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### The Eccentric Desires For Delight And The Negligence Of Social Conformity In Kiran Desai's Novel, Hullabaloo In The Guava Orchard

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#### **Abstract**

Kiran Desai's Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard portrays an individual's eccentric desires and escape from social conformity. The theme of desire for delectation plays a vital role in the changes that happened in the life of Sampath and his mother Kulfi. They are affected psychologically and their disappointed feelings are clearly depicted by Kiran Desai through various incidents. The protagonist of the novel, Sampath does not like to live a customary life. He alienates himself from his family and his alienation made him decide pessimistically. He feels that the shift of place is the only solution to elude from the problem. He used to make his mind wrongly till the end of the novel. Like him, his mother Kulfi expresses a sense of vague longing for exotic foods. Her house is small for her big desires. She represents the embodied desire for meaning in life beyond the drudgery of going to work and returning home. The prime focus of this paper is to examine the eccentric desires of the protagonist, Sampath and his mother for happiness by freeing oneself from social conformity.

**Keywords:** Eccentric desires, displacement, exotic foods, happiness, daydreaming, social conformity

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#### **1. Introduction**

Kiran Desai is the daughter of celebrated Indian writer Anita Desai. She is the author of two popular novels – Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard and The Inheritance of Loss. She is an emerging post-colonial Indian author who won an international reputation, quite early in her writing career. She is a young and energetic Indian English novelist who possessed a lot of creative skills. She has inherited the literary skills of her mother Anita Desai. The literary environment from her childhood enabled her to create works with nuances.

Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard is a humourous and satirical story of life, love, and family relationship. It portrays human foibles and eccentricities in a satirical tone. This novel was published in 1998 and with the publication of this novel, Desai ventured into the world of literature. She says, “I think my first book was filled with all that I loved most about India and know I was in the inevitable process of losing.” This novel can be read on several levels as an inventive, fast-moving, delicious

tale full of rich descriptions and fabulous personalities but also as a deeper study of the pathos of familial misunderstanding, the ridiculousness of hero worship, and the unpredictability of commercialism and the ineptness of officialdom. This novel is known for its verbal art and the novelist exhibits the social and political scenario of contemporary India.

Kiran Desai has very distinctly painted through this novel, the chaos and crisis of modern times caused by the loss of rationality and logical consideration, loss of emotional bonds and longing, loss of social order, peace, and harmony. It represents at the same time the realistic culture of the Indian subcontinent and the universal intricacies of human experience. This novel is a touching insight into the absurdities and ambiguities in a small town in India. The protagonist of the novel, Sampath Chawla is a twenty-year-old young man who is frustrated with his life and wants to escape from the materialistic world. His mind was filled with desires and illusions. He is different from other people. He has different needs, desires and feelings. He dislikes the machinery life in which one runs behind money. Therefore, he displaced himself in a guava orchard and he is not interested in committing to the society. He feels disillusioned in his life and his only way to resolve any kind of problem is by escaping. The primary motivation of the main character, Sampath, is to be free of the forced and false manners of life.

Like the main characters in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children*, his birth is an event of an almost mysterious and incredible kind. Sampath was born to Kulfi and Mr. Chawla during the monsoon. He is born with a brown birthmark on his cheek and, because he came with the rains, he is called Sampath-Good Fortune. He becomes a strange boy, imaginative, and attracted, like his mother, to sensuous beauty. Also like her, he likes to get lost in the objects of his perception, becoming one with them. Sampath is in the adolescent stage but his development is not up to the mark. He does not have the transition and he is confused as to how to decide his life. The latent confusion renders the life of Sampath as one without any ambition, worthless, and one that became useless. Sampath is unable to get inspiration from his family. So, he lacks the love and care from his mother and he cannot take his mother as his inspiration. He rejects his job in the post office and spends time idly, unable to make himself focus on things he doesn't like.

Unhappy with his work and with his family, Sampath is an imaginative and introspective boy who spends his time contemplating mysterious things in his mind or observing nature in admiration. Thus, at the marriage ceremony of his boss's daughter, he wears the colours and textures of the wedding clothes to himself until he is drunk on the beauty and sings naked in the fountain. In the house, he has observed a lot of things, materials and rich costumes for the bride as well as jewellery and cosmetics. He beautifies himself with all the accessories. He cannot make himself do the tedious tasks of the world anymore and has little control or social sense. Sampath believes everyone is conspiring to keep him in a net. It is a prison he has been born into. He wants a natural and free life. He wants open spaces. He finally takes flight from home when he tastes the sweetness of guava and feels its wildness within, thus shedding his last social conditioning. Thus, in a key moment, while eating guava, he turns into the guava's sweetness and has the desire to escape. He takes up his home in a guava tree as the most natural home for him. He hopes that this is the way of riches and this is a king's life. Sampath remains on the same guava tree. Interestingly, in his mind the world he can see from the branches looks perfect and still:

"This orchard matched something he had imagined all his life: myriad green-skinned globes growing sweet-sour and marvellous upon a hillside with enough trees to fill the eye and enough fruit to scent the air.... Oh, if he could exchange his life for this luxury of stillness, to

be able to stay with his face held towards the afternoon like a sunflower and to learn all that was to know in this orchard; each small insect crawling by...." (Desai, 50-51)

His search for quiet and simpler life induces him to flee to a sanctuary outside of Shakot, where he gets comfort within the branches of the guava tree. He climbs and stays in the guava tree in the orchard as a bid for freedom and senses this is the way life should be, peaceful and beautiful. However, soon his family and neighbours arrive to get him down. His inspired trick of telling all the people their secrets, obtained from the letters he has read in the post office, leads him to be called a clairvoyant holy man. People come to ask questions of the so-called Monkey Baba, and he obliges with aphoristic riddles that don't make complete sense but leave people satisfied with the profound wisdom. Sampath is amazingly turned around from a fool to a respected wise man, and he can't help enjoying it at first. He prefers the monkeys who settle in his tree, however, as more his type. His taming of the monkeys is seen as another wonderful occurrence, for monkeys are dangerous and can wound or kill a person. When the monkeys become a drunken nuisance, everyone wants to get rid of them except for Sampath.

He thinks to himself that the only people who make sense are his mad mother, the wild monkeys, and himself. He seems part monkey himself, enjoying naughty pranks and spontaneous behaviour. He senses the tree in the orchard represents the first time the genuine life as it is—he is at one with its beauty. If he could only stay long enough, he could melt into it. As the people come together on the orchard in a moment of extreme chaos, Sampath disappears as he holds guava; like a Buddha, he is absorbed into its life force. The fruit bears a mark exactly like Sampath's birthmark. Eventually, Sampath is released from the endless cycle of demands. Transformed into guava, he is last seen being carried towards the sacred Himalayas by the hungry monkeys.

Carl Jung says "If the person is stuck in illusions of childhood, however, or has built up unrealistic expectations, he or she can have a multitude of problems". Sampath is stuck with life and wishes to enjoy his life without any work. It shows that he wants to live as his childhood days. Like a child he wants to be without any work, he wants to be in his world of dreams and desires. He wants to escape from the frustration and failures that he faced in his life. Through isolation, the protagonist Sampath wants to attain freedom from his day-to-day activities. There are various reasons that may suit a person's alienation and it may happen sometimes in their own home because they were distanced from their family. But his shift of place to the orchard made his family members feel worried. They were also psychologically disturbed and felt alienated in their hometown itself. He has urge to change his place for his convenience and delight. But his change makes the entire family shift to the orchard and so Sampath longing for happiness through loneliness is not satisfied.

In this novel, the most freedom-loving creatures are the monkeys. They come and go as they will, and create devastation, for they cannot be caught or tamed. Sampath sees them as a symbol of his own joy, promising he will not live without them. Many of the characters have the same urges, for instance, Kulfi, Sampath's half-mad and repressed mother. Sampath's mother is the character who most influences the development of her son. She is the real sufferer. She cannot stand the rules of the society her husband strongly respects and adheres to. Indeed, she is an unhappy wife. She is possessed of some peculiar characteristics and it may be observed that Sampath has inherited the peculiar characteristics only from her. She is beautiful but descends from a crazy or eccentric family and appears to be mentally unstable herself. She is married only because of her parents' compulsion since her family considered marriage is the only solution to keep her madness under control. As the narrator tells:

"Clearly she was going mad. Yes, there it was- the eccentricity that had plagued her mother's side of the family for generations bubbling up yet again, just when they hoped the culprit genes had finally run into some dead end and been laid to rest." (Desai, 63).

Mr. Chawla's mother, worries that her son would not have a wife, is responsible for the match. Kulfi has been married off in a hurry when young so her family would not be left with a mad woman. She has begun sleepwalking while eating melons and fruit. Kulfi's family marries her quickly to Mr. Chawla, who is a lower class. Mr. Chawla has resisted the marriage at first, but his mother likes Kulfi and the dowry that would enable them to buy a refrigerator. From the moment she is made to marry, Kulfi refuses to cooperate or perform her duties unless she wants to. As sensuously aware as Sampath, she loves colour, texture, and taste, and paints the walls of the house while pregnant. Kulfi's hunger while pregnant is enormous and does not abate, even after she gives birth. She has dark passionate eyes, but people are uneasy looking at her. She envisages and cooks sumptuous dishes once she is set free from the house and can live in the forest near Sampath.

Kulfi's preoccupation with food, oddly enough, does not direct to her cooking or doing anything around the house. She feels tired of domestic life and takes a seat by the window, as though she is in a cage and would like to escape. She allows Ammaji, her mother-in-law run the house. She rarely cooks; only wild and exotic food will gratify her. She is a kind of food artist. In watching her son retreat to the orchard, she recalls her youth when she felt the need to escape. She knows why he is sitting in a tree. Kulfi and Sampath are the only ones in the family who comprehends one another. Inspired by what she takes to be Sampath's wisdom, she commences finally to cook the masterpieces that have been in her mind. Her early efforts had been foiled when she tried to steal and cook pheasants from the zoo. But in the orchard, her creativity is released and she is a wild woman when she rounds up the ingredients, such as seeds, eggs, and animals. One can also study the book as a eulogy of food, of strange foods, of crisp aubergines. Kulfi, the word is used to mean Indian ice cream, when she was pregnant with Sampath, dreams of food when she is awake, and when she is sleeping. For example, "In her mind, aubergines grew large and purple and crisp, and then, in a pan, turned tender and melting". In the Guava Orchard Kulfi discovers finally the meaning of her life. There, she plans, hunts, gathers, simmers, and cooks.

While the forest pacifies Sampath, Kulfi is excited and ignores warnings about snakes and scorpions. She daydreams of being a royal cook. Mr. Chawla thinks her insane and would like to have her committed but does not do so to save the family name. When he threatens to build a cement hermitage for Sampath, Kulfi tells her idea confidentially to Sampath that all of them could be poisoned. He suspects that she once purposely made him sick on her food to get him out of school. She cooks one of every kind of creature in the forest and has to search harder and harder for new ingredients. Finally, she comes up with one exotic ingredient she has never used before: monkey.

## 2. Conclusion

The two conflicting instinctive impulses of freedom and conformity have to be kept in balance by most adults. But here Sampath represents the human urge to be free of constraint, without social conformity. In the guava orchard, he enjoys his dreams but Sampath's longing for loneliness is not satisfied fully. At the end of this story, Sampath mystically and mysteriously transforms into guava. Kulfi and Sampath live in a state of being that is inaccessible and incomprehensible to the townspeople. They know well that they can never conform, and thus will never be understood. Kulfi and Sampath seem extreme in their need to be free, but other characters have needs as well. The Chief Medical Officer wants to get out of Shahkot, so he can have peace and happiness. The wife of

Verma leaves him to be free of his domineering theories. The Hungry Hop boy likes to be free of his female relatives, and Pinky decides to run away from boredom. But Sampath and his mother Kulfi, however, lack any social sense, like the monkeys.

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