nature. She cooks only for Sampath, who, she believes is her only true judge. The diversity of flora and fauna in the orchard makes her a majestic cook. She strolls in the deep woods for collecting different herbs for her son's meal. She is always seen experimenting in cooking and searching unique food items. Every member of the family is happy in the orchard, while Sampath is enjoying his new individuality and bond with nature, Mr. Chawla is busy in commercial gain.

But with the arrival of Cinema Monkeys Mr. Chawla's plan get disturbed, as the monkeys created chaos in the orchard and scared the visitors and pinky. Sampath very affectionately reacts to their arrival and established an unusual bond with them and soon both enjoyed each other's company. Though Sampath and his devotees are content at the coming of the monkeys who do not threaten anyone, yet Mr. Chawla, Kulfi and Pinky get troubled. Mr.

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Chawla is concerned because of the monkeys who eat all the offerings by the devotees. But the situation become out of control when the monkeys, under the influence of liquor brought by a devotee, play havoc in the orchard. Realizing the threat to the safety of Sampath and his devotees Mr.Chawla decided to shift him at a safer place but Sampath refused to go anywhere. Ultimately Mr. Chawla seeks help from the government agencies to eradicate the monkeys from the orchard.

Sampath was never in encouragement of any such plan of his father to remove monkeys from the orchard. But Mr. Chawla, Chief Medical Officer, the Brigadier, Vermaji and the Superintendent of Police all wait for the arrival of the District Collector so that their suggestion for the removal of the monkeys may be accepted. Verma ji suggests a display of Cinema Monkey's carcass in the orchard to disseminate the entire group of monkeys. The Brigadier, who always intensely waits for the elusive green pigeon, recommends that they should organize a firing squad whereby fifty or hundred men will be spread throughout the confrontation, discharging their rifles every twenty to forty minutes to scare the monkeys. The Chief Medical Officer who himself remains sick, suggests to call off the liquor licenses of all shops and restaurants and to ban alcohol in Shahkot. However, the Monkey Protection Society, businessmen and shopkeepers did not agree to such suggestions. The District Collector gives approval to Mr. Chawla's proposal of training the police and army as monkey catchers. He recommends to catch all the monkeys in one go and to transfer them to a far-off forest in another state where they can continue their life. It is resolved that Sampath should come down the tree so that he may not get injured. Sampath speculates the danger in coming down the tree. When he looks down from the tree, he sees an ugly face of humanity.

Sampath regrets the transformation done in the orchard due to his popularity. He wails that ultimately the orchard has become what Shahkot is a lot of noise, lot of people, mess, garbage, advertisement banners on trees and all these are now terrifying him and his orchard. Thus, Sampath once again resolves to seek refuge in the lap of nature where there is no modernization and civilization. He is not ready to compromise either his blissful state or his lovable company of the monkeys at any cost. When the army reaches the guava tree, they discover a laughing Buddha shaped Guava with a brown mark on it that look like Sampath's birth mark. The Cinema Monkey picks it up and climbs higher and higher in the mountains. Sampath had transformed himself into thin air and had become an integral part of nature, thus leaving behind the civilized life of man.

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