



## **MULTICULTURALISM IN THE NOVELS OF KIRAN DESAI- AN ANALYSIS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the theme of multiculturalism in the novels of Kiran Desai, focusing on her nuanced portrayal of cultural intersections, identity conflicts, and the immigrant experience. Desai's works, particularly *The Inheritance of Loss* and *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, explore the complexities of global interconnectedness, shedding light on the struggles of individuals caught between disparate cultural worlds. Through her vivid storytelling, Desai captures the psychological and social ramifications of migration, colonial legacies, and globalization, highlighting the challenges of assimilation and the persistence of cultural roots. Her characters embody the tensions of hybridity, navigating between tradition and modernity, the local and the global, and the personal and the communal. This analysis underscores how Desai's narratives reflect the multicultural realities of contemporary society, offering a rich commentary on belonging, identity, and cultural coexistence.

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**Key words:** multiculturalism, cultural identity, immigrant experience, belonging and identity conflicts etc.

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On October 12, 2006, Rashmee Roshan Lall, in an article for the Times of India, declared that Kiran Desai had inherited her novelist mother Anita's legacy by achieving the world's most prestigious literary award. This accomplishment came with a prize money of £50,000, the promise of skyrocketing book sales worldwide, and an entry into the esteemed community of Indian literary luminaries who expertly explore themes of cultural complexity and the hybrid identities of immigrant populations. It was a remarkable feat that propelled Kiran Desai into the spotlight, offering her a passport to the dazzling realm of renowned chroniclers of cultural confusion and the intricate narratives of hyphenated immigrant identities. — It was one of most honoured moment for whole India .It further embodied India in consistently procuring award winning author entactin their works on Indian colour themes and identity.

Much coveted Booker Prize winner (2006) Kiran Desai's mother Anita Desai is equally famous author whose three books, Clear light of Day in 1980, In custody in 1984 and fasting, feasting in 1999 had been short-listed for Booker Prize. But it was her daughter who eclipsed varied other August writers and was facilitated for her proficient skills. She beat Sarah waters for (The Night watch) and fellow nominees Kate Green villa (The Secret River) His ham Matar (In the Country of Men), M.J Hyland (Carry Me Down ) and Edward St Aubyn (Mother's Milk).

Hermione Lee, Chairwoman of the judges said, I think her mother should be profundities' Clare to those of us who have read Anita Desai that Kiran Desai has learned from her mother's work Both write not just about India but about Indian Communities in the world. Her first novel, *Strange Happenings in the Guava Orchard* later entitled as *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) got literary attention in the anthology 50 years of Indian writing —edited by Salman Rushdie. It took four years to write and the repercussions were positive.

She stated that

*“I think my first book was filled with all that I loved most about India and knew I was in the inevitable process of losing. It was also very much a book that came from the happiness of realising how much I loved to write”.*

Salman Rushdie's appreciation of Desai's yet unpublished fiction found expression in his inclusion of its excerpts in his controversial The Vintage Book of Indian writing (1947-1997) celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of Indian Independence. Desai pleasantly belied her readers who were with mere expectations of having veiled version of her autobiography in the debutante novel rather she brought something multifarious incredible —Strange happenings in the disguise of dull witted young man turned into —Baba of unfathomable wisdom.

The novel is wry, satirical narration of life, love, family relationships in socio-cultural context of India. It won prize for the Betty Trask Awards in 1998. Though on surface level the novel is ostentatious as comic tale but the efficacious craft of writer has unveiled the complexities of everyday life. The novelist is not only concerned with social, political or moral problems but their creative impulses were forcing them to vent their sensibilities, the inner complexes, tension, spiritual, crises feeling of alienation in their characters.

There is a portrayal of crowded gallery of characters belonging to the middle class. The story is set in small Indian town Shahkot, there is an amalgamation of hilarious accounts of incidents encountered by the residents of Shahkot from the Himalaya region. There are ample of exciting happenings that mainly nexus on Sampath's unusual interests, habits and his desires. There are many melodramatic events along with steady remarks on the misconceptions encircling the human mind in the name of faith and traditions. Novelist gets religious sensibilities awakened to cognizant the distorted face of the religion in the materialistic world. Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard is outstanding literary effort in the field

of fiction. At the outset novel focuses the tough living conditions of the people in shahkot. Due to delayed arrival of monsoon the inhabitants are made to suffer. Their life has become miserable. Among various families there is a family of Mr R.K Chawla. Story has been mainly interwoven around this family. Mr Chawla reads from the newspaper. Problems have been located in the cumulus that have become overly heated. Shahkot had boasted of the highest temperature in country.

The intense heat caused the roads to become soft and transform into sticky pools of pitch. It also melted the grease in the Brigadiers' mustache, causing it to lose its shape. "The people of Shahkotia, seeking relief from the sweltering heat, engaged in debates over securing spots directly beneath their ceiling fans. They ventured out of their homes only when necessary and quickly scurried back indoors. In the bustling marketplace, they stormed the shops in search of palm leaf fans and purchased grey blocks of ice that emitted smoke, resembling small fires. They leaned their heads against the refreshing coolness of melons before slicing into them. They pressed glasses against their cheeks and foreheads, relishing the brief respite before taking sips. They fanned themselves with bunches of spinach near the stove, reluctantly releasing them only for the sake of preparing the evening meal. Months passed but the monsoon did not arrive moreover they had given up hope. There was terrible condition of drought. Scarcity of fruit and other vegetables had taken place. Kulfi in this abject situation has enormously grown large. People stopped short in amazement as he walked down the street. She walked through Shahkot like this as distracted as this as strange as this. There was always something odd about her they said. You could tell this from the minute she entered shahkot. Meal after meal of just rice and lentils could not begin to satisfy the hunger that grew inside her. She bribed the vegetable seller and the fruit seller and the butcher with squares of silk, with embroidery, a satin petticoat, an earring set in gold, a silver nutcracker bit of her dowry. Her hunger was like a prowling animal. Mr Chawla's relationship with Kulfi was not

cordial and neither he could tolerate her activities. He sportingly said his mother ‘What have you married me to Amma? Mr Chawla was respected and had good reputation among villagers. He has been living a disciplined life but always got snorted to see his wife unusual behaviour. There was no understanding between them Kulfi would often feel isolated and alienated from her family. She was completely obsessed with her food. She began to draw on the dirty, stained walls of the house. she drew a pond, dark but leaping with colorful fish.

One day Kulfi was lost in her thoughts in her bedroom looking at the street and something unexpected happened. She watched the children in the streets leap like frogs, unable to keep still in their excitement. It’s going to rain they shouted, they wrestled and tussled with each other in an exuberance of spirit. At last! The monsoon reached, Kulfi watched with unbelieving elation. Desai showcases the happiness of Shahkotian with ecstasy. Shahkotian were leaning from balconies and verandas. All were joyful and Mr Chawla bustled about with plastic sheeting and Ammaji placed buckets outside to catch the rainwater. It was during this time Kulfi gave birth to Sampath, the protagonist. He was born with brown birthmark upon one cheek. He brought much coveted monsoon and felt breeze of happiness. He was considered fortune for whole shahkot — Wonderful well wishers in the house chanted what a beautiful baby.

They said let’s name him Sampath. Good Fortune. Rest growing Hullabaloo in the life of Sampath and his family’s reaction on the work is the governing idea of the novel that keeps the reader enjoying every Happenings in it. As the story progressed Sampath had become twenty year boy. He was born with unusual behaviour and mannerisms like his mother. Being introvert, he is unable to share his feelings and there is very significant missing from his personality that psychologically categorises us as normal human beings.

He is working in shahkot post office but is completely insatiable with his humdrum

life. This suffocating adjustment for him has become big anxiety. He wants to live an ideal life away from strict norms that are instructed by his disciplined father. Sampath was unlike his classmates. He spent many blissful hours dreaming in the tea stall and singing to himself in the public gardens. He was least bothered about his career prospects. During his duty time to pass his time he could often peep into the letters of various people. Sampath unusual behaviour vents out in his boss wedding. On the wedding like other employees of the post office Sampath too was given task of filling glass with sharbat of washing the glasses ones they were emptied by guest. Unfortunately, there happens a misbehaving act from Sampath that consequently makes him loose his job. Though Sampath father was worried about his son becoming jobless but satirically Sampath was finally pleased to free himself from this boring job. Few days later when Mr Chawla gave Sampath offer for working in —Butterfly Delicious Butter Factoryll, Sampath thoroughly got perplexed by his father proposal and finally made up his mind to run away from his home. His interaction with his mother made him vent out his emotionsll No I don't want an egg he said I want my freedom —He was sick of monotonous life which had been tarnish and drab. His frustration at various places, failures at school compelled him to indulge in reverie .The monotonous life gained attention when he took refuge in the bosom of Guava Orchard.

One afternoon finding himself in solitude he sat in the bus and rode through all the way to the outskirts of shahkot . Immediately in between he got down the bus and began to run upwards towards the slope, till he looked before him a Guava tree in the Orchard. He reached its base and feverishly without pausing he began to climb. He clawed his way from branch to branch. Hoisting himself up he disturbed dead leaves and insects carcasses and all the bits of dried up debris that collect in a tree. It was at this point of his life he felt sense of marvellous emotions. \_A Guava tree larger and more magnificent than any he had ever seen. 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 that fill the eyes and enough fruit to scent the air. 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. Finally, he was in the right place at last.

Calm and composed and peacefully away from the worldly tensions. This was the way of riches, and this was a king's life he thought he could exchange his life for this luxury of stillness. All his family members reacted in a rebelling manner and shouted at him to get down from the branch. What are you doing up there? They shouted. It was only his mother Kulfi who conceded with his decision and said 'Let him be \_'. Gradually the news disseminated about Sampath's strange action. Fortunately, Sampath's obsession in daydreaming and self-absorbing gestures were intercepted as a sign of spiritual sublimation and gained reputation as a —Tree Babal. Kulfi takes care of her son in exclusion of everybody else. She intent on fanciful new dishes that no one has ever imagined|| cumin, quail and mustard seeds pommel rind|| she muttered as she cooked|| fennel coriander, sour mango...Colocasia leaves, custard apple, water melon, bitter gourd

.D. Nimsarkar comments ||Sampath's mother's experience is naïve and surprising as she only has the insight proper to understand her son's deeds secretly. Desai has brilliantly brought the multicultural society gathered to visit the —Babal. The Guava Orchard becomes multicultural place for all people of different cast and community. When Sampath reveals all the hidden secrets from the letters he read in post office people consider him true Baba. Many come there for knowing their fortunes and misfortunes. There is also highlight on the patriarchal system in India. Pinky courageously pursues her love with Hunger Hop that goes against her cast and community. Representation of post office discovers aspect of multiculturalism where all mails come from different nations and cast. The physical description of post offices showcases the scenario of Postcolonialism India which still needs

a lot of reforms. To give authenticity of his disguised new job Sampath recognises Mr Singh shoes letter he had read. He shouts at him and reveals his content from letters your jewellery still safely buried beneath the Tulsi plant? Further, catching sight of Mrs Chopra in the crowd he asked: How is that lump in your throat that travels up and down your windpipes, whispering threats and almost bursting right out of your chest? Sampath intensified their faith in his greatness, and they were bound to detect a rare spirit and gleam in Sampath's eyes. Desai in her novel has given steady remark on the misconceptions encircling the human mind in the name of faith and tradition. Novelist has put efforts to get out religious sensibilities awakened to cognizant the distorted face of the religion in the materialistic society. However, the fame last only for short span of time because when Sampath visitors and devotees got multiplied in Orchard along with them umpteen food and belonging entered which gave monkeys an satiable place to reside on for eating. When they saw Sampath

—The strange sedentary member of another species they had spotted up in their usual domain. Sampath turned their dirty game right back on them and hooted and howled hoo he cried, rolling his eyes, puffing out his cheeks in a way that seemed to cause mutual satisfaction. They looked even more impressed when they had spent long enough time in

the Orchard to identify Sampath as the nucleus of this bountiful community. He was not merely accepted but endowed with elevated within monkey hierarchy. Unfortunately, as the monkey got into habits of liquor everything went tops turning. Mr Chawla started to search for a solution to have an immediate control over the unreasonable behaviour of monkeys. The Chief Medical Officer, an expert in human monkey interaction, Verma ji, the Brigadier, the district Collector and the Superintendent of police all contributed to save the city but unfortunately Sampath lost his happiness in the midst of insane persuasion of monkeys by the people finally to save himself from ugly sea of materialistic society Sampath decided to disappear They looked here and there. Up and down the Guava tree. In the neighboring trees.



In the bushes. Behind the rocks. They stared up into the branches again and again, in to the undisturbed composition of leaves and fruit and bobbing up and down. Desai has conjured up a small town, midway between tradition and modernity and focused on the life of towns anonymous inhabitants. She invites the reader to react to the 'environment' of the story which is value laden and richly symbolic. There is an explicit summon that if destruction of nature takes place men will eventually lead to his self- destruction.

Kiran Desai's novels provide a profound exploration of multiculturalism, delving into the intricate web of identity, belonging, and cultural negotiation in an increasingly globalized world. Through her richly drawn characters and vivid narratives, Desai captures the nuances of living between cultures, highlighting the tensions, struggles, and resilience of individuals navigating these spaces. Her works, particularly *The Inheritance of Loss*, reveal the enduring impact of colonial histories, the challenges of migration, and the complexities of hybridity in shaping personal and collective identities. By portraying the multifaceted realities of multicultural existence, Desai not only mirrors the experiences of diverse communities but also invites readers to reflect on the broader implications of cultural coexistence in our interconnected world. Her contribution to postcolonial literature underscores the universal relevance of multicultural themes and affirms the power of literature to foster understanding across cultural divides.

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