

A Thematic Analysis of Kiran Desai's Select Works: A Study

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Abstract:

The study analyses the themes in two of Kiran Desai's novels. The novels selected for the study are *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss*. The former was published in 1998 and the latter in 2006. *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* deals with the story of Sampath who hates society's expectations on him. He craves to be alone. *The Inheritance of Loss* is a winner of The Man Booker Prize. It is set in India and USA. In India, it looks into the story of a retired Indian judge named Jemubhai. He employs a cook, whose son Biju works in USA. Biju is suffering from poverty and racism and is an undocumented immigrant. Some of the themes in *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* are religion, culture, Indianness and the crushing weight of society's expectations. Some of the themes in *The Inheritance of Loss* are colonialism, migration, poverty, privilege, loss of Identity, culture shock, alienation etc.

Key words: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, *The Inheritance of Loss*, Religion, Culture, Society's expectations.

I. INTRODUCTION

In this article, an analysis of the different themes in Kiran Desai's *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss* will be studied. The protagonist of the first novel selected for study, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* is Sampath. Despite being an adult, he does not like the responsibilities that are eventually thrust upon him by society. The protagonist is very much averse to expectations placed on him by society, especially his father. He is very imaginative and his main desire is to be alone. The themes of religion and culture that are often viewed in literature are also seen in the novel. The second novel for study *The Inheritance of Loss* has won many awards. The novel is set in USA and India. In India, the novel shows the story of Jemubhai. He is a retired Indian judge who lives with his orphaned granddaughter, Sai. The Judge and Sai are very influenced by British customs. In the US, the cook's son, Biju is suffering from poverty and racism even though his father falsely assumes his son to be happy and making money.

II. HULLABALOO IN THE GUAVA ORCHARD

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard focuses on the story of the protagonist, Sampath. He was born in Shahkot. This place is located in North India. Sampath works at a post office. The most notable thing about Sampath is that he doesn't possess goals and ambitions in life. Sampath, however does have a rich imagination. Throughout the novel, his father Mr. Chawla urges Sampath to be goal-oriented. However, all of this falls on deaf ears. His mother is Kulfi and he also has a sister named Pinky. Sampath's mother personality is quite similar to him. She is also very much imaginative. His mother is very creative and is full of rich imagination. When Sampath was working at the post office, he used to read people's letters. Thus, Sampath had knowledge of several people's innermost secrets. He is later fired from his job at the post office. Unable to bear the expectations placed on him by society, he runs away to a guava orchard. There, Sampath decides to climb up on a guava tree and stays there. His family asks him to climb down but he refuses. As he starts revealing the public's secrets, the people falsely assume that he is a holy man. Thus Sampath soon becomes very famous and his father starts to think of ways to make money off of him. *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* looks at

how beliefs about holy men are readily accepted by Indian society. The theme about the presence of holy men in India is seen throughout the novel as the protagonist himself, despite not being one, is assumed to be so. Several themes are seen in the text. The major themes include religion, culture, society's expectations and Indianness.

III.THEMES IN *HULLABALOO IN THE GUAVA ORCHARD*

The depiction of Indian culture is seen in many places in the novel. The belief in superstitions among Indians is also widely seen. Indian society's preference for male children is also viewed in the novel as Sampath's birth is a cause for celebration among the family members. Sampath's father gets him a job at the post office as a clerk. From the beginning, the reader can see that Sampath is not interested in the job. Yet he feels compelled to go through this experience. The main reason for Sampath to agree to this job can be connected to the individual versus society theme which is often viewed here. Rishikesh, a holy place for Hindus is spoken about. Mr. Chawla (Sampath's father) is the head clerk at the Reserve Bank of Shahkot. He is very goal-oriented and ambitious. He is also the head of the family. Here, the reader can see the existence of patriarchy which is widespread in India. Sampath's desires for his life are completely opposite from what society expects from him. This is the main theme in the novel, that is, the power of society's expectations over an individual, and how people struggle under it. King Asoka, a well-known Indian emperor is mentioned. He belongs to the Mauryan Empire. In the novel, Buddha is also mentioned. Buddha is the founder of Buddhism. He was born at Lumbini Province, now situated in Nepal. Lord Hanuman and Lord Rama, extremely significant deities in Hinduism are spoken about in the novel. The tradition of the 'bride-viewing ceremony' for marriages in India is also portrayed. The acceptance of holy men by Indian society without much hesitance is also a major theme.

IV.THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS

This novel is a recipient of several awards. This novel is set in USA and India, and tells the stories of two main characters. Jemubhai is a retired Indian judge. He lives in Kalimpong, which is situated in Northern India. Kalimpong is a very mountainous region. The Judge lives with his granddaughter, Sai. Sai has lost both of her parents at a young age, and is therefore orphaned. Sai's mother was a Hindu and his father was a Zoroastrian. The Judge and Sai have a lot of similarities. Both of them are very much influenced by British customs. Thus the reader can definitely say that the Judge and Sai are extremely anglicized. The Judge has employed a cook who suffers from poverty. The cook has a son named Biju who works in USA. Biju is an undocumented immigrant and therefore often fears getting arrested. Biju earns very little money and is shown suffering from poverty. He is also a victim of racism. The Judge's past is also portrayed in the text. The Judge had experienced racism while studying in England. This horrific experience had left its traumatic impacts on him. Thus the text can be analysed from a postcolonial perspective as well. Several themes are shown in the novel. The major themes in the novel are colonialism and its consequences, poverty, migration, privilege, racism, culture shock, alienation and loss of Identity.

V.THEMES IN *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

The consequences of colonization and how it affects people's lives is a main theme. Alienation is another important theme, especially portrayed through Biju, an undocumented immigrant who is thrown into a new culture and is finding it difficult to cope with his new life because he is so far away from his homeland. The Judge was a victim of racism during his education in England. The reader can notice that due to traumatic events, the judge had internalised the racism. He therefore seems to reject his Indian culture. It is noticeable to the reader that the judge also suffers from a loss of Identity. His wife, however, is influenced by Indian customs and traditions. This highly infuriates the Judge since he always tries to adopt British customs. The theme of globalisation can also be seen. People from different countries and cultures travel to different places in search of better financial opportunities. In the 21st century, this practice is seen on an extremely vast scale. Biju goes to another country for work in the hopes of earning more money and saving his family from poverty. Poverty is another important theme in the novel. The Judge's cook suffers from extreme poverty. The cook also leads a miserable life as he says that if not for his son, he'd already be dead. He also owns very few things. He is also not respected, as mostly people who are powerful and rich are only given respect. This shows privilege. The cook was born into poverty and his life shows how hard it is to break from the cycle of poverty. Poverty is the main reason as to why he sends his son to another country, hoping that Biju would be

able to earn more money and have a better life. However, he is wrong about Biju's life abroad since Biju also suffers from poverty. Since Biju is an undocumented immigrant, he is exploited. The influence of British customs in the novel can be seen through the mention of food items which are usually consumed in Britain. Some examples seen in the novel are scones as well as macaroons.

A Scotsman had built the house where the Judge now lives. This shows how the Judge is alienated from his Indian culture. Even the Judge's father had once commented that his son feels like a stranger to him after his return from England. The Judge's granddaughter, Sai is an orphan. Her mother was a Hindu and her father was a Zoroastrian. They had both passed away in an accident. Sai tries to cry at the unfortunate circumstance regarding her parents' death. However, she was unable to cry. This incident shows the reader how alienated Sai is from own parents. Sai's loneliness is also depicted. It is usually only the cook who keeps her company. The presence of superstitious beliefs is another important theme in the novel. Migration is also a significant theme in the text. The life of immigrants and their sufferings are seen in the novel. Biju suffers from poverty, racism, and culture shock. The cook is another example of a character who internalised discrimination, just like the Judge. The results of colonization is a very important theme. It affects the psyche of the people. It traumatises people as they struggle with an identity crisis. This identity crisis has the capacity to affect generations.

VI.CONCLUSION:

Thus, the study has analysed the themes in *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss*. The novel is filled with so many rich themes that give the readers a great understanding on the working of society.

REFERENCES:

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