



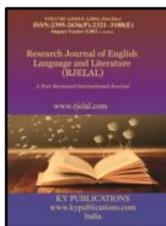
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SHIFTING PARADIGM IN INDIAN WRITINGS IN ENGLISH FROM ECOFEMINISM TO
ECOCENTRICISM WITH REFERENCE TO KAMALA MARKANDAYA'S "NECTAR IN A SIEVE"
AND KIRAN DESAI'S "HULLABALOO IN THE GUAVA ORCHARD"

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ABSTRACT

Indian Women fiction writers have been portraying the political- societal issues in their writings. With each era the situations changed and so were the consequences. This paper has dealt with the interesting transition of thought process of various philosophers with regard to ecology and the reflection of these theories in the works of women fiction writers. Kamala Markandaya's novel 'Nectar in a Sieve' talks about the oppression of Women and Nature alike – the setting was in 1954 whereas Kiran Desai's 'Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard' has totally different setting and it talks about the ill effects of corrupting Nature. Here we have a woman writing about the plight of a man in the backdrop of Nature. Both 'Ecofeminism' and 'Ecocentricism' have been examined respectively in both these novels.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Ecocentricism, Ecology and Environment.

Ecology has always played a pivotal role in the Indian psyche since time immemorial. Indian cultural generally and the Hindu religion particularly worships tree, animals, birds, plants and celestial bodies because Nature is believed to help mankind in sustaining and imparting equilibrium. Nature is also seen as symbol of fertility and growth which is important to carry on with life on this planet. There are instances that women are seen as epitome of fertility too.

'Ecofeminism' was first coined by Francois d' Eaubonne in her book 'Le FeminismeOu la Mort' (1974) where she relates the subordinate groups (women ,people of color,the poor)to the oppression of nature. There is a big difference between Western and Indian perspective regarding the 'Ecofeminism'; according to the Western thought process Ecology stands for development, progress

and globalization whereas for East it denotes existence and sustainability.

The Indian eco activist and literary personality Vanadana Shiva in her book '**Staying alive: Women, ecology and development**' has clearly underlined the connect between women and Nature for the fulfillment of their daily needs. But unfortunately the capital reduction paradigm fails to recognize this fact. She give illustrations from the "Chipko Movement" wherein the feelings and thoughts of women about Nature were clearly reflected in the folk song which was also the war cry during the movement-

"Embrace our trees,
Save them from being felled,
The property of our Hills,
Save it from being looted"

According to her the concept of eco feminism revolves around the exploitation of Nature

on one hand and inferior portrayal of women on other hand. The society is patriarchal where men were the stronger sex. Incidentally men were shown to be closer to culture which unconditionally gives more power to the them. In the due course the women were ill-treated while Nature was exploited hence both had same fate.

But with changing thought patterns of eco feminism, there was another thinker who came to the fore front, she is Beena Agarwal, who is another representative of Indian ecofeminism, with a perspective different from that of Shiva's. According to Agrawal, women cannot be considered a homogeneous group, differing on the basis of class, race, culture, and caste.

She argues that gender domination cannot be isolated as the sole cause of the degradation of women and nature, without attending to the political, social, and economic factors inherent in domination. Further, ideological shifts and the disparities, that are prevalent in Indian society, have aggravated the existing problems.

Agrawal thinks that ecofeminism is inadequate because it ideologically constructs relationships between gender and nature, which become part of a structure that cannot be considered whole. This limitation has given a platform to Beena Agrawal to come up with an alternative theoretical formulation to ecofeminism, which she terms as 'Feminist Environmentalism.' In this perspective, a male and female relationship with nature is rooted in material reality. She also believes that gender division and labour division has adversely affected the tribal and people dependent on ecology, they could be both men as well as women.

Chayya Dutta, a leading feminist activist and founding member of "Forum against Rape" and "Stree Mukti Sanghata" (Women's Liberation Organization), tries to develop, in her work titled *Ecofeminism Revisited* (2011), an alternative development model which is opposed to market-oriented capitalism. Focusing on decentralization of power, the local production system, and subsistence practices, she especially addresses the problems of rural women whose livelihood depends upon natural resources. Further, she aims to create

awareness for environmental destruction by introducing on a substantially alternative development agenda.

With all the above theories, this paper will delve upon on the thought process of Kamala Markandaya's "Nectar in a Sieve" which was published in 1954. This novel falls in the genre of classical pastoral. Nature here is not just a back drop but a full scale character. Due to establishment of tannery in the village, the lives of village people, especially women, get disrupted and pastoral land is destroyed.

This paper will examine this Indian English novel on the basis of two fundamental premises of ecofeminism: on the one hand, the idea that a patriarchal conception of modern development is the root cause of the exploitation of women and on the other hand, the positioning of women as saviors of nature, due to a correlation drawn between the two. In this novel, Markandaya tries to link the introduction of the tannery in the village to two groups of men of different provenance, the first of which oversees, foremen, and workers, and the second constituted by landowners, represented, for example, by *Zamindari*. The system under which *Zamindari* held land and on which they collect tax from peasants whom they have given for cultivation. View all notes such as Shivaji, and merchants, traders, shopkeepers, and moneylenders, known as the *Savakari*. It means merchants, traders, shopkeepers, and moneylenders. View all notes, represented in turn by the money lender Biswas and the grocer Hanumanta.

Men are the epitome and symbol of modernization and development. The construction of the tannery starts under the supervision of the overseer and the white men. Markandaya's purpose is to depict the idyllic life of the village which is desecrated by the introduction of the tannery. Before the introduction of the tannery, the village was calm and serene, with bountiful flora and fauna, and the major occupation of the villagers was agriculture. Over the two-month period of tannery construction, there is a continuous overflow of bullock-carts laden with bricks, stones, cement, sheets of tin, corrugated iron, coils of rope and

hemp. Further, the kilns in neighboring villages which keep burning the bricks are unable to meet the demand of the construction of the tannery.

As the "evil" of development is introduced into the village by disturbing its agrarian culture, the villagers are forced to work on the project of the construction of the tannery. In excitement over the new construction, the young boy Arjun aptly suggests, "They are pulling down houses around the maiden and there is a long line of bullock carts carrying bricks" *Nectar in a sieve*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. [p. 27].

The second important feature of patriarchy is represented by the landowning *Zamindari*, portrayed in the novel through Sivaji, the proprietor who leases his land to peasants Rukmani and Nathan, who are the tillers of the Shivaji's land. Though Sivaji accompanies Nathan and Rukmani in their rough phases, he sells the land to the tannery for a profitable price. He is thus not bothered over the livelihood of Nathan and Rukmani, who have worked on the land for more than thirty years. The villagers are struggling hard to survive. The fields have consumed all their labor, and all that lies before them in the end are worthless heaps of dried hay on account of nature's fury. The pathetic condition of landless people is that they received no concessions in paying their dues to their landowner and are left with nothing; their only hope is to wait for another crop. This shows that patriarchal culture mars agrarian culture, which is represented by third world peasants like Rukmani. Regardless of more than thirty years' association with the land as their own child, everything that Rukmani and Nathan held is effaced by Sivaji.

The landowner appears one day and declares that the land is to be sold to the tannery and has to be vacated within two weeks; this inhuman patriarchal attitude is received as follows by Nathan, "The land is to be sold. We are to move. Sivaji came this morning. He says there is nothing to be done. The tannery owners are buying the land. They pay good prices" Markandaya, K. (1954). *Nectar in a sieve*. New Delhi: Penguin Books,(p. 134). The tannery not only

grabs the livelihood of the people, but also mars the ecology and environment of the village.

Additionally, villagers are exploited during their hard times by moneylenders, such as Hanumanta and Biswas. Indifferent to villagers, shopkeeper Hanumanta is very harsh towards Rukmani, claiming, "You have come for rice. They all come for rice. I have none to sell, only enough for my wife and children. Are you not growers of it? Why then do you come to me?" Markandaya, K. (1954). *Nectar in a sieve*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. (p. 45).

Then, Rukmani goes to Biswas to buy rice; he too is very indifferent to villagers, exploiting them at his content. He fleeces the villagers and says,

"Take it or leave it. I can get double that sum from the tanners, but because I know you" Markandaya, K. (1954). *Nectar in a sieve*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, (p. 45).

This attitude shows how he is unconcerned with the villagers' plight, immune to the fact that the tannery has changed everyone's attitude in the village.

Nevertheless, the introduction of the tannery impacts on the villagers' lives at different levels. First, *bazaar* prices of daily commodities soar very high, with common people being unable to afford their daily needs. Secondly, the small scale businessmen are wiped out because of the bigger shops. The agrarian culture and the small scale shopkeepers' condition steadily and gradually deteriorate by the slow sprawl and spread of the flourishing tentacles of the tannery, which in the end swallows the serene pastoral land of the village.

The tannery goes on working day and night. Markandaya states, "A never-ending line of carts brought the raw material in thousands of skins, goat, calf, lizard, and snake skins—and took them away again tanned, dyed and finished" Markandaya, K. (1954). *Nectar in a sieve*. New Delhi: Penguin Books,(p. 49).

Further, the pastoral land is encroached by the construction of a little colony for the higher officers and workers, in between the town and the open country, of "brick cottages with whitewashed walls and red-tiled

roofs" Markandaya, K. (1954). *Nectar in a sieve*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, pp.(49–50).

As such, Markandaya probes two contrasting types of lifestyle. On the one hand, the introduction of the concrete buildings in a serene landscape and, on the other hand, constructions meant for peasants, typical huts with thatched roofs and mudwalls.

Third, the tannery changes the attitude of the young generation, as they no longer want to continue their ancestral profession of tilling the land; rather, they wish to earn easy money by working in the tannery. Rukmani's sons—Arjun, Thambi, and Raja—have not, for instance, shown any inclination to the cultivation of the land; instead they would like to join the tannery. In response to Arjun's decision to join the tannery, Rukmini expresses her contention and remorse, "You are young, besides, you are not of the caste of tanners. What will our relations say?" (Markandaya, K. (1954). *Nectar in a sieve*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. ,(p. 53).

The tannery not only engulfs the agrarian culture but also creates fractured identity among the younger generation. Due to insufficient food, first Arjun and next Thambi—two sons of Rukmini—join the tannery and later go to Ceylon to work on plantations. On the other hand, Raja—another of Rukmani's sons who too joined the tannery—is caught in a theft in the tannery and loses his life. This adds further to the woes of Rukmani's already devastated life.

Fourth, the tannery denotes the indirect effect of the modern development attitude, leading to problems such as global warming, on the age-old agrarian profession and on the environment. Here, it is very appropriate to relate Carolyn Merchant's conflation of "technology innovation, the spread of the capitalist market, *the scientific revolution*, and changing attitudes towards nature and the earth" Merchant, C. (1980). *The death of nature: Women, ecology and the revolution*. New York, NY: HarperCollins., p. 43; emphasis added). Indeed, once peaceful and calm, Rukmani's life changes into that of hunger and suffering:

The drought continued until we lost control of the time. Day after day the pitiless sun blazed

down, scorching whatever still struggled to grow and baking the earth hard until at last it split and irregular fissures gaped in the land. Plants died and the grasses rotted, cattle and sheep crept to the river that was no more and perished there for lack of water, lizards and squirrels lay prone and gasping in the blistering sunlight. Markandaya, K. (1954). *Nectar in a sieve*. New Delhi: Penguin Books,(p. 79)

Markandaya, further, wanted to project the ugly transition of the simple, traditional, pastoral, idyllic village into the crowded noisy town. The birth of a town in the village entirely changes the scene of the village and the lifestyle of the villagers, who just experience destruction, frustration, and long-lasting poverty:

Not in the town, where all that was natural had long been sacrificed, but on its outskirts, one could still see the passing of the seasons. For in the town there were the crowds, and streets battened down upon the earth, and the filth that men had put upon it; and one walked with care for what might lie beneath one's feet or threaten from before or behind; and in this preoccupation forgot to look at the sun or the stars, or even to observe they had changed their setting in the sky: and knew nothing of the passage of time save in dry frenzy, by looking at a clock. Markandaya, K. (1954). *Nectar in a sieve*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. , p. 117)

The emergence of the tannery in the setting of the village changes the face of the village beyond recognition as well as alters the lives of many people. Although many are able to survive successfully, many more fall victim to the tannery and lose their lives in the clutches of this modern juggernaut. The tannery brings only resentment and resignation to the lives of villagers because their sons and daughters are allured into the tannery, ultimately losing their rural lifestyle.

Fifth, due to hunger and loss of traditional modes of work, many of the peasant women are compelled to take up prostitution. Kunthi, Rukmani's neighbor, for example, starts the business of prostitution to fulfil the hunger of her belly as well as that of her family, as Markandaya very minutely extrapolates:

I thought of Kunthi as I had once seen her, with painted mouth and scented thighs that had held so many men, and I wondered if after all these years he had not at last found about her. Perhaps the truth has been forced upon him, I thought, looking at her with suspension, and I gazed upon that ravaged beauty. Markandaya, K. (1954). *Nectar in a sieve*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. , p. 84)

The throng of men have spoiled women's chastity. Not only Kunthi but even Ira, daughter of Rukmani, who is abandoned by her husband because of her barrenness, could not bear her grim, dull, dark, hopeless future, nor the unending hunger and starvation of her younger brother, and slowly turned her mind to prostitution. Once Ira was a decent and obedient girl but now she is ready to sell her body at the cost of one rupee per day in order to save her brother Kutti, who is lying hopelessly on his deathbed. The tannery has not only marred the village pastoral land and agrarian culture but also ruptured moral values.

The novel confirms the viewpoints of most of the renowned ecofeminists that women are invested with a mission to save and nurture nature. Chris Cuomo, an American ecofeminist, observes, "Environmental ethics can benefit by incorporating feminist insights on the limitations of traditional philosophical conceptions of ethics" Cuomo, C. (1998). *Feminism and ecological communities*. London: Routledge Publication. , p. i). This key feature of ecofeminism can be studied through Rukmani, the principal protagonist of the novel who, as representative of the third world woman peasant, is very much associated with nature.

Women writers were constantly writing about society and its gradual transition. In the same way new theories were constantly coming up. If Kamala Markandaya explored eco feminism ,Kiran Desai comes up with her novel which can be put into the genre of ecocriticism.

Ecocriticism, also known as 'literary ecology' or 'green' literary studies, is a field of environmental movement that emerged in the late twentieth century as a somewhat deferred reaction in Humanities especially in the 1960s and 1970s. It is an interdisciplinary study

of Ecology and Literary Criticism which is unusual as a combination of a natural science and by analogy, Ecocriticism is concerned with the relationships between literature and environment or how man's relationship with his physical environment is reflected in literature.

The first definition is to be found in the 'Introduction' to *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996), an important anthology of American ecocriticism-

What then is ecocriticism? Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies.

Ecocriticism is, then, an avowedly subjective way of study, as its comparison with Feminism and Marxism propounds. Ecocritics usually tie their cultural analysis explicitly to a 'green' moral and political agenda. In this respect, ecocriticism is closely related to environmentally oriented developments in philosophy and political theory. Developing the insights of earlier critical movements, ecofeminists, social ecologists and environmental justice advocates seek a synthesis of environmental and social concerns.

This paper assesses Kiran Desai's debut novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* with an aim to read it from the perspective of ecocriticism. From a thematic point of view, the novel is an engrossing one, where the elements like satire, hilarity, absurdity, comical appearance of the characters enormously set the milieu and the idiocy of human beings.

The novel is comprised mostly of eccentric characters: Sampath (the anti-heroic protagonist), Sampath's mother Kulfi, Sampath's sister Pinky, Sampath's father Mr. R.K. Chawla, and his grandmother Ammaji. Apart from Sampath's family members, there are minor characters like the Hungry hop boy, CMO, District Magistrate, Mr. Gupta, Miss Jyotsna, and the Brigadier. The

monkeys, as animal characters in the novel, play a very vital role.

This fictional tale revolves round an uninteresting, hilarious funny incident of an apparently stupid, moron's detestation of mundane routine bound tasks and a frantic search for escapism.

Though this search is not as poetical as Keats' 'Ode to the Nightingale', where the pangs of the poet is scripted thus, 'Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget/ what thou among the leaves hast never known/the weariness, the fever, and the fret/ Here, where men sit and hear each other groan' (21-24) but Sampath's flight is a very prosaic one. Hating the boredom of a clerical job in the Post office, one day he flees off and chooses an antic guava orchard as his abode. The twist-in-tale begins from there. Sampath's settlement in the guava orchard is apparently an erratic decision, but the family members of Sampath make an attempt to give this apparent stupid decision a whole new dimension.

This sort of rumour, reporting several causes behind that utter dryness, is the specifically set backdrop against which the novel begins. The setting of the story is in a small town, Shahkot where the weather is intolerably hot. Many people suggest offering a variety of probable solutions:

Mr. Chawla himself submitted a proposal to the forestry department for the cutting and growing of vegetation in elaborate patterns; the army proposed the scattering and driving of clouds by jet planes flying in special geometric formation; the police a frog wedding to be performed by temple priests. Vermaji of the university invented a giant fan which he hoped would attract the southern monsoon clouds by creating a wind tunnel moving north toward the Himalayas.

In short, everyone is worried about the uncertainty of immediate monsoon. The unbearable heat and dry condition depress the local people. This detailed description of the dry and hot weather at the beginning of the novel is important because it is related to the year of birth of the chief protagonist Sampath. By late September the heat and lack of

rain combine to produce a terrible crisis. The condition degenerates to such an extent that relief camps are set up by the Red Cross Society in the west region of Shahkot. The ration shop fails to distribute adequate amount of rice and lentils, and the prices of essential commodities rise higher. These reasons given for such conditions are thus, both human and natural; and the suggestions mentioned above are the products of human mind, hinged on the essential fantasy signifying a typical human penchant to believe in the far-fetched ideas when trapped in natural catastrophes. During this terrible crisis, Sampath is born as an auspicious.

The whole description has an exotic and fantastic aroma in it. At one level it is an escape and on the other it is a 'simulacrum' of her wish-fulfillment. The two levels of reality: one which is 'there' before her, and the 'other' which she perceives; are constantly intermingled in her unconscious, and at this point Sampath is born, his birth symbolizes the attainment of reality for Kufi. These paranormal and freakish activities can be read as premonitions of something quite menacing for the baby. And this, no doubt, is an instance of a mystic deed:

... all of a sudden a shadow fell across the sun and magically, as quickly as a winter's day tumbles into smoky evening.

Sampath's 'birth' and 'birthmark on his face' are taken as an indication of a spiritual identity of a godly persona. Rain is the traditional symbol of fertility and rejuvenation; it has a religious connotation in Hindu society. When seen from a cultural point of view, it may be said that Sampath's birth preceded by rain is a means of salvation for the famine-cursed land.

Sampath, the supposed 'wealth' as its meaning suggests, is an individual not belonging to the familiar stream of average populace. To describe his character, one must pay attention to the following quoted lines of Sri Aurobindo:

A spiritual evolution, an evolution of consciousness in Matter in a constant developing self-formation till the form can reveal the indwelling Spirit, is then the key-

note the central motive of terrestrial existence. (*The Life Divine*, p.824)

Sampath desperately seeks for peace, which Sri Aurobindo on a very high plane of spiritual consciousness finds to be the essential foundation of man's irreversible and decisive spiritual evolution. Though, according to Nikhil Kumar, Kiran Desai is not well conversed in yogic consciousness, "she is unmistakably aware of the essentiality of peace which prepares man for his spiritual upliftment; peace which Sampath is seeking. The urge for serenity is found to have taken a firm hold of him as he finds this material life to be 'a prison he had been born into', and all he craves for is nothing but 'freedom' ("Spiritual Seeking" in Kiran Desai's "Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard").

Reasonably, Sampath inherits eccentricity from his mother's side which persuades him to go away from the 'hullabaloo' or the cry of the mundane life, and consequently he takes refuge in a guava orchard; which epitomises his eccentricity as a tool of resisting the substantial pettiness of humdrum subsistence. It is interesting to note that Sampath is portrayed throughout the text in relation to the natural elements.

On leaving the buildings far behind, he feels the freshness of greenery bloom within his tired frame. Soon he leaps from the window of the bus and runs towards an old orchard visible far up the slope. Finally he climbs up a guava tree and settles among the leaves. In the branches of the tree he experiences calm and contentment, as the writer comments, 'Yes, he was in the right place at last'.

Trees can never be the abode of human beings, for it is open to all sorts of hardships unbearable to a human being. But to Sampath, such a life is a heap of immense joy, he feels himself much closer to Nature itself, and decides to spend all his life in plenty of its bountifulness:

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 . . . Before his eyes, flitting and darting all about him, was a flock of parrots, a vivid jewel-green, chattering and shrieking in the highest of spirits. This scene filled his whole mind and he wondered if he could ever get enough of it. This was the way of riches and this was a king's life, he thought . . . (p.51)

In a Faustus like manner he even wishes to exchange his life for this luxury of stillness, 'to be able to stay with his face held toward the afternoon like a sunflower and to learn all there was to know in this orchard: each small insect crawling by the smell of the earth thick beneath the grass; the bristling of leaves; his way easy through the foliage; his tongue around everyone'. This binary between nature and culture, between abundance and restriction, between limitlessness and liminality conjures up the essence of the text.

The character of Sampath thus undergoes a complete change. From an inactive, depressed young man, he is transformed into a 'Baba' or 'Hermit' of exceptional wisdom. He does not pay heed to any one; neither to his family members appealing several times to come back, nor to the woman brought before him for a supposed marriage:

"Sampath looked down at the veiled woman standing underneath his tree and felt hot and horrified, tiredness rolled over him like a wave and, closing his eyes, he fell into a deep slumber, lodged in a fork in the guava tree".

Mr. Chawla is very unhappy to see his son choose a place like guava orchard to live in. He often rebukes Sampath calling him a monkey and a stupid unreasonable fellow: "Sampath first surprises the people beneath his tree by exposing the secret of Mr. Singh about his jewellery, Mrs. Chopra about her problem in throat, and a bald-headed man about the secret oil. However, people take it as something spiritual on his part. They regard him as a remarkable man with exceptional character.

With Sampath's hermitance, one thing that also runs parallel is Kulfi's desire to cook food for her son. Sampath's holiness brings in her a new alacrity for cooking, with varieties of ingredients, spices,

meats and natural herbs. She discovers in the orchard a special kind of peace. She cooks outdoors in the sunshine under the gigantic sky.

While cooking she realizes that she is on the brink of something enormous. All round her is a landscape she understands profoundly, she understands it as she understands her son, she knows why he is sitting in a tree, because, it is the right place for him. Cooking has a cathartic effect on Kulfi's emotions, symbolic of her hidden desires. Common people go crazy with the exotic flavours, marvelling at the ingredients and exotic scents of cloves and cardamom, reminding of one of the mystic world of spices in Chitra Divakruni's *The Mistress of Spices*:

Pickled limes stuffed with cardamom and cumin, crepuscular creatures simmered upon the wood of a scented tree, small river fish baked in green coconuts, rice steamed with nasturtium flowers in the pale hollow of a bamboo stern, mushrooms red- and yellow-gilled, polka-dotted and striped. . . pouring from his eyes, his ears exploding, barely able to breathe, Sampath would beg: 'More! Please, some more.' And triumphantly Kulfi would rush back to get another helping. (102)

Sampath is provided all sorts of comfort at the guava orchard: a cot for sleeping, sufficient food and water resources, and devotees now and then come as worshippers. The money and different kind of items that are offered to the 'Monkey baba' (Sampath's name at the guava orchard) is a stark satire on the commoditization of religion in the Indian context. The monkey figure in this story is related to Indian mythology. The Baba (Sampath) loves monkeys – their company, their pranks and feels absolutely at home when they play around him.

According to the Hindu mythology, monkeys are the incarnation of the Hindu god Hanuman, and therefore Sampath's love for the monkeys connects him to great god Hanuman. Sampath calls the monkeys by various affectionate names such as "you badmahes" and shows his special affection for them. The reason that

he is called a 'Monkey Baba' is because of his affinity to monkeys.

The monkeys however, add a touch of ribaldry to the holy situation in the guava orchard. Things become complicated when one day the monkeys in the orchard find five bottles of rum in

the bag of a man who had stopped to see Sampath on his way to a wedding. The monkeys consume liquor and become uncontrollable beasts.

The police come to rescue the devotees from the menace of the monkeys, but little could be done in such a situation. The monkeys engaged in ravaging and looting throughout the town. Some propose to convince Sampath to get down from the tree, because they believe that Sampath is the idol of the monkeys and if he leaves the orchard then the monkeys will not find any inspiration to continue the destructive work.

Kiran Desai's first novel apparently seems to be farcical in its presentation, but it critiques the real world of humans. The environment shifts in her novel to 'fantastic realism' turns the theme into an uncanny mix of fantasy and magic. The matter of the novel is critiquing the 'normal' world besides the supernatural perception of some characters that show how the 'other' world has so much more to offer to the primary world.

Nature in this novel is a powerful symbol, representative of the fantastic world, which is constantly desired by man, but is also drastically misused. Desai presents nature as an integral component of human life. The novel begins with a description of a horrible facet of nature, where people and environment around them, wither under intense heat.

Men try to invent many artificial ways of bringing rain to alleviate the heat, but nothing works, which highlights the supremacy of nature. Later in the text, nature is intrinsically related to the monkeys, parallelly existent in the lives of the people of Shahkot. Initially the cinema monkey, and then the whole herd abiding in that orchard spark a war against the two forces – man and nature. Humanization of monkeys and their change as alcoholics symbolises a speculum of evil in man.

Their affair with alcohol invests them with human qualities of assault and thievery. It helps in artificially expanding their energies, leading them to ravage the forests in a dire drastic way.

The guava orchard, then hardly remains an orchard, it turns into an extension of the mankind at large.

When seen from the perspective of the criticisms of Glotfelty and Buell, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* assumes a different significance. Glotfelty's remark in his famous quote on ecocriticism elucidates the idea that as a critical tool, ecocriticism is a practical mode of analysing literature. This apparently funny tale comprising the monkeys and the 'Monkey-Baba' become significant after we see the severe damage caused by man on natural world. The monkeys get alcoholic and start destructing the human as well as natural vegetation. In this way, the settings -- both the Shahkot and the guava orchard serve an important role paving the ways for ecocritical analysis.

If we take into account Glotfelty's most significant question ways and to what effect is the environmental crisis seeping into contemporary literature and popular culture?" (Glotfelty & Fromm xvii), then the concluding portion of my analysis of the text shows how this battle between the nature and the man has cast a shadow of doom over everything. Finally, I would like to quote from *The Ecocriticism Reader* again to complete my discussion on Glotfelty:

Despite the broad scope of inquiry and disparate levels of sophistication, all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artefacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman. (Glotfelty xix)

Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination* (1996) attempts to lay the groundwork for environmentally aware readings of literary texts, and to suggest the future direction of

the ecocritical research program. Buell quite correctly emphasizes on our ability to become intimate with nature, over and against the tendency of some theorists to assume the entire otherness of nature and to question the efforts of natural science to learn something about that otherness. But though it may be true that "the emphasis on disjunction between text and world seem so overblown," (Buell 84) it is not at all clear to me how a "spirit of commitment to environmental praxis" is sufficient to join together what theory has supposedly put asunder (Buell 84).

In the novel, Kulfi Chawla is intimately related to nature, actually she is described here as the nature incarnated. Her activities, roaming about endlessly in search of new ingredients, her insatiable hunger, and the mysterious cooking – all attribute her greater affinity with the nature's persona.

Following Buell, we also find that nature, as described in this novel is more an ideological abstract ideal, an epitome of perfection; and this is the reason for which Sampath Chawla has discarded his material home, in search of a spiritual one. Another important thing that I like to mention here is the concept of 'pastoral' proposed by Buell. Pastoral, undoubtedly one of the most universal form of Western Environmental imagination which is almost synonymous with the idea of returning to a less urbanised, more natural state of existence:

Historically, pastoral has sometimes activated a 'green' consciousness, sometimes euphemized land appropriation. It may direct us toward the realm of physical nature, or it may abstract us from it . . . the modern transmutation that concerns me most is the *enlistment of pastoral in the service of local, regional and national particularism*. (Buell 31)

Reading from this perspective, Sampath's leaving of his own home, and his disagreeing at the end to leave the guava orchard can be critically looked from an ecocritical observing eye. It must be mentioned here that like other environmental novelists, Desai does not emphasize on anthropocentric prejudice

against ecological loss, neither does she point out the issues of deep ecology or bio diversity. Rather she has shown here the piercing affair of habitat formation, how human addiction for alcoholic drinks can altogether bring about an extreme change in the entire ecosystem upsetting down its own design. Conceptualizing from this facet, this seemingly amusing tale thus becomes an envoy of ecocritical sagacity.

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