CHAPTER-IV
MAGIC REALISM IN KIRAN DESAI’S
HALLBALOO IN GUAVA ORCHARD

I Introduction :

Kiran Desai is a daughter of the celebrity novelist Anita Deasi. She has written two novels namely *Hullabaloo in the Guava orchard* and *Inheritance of Loss*. Her second novel won the Booker Prize. In this chapter, Hallabaloo in the Guava Orchard is undertaken for the study of Magic realism. The chapter is divided into four parts. In the second part, the plot of the novel is given. In the second part, the narrative is studied with reference to magic realism. In part four the analysis is summed up to conclude the chapter.

II Plot:

The plot of Hallabaloo in the Guava Orchard is woven around the rise and fall of Sampath Chawal as a holy man. He works as a clerk in the local post office. As he faces unbearable humiliation, he runs away from his home and settles down in a guava tree in the orchard in the outskirt of the town. He is mistaken for a holyman. He makes everybody believe that he is a sadhu by revealing the hidden secrets. However he is disturbed by monkeys. In the subsequent narrative he disappears mysteriously.
III) i) Magic Realism in *Hallabaloo in the Guava Orchard*: – A Study

Kiran Desai is a distinguished Indian women novelist in English during the present century. She is a daughter of Anita Desai who is one of the most prominent Indian women novelists in English. Kiran Desai has written two novels namely Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard and Inheritance of loss and won the covetous ‘Booker Prize’ for her second novel in 2006. However her first novel Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard is as remarkable her ‘Booker Prize’ novel. Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchar deals with the theme fake sage hood in which there is an employment of the device called ‘magic realism’. This chapter undertakes the study of magic realism adopted in the plot to consider Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard Never the less, the chapter is divided into four parts including the introduction namely the plot, magic realism in Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchar and conclusion.

ii) Plot of Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard :

Kiran Desai has acknowledged in an interview that the story of an Indian hermit who took shelter in a tree motivated her to writer her maiden novel Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard. As a result she adopted the plot of sagehood in the contemporary time. The plot shows how the rise Sampath Chawla from the position of clerk in the post office to the status of a hermit/sage and the down-fall from his status as a hermit.
Sampath Chawla is a mediocre boy who has made no significant progress in his studies. He lacks ambition to get employment. His father, Mr. Chawla, gets him a job in the post-office in Shahkot after moving earth and heaven. He fails to fair well in his job as well. Hence his father rebukes him every now and then an account of his carelessness. His sister also joins his father in humiliating him.

Sampath Chawla undergoes a deep sense of frustration and annoyance. Therefore, he decides to leave his family once for all. When the members of his family have gone out, he escapes from house by boarding a bus. When the bus slows down near an orchard on a hill, he alights suddenly and runs towards a guava tree. He climbs the guava tree and settles down a branch. This news spreads across the town like a wild fire. His parents become worried about him. His father attempts to persuade him to return home but ends up in failure. He consults a doctor and a priest on the advice of the latter, he makes arrangements for his marriage. Yet he is unable to make him get down from the tree.

In the meantime, he is mistaken for a sage by a group of pilgrims. This news is also published in the local news paper. As a result, Sampath’s image as a sage spreads everywhere in the town. Consequently, the number of visitors and his followers goes on increasing rapidly. His father takes the advantage of Sampath’s popularity by way of
constructing stalls and rooms for the visitors in the orchard. Besides, the number of monkeys roaming near the guava tree mounts. It causes nuisance to the visitors. Hence the district government authorities are assigned the task of chasing the monkeys away from Sampath. In order to accomplish this task, Sampath is to be brought down from the guava tree. In the operation of this task Sampath gets lost and the monkeys flee from the orchard. Thus the narrative is ended.

iii. Magic Realism in Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard:

The plot of Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard is a satire on the tradition of sagehood which has undergone a serious degradation during the post independence period in India. It is evident in the emergence of false-sages and their exploitation of the public in many places in our country. The plot attempts to trace some factors which lead to the emergence of false sages and the consequences of such events. However the motto of the narrative is not to render realism of these instances. On the contrary, it ridicules this tradition. Hence the device of magic realism is adopted in the development of this plot. Indian spiritual philosophy asserts that sages and saints are not made but they are born. In order to ridicule this notion, the manner in which Sampath is born is narrated with a tinge of magic realism.
Sampath is born to Mr. Chawla and Kulfi whose marriage needs to be analysed. Mr. Chawala was around twenty four years at the time of his marriage while Kulfi was still younger than that age. She showed the signs of strangeness before the marriage. Hence her parents were in espair about her peculiar behavior as shown below:

her sanity dissipating, the sense of scattering from her like seeds from a poppy pod. They had spent night after sleepless night gathered at the window to watch as she wandered up and down in the garden, having taken suddenly, after her twentieth birth day, to sleep walking. Her father watched pale in his pyjamas; the aunties shook in their petticoats. The months had gone by with no sign of this behavior abating. The moon grew big, then delicate a hair’s strand, then once more to fullness. Kulfi walked serenely by the bottle brush tress, barefoot, with the gait of a queen; asleep, but eating slices of melon, spitting out seeds that showered like rain drops among the bushes. (HITGO, 62-63).

Her parents discover apple cores and wall nut shells under her bed and sticky trails leading from the Kitchen pots straight into her room. In addition, bits of cinnamon and asafetida in her pocket and little twigs and
a crushed night beetle in her head are noticed. Yet she argues in the next morning that she has slept soundly. Her family members feel that her behavior is a sign of lunacy which Kulfi has inherited from mother’s side of the family. Her grandfather had been so much fond of chickens that he used to sleep in the coop at night. Her aunt was also peculiar and used to announce that she was the last Maharaja of Oudh. When Kulfi’s father believed that his daughter had gone mad, he did not waste his time in search of a groom for his daughter leisurely. As soon as learnt that a widow called Ammaji was looking for a bride for her son, he attracted her with a lot of dowry and got Kulfi married to her son, Mr. Chawla despite he was reluctant to marry her. Thus Mr. Chawla and Kulfi got married.

Kulfi is a somnambulist but there is an employment of fantasy in the depiction of her as a sleep walker. Kulfi is depicted to be a lover of eating. She steals food fruits and nuts from home and eat them in secret. When she is enquired she pretends to be ignorant of her overeating thus:

But she woke refreshed, with no recollection of her nightly rambles, her midnight feasting, insisting she had slept soundly when her family, grey and dizzy from lack of sleep, questioned her over the morning tea. In the garden watermelons grew in a tangle they hacked out in vain. (HITGO, 63).
It becomes clear that Kulfi has shown the signs of eccentricity at the age of twenty. Her father presumes that it is the legacy from her mother side’s family in which eccentricity had prevailed in many generations. Kulfi’s father is not ready to bear the responsibility of looking after his insane daughter. He wants to get rid of her by getting her married off to some one before hr madness becomes public. Mr. Chawala and Kulfi are thus married.

The depiction of Kulfi at the time of her child bearing is also characterized by fantasy which is a major tool of magic realism. Kulfi is twenty one years old at the time of her first pregnancy. Many strange things occur in her personality and in the external atmosphere indicating that the child she is going to give birth to is not an usual one.

Though it is a summer and draught ridden outside, there is a strange growth in Kulfi’s body during this time. Her unusual growth appears like magic which is explicit in the depiction of Kulfi as follows:

Kulfi, in these months, was so enormously large, she seemed to be claiming all the earth’s energy for herself, sapping it dry, leaving it withered, shriveled and yellow. People stopped short in amazement as she walked down the street. How big she was! they forgot their dealings in the almost empty market place. They teetered on their
bicycles as hey booked around for just another sight of that stomach extending improbably before her like a huge growth upon a slender tree. Her eyes were so dark, so sooty and vehement, though, these people who turned their heads to stare turned quickly away again, ill at ease for some reason and unsettled. Not noticing them, she passed by as if they weren’t there at all. On her face, about her mouth and in the set of her chin was an expression intent and determined but yet far away and distant, as if all her thoughts were concentrated upon a point invisible to everybody but herself. She walked through Shankot like this, as distracted as this, as strange as this. (HIGO, 3-4)

She becomes passionate for food so intensively that she longs for fish in many forms like fish curries, fish kebabs, pomfret, bekti ruhi, shrimp, mussels and for in abundance. It surprises her husband.

Kulfi’s physical growth and in diminishable passion at this juncture is unusual because there is a situation of famine and draught outside. It is the season of summer with unbeatable heat and increasing dust. For the sake rain efforts like cloud-seeding, frog wedding, installation of a giant fan to draw the southern monsoon clouds and things like that undertaken in the town. It is noticed that everybody is worried about the situation.
Failure of the monsoon rain affects the people in every aspect of their life. The following serves as an illustration of the condition:

It was a summer that sent the dizzy pulse of fever into the sky, in which even rules and laws that usually stood straight and purposeful grew limp, like plants exposed to the afternoon sun, and weak. The heat softened and spread the roads into sticky pools of pitch and melted the grease in the Brigadier’s mustache so that it drooped and uncurled, casting shadows on his fine, crisp presence. It burned the Malhotra’s daughter far too dark for a decent marriage and caused the water, if it came at all, to spurt, scalding, from the taps. The bees flew drunk on nectar that had turned alcoholic; the policeman slept all day in the banana grove; the local judge bribed an immigration official and left to join his brother in Copenhagen. Foreigners in the tour buses turned and went home, while Shahkotians argued for spots directly below their ceiling fans, leaving only for minutes if absolutely necessary and then hurrying back. In the market place, they raided the shops for palm leaf fans and bought grey blocks of ice that smocked like small fires. They rested their heads against
the coolness of melons before cutting into them, held glasses against cheeks and foreheads between slips, fanned themselves at the stove with bunches of spinach before letting go reluctantly, for the sake of the evening meal. The weeks passed, but the monsoon did not arrive. And by the time, it was September, they had given up hope. (HIGO, 2-3).

When there is a situation of draught and famine and the people face the problems of water and food it is only ironical that Kulfi goes to the market and brings fish and other things for her consumption. She happens to empty the cupboards of the things kept for food preparation. Besides, Kulfi abnormal physical growth appears as a matter of wonder because her personality was altogether different one year ago. Though there were signs of eccentricity and overeating in her then she remained slim because of which Mr. Chawala agreed to marry her. It is worth while to take account of this factor as given below:

But although he did not admit it out loud, he too had been smitten by Kulfi’s flower beauty, her slender frame, her impossible delicacy so different from the robustness of the neighbourhood girls with their loud laughter, their round hips, their sly nudging and winking. And a few months
time Kulfi moved from her ancestral home, which was big and rambling, even if the roof leaked and the paint had peeled away, to the Chawlas’ tiny rooms in the tumble down streets of Shahkot. And over time, Mr. Chawla had developed a sort of exasperated affection for his wife, even when it became apparent that she was not the normal daughter of a crazy family as Ammaji had conjectured, but the crazy daughter of a crazy family as he himself had surmised. (HIGO, 64-65).

Kulfi was indulging in over eating even before her marriage. Yet she did not become fat. But she grows fat and large after at the time of her pregnancy when the town strangeness and ironical. Yet there is also a hint in it that the child she is attacked by famine. It suggests going to deliver shall be unusual.

There is an instance of the use of fantasy in the depiction of Kulfi before the birth of her child. Kulfi begins to behave in a strange manner some ways before the birth of her first child. She happens to come across a box of old crayons in the back of a cup board with which she begins to draw pictures on the wall. She draws the picture of all sorts of babies around the pictures Ammaji has put. Then she draws a picture which is an example of fantasy because the picture is of those objects she has not
known earlier. To illustrate this, the following is cited from the novel thus:

Kulfi drew around these pictures and sometimes over them. She drew a pond dark but leaping with colourful fish. A field of bright pineapples and pale, dangling snake-gourd. Big lumbering jack fruit in a jack fruit tree and a scratching bunch of chickens.... She drew a parade of cooks beheading goats. Others running to a market place overflowing with things to bargain over. Some standing over steaming pots with ladles or pounding whole spices on a grinding stone. She drew creepers and vines that climbed in at the walls. She began to draw fruit she did not know; spices yet to be discovered in hidden bods or sequestered in the heart of unknown flowers. She drew dishes that she had never eaten; a black buck suspended over a fire with a row of ingrediens destined to transform it into magnificence; a peacock cavorting. Among cloves of garlic; a boar entangled in a jungle of papaya trees. Onions grew large beneath her feet; creepers burst from the floor boards; fish swam beneath the doors. (HIGO, 7-8).
This element is very significant in the narrative because it serves a forecast of the orchard which her son is going to use as his ashram after twenty four years. Thus there are two aspects of fantasy in this description. Firstly, the picture Kulfi has drawn are mysterious. Secondly it fore tells the future course of the narrative. Therefore it is regarded as significant.

On the day of the birth of Kulfi’s child, there is a change in the climate. The summer disappears suddenly with the thick clouds in the sky and a cool breeze in the land. Kulfi watches this abrupt seasonal change through a window from her. She is the first to announce “Here comes the rain.” Subsequently, it begins to rain heavily bringing about joy among the people of the down. This instance is symbolic of suggesting the birth of Kulfi’s first child as it is evident in the following:

She felt her muscles contract as a clap of thunder echoed about her. Again, the thunder roared. Kulfi, soaking wet, opened her mouth wide and roared back. Below her, the ground had disappeared, ponds formed, joined to make lakes and ran down streets to make rivers. Rivers took the place of roads.

A mere two hours later, Mr. Chawla and Ammaji running back and forth with cloths and hot water, the storm
still ragging, rain pouring through windows that would not stay closed and flooding in beneath the doors, Sampath was born. As his face, with a brown birth mark upon one cheek, appeared to the cheers of his family, there was a roaring overhead that almost split their eardrums, followed by a vast crash in the street outside. (HIGO, 10-11)

The fall of the tree is interpreted in two ways. Firstly it is viewed as an ill omen suggesting apocalypse. Then Mr. Chawla and Ammaji run to the window to observe what has happened outside. They discover that the coincidence of the fall of the tree and the birth of Kulfi’s son suggest the beginning rather, as a crate of Red cross supplies is found in the fallan tree. It is regarded as god send. The illustration of this is provided as under:

Caught in their old jamun three, they saw a crate of Red Cross supplies that had been dropped by a Swedish relief plane befuddled by the storm in a move that must surely have been planned by the gods. The departing plane rose high into the sky and vanished among the swirling clouds, unmoved apparently, by the town people jumping and waving down below as they ran out despite the downpour to greet this unexpected largesse. Dropped in the foliage of
the ruined jamun; they discovered containers full of sugar and tea, of rehydration mixes, dried milk powders in packages covered with pictures of smiling foreign women. There were nuts, sweets and baby food tins galore. Filling their arms with their share of this booty, they ran up and down. Climbing high into the tree, the street urchins tossed down what they found lodged in the broken branches. Mr. Chawla ran back and forth like a silly chicken, filling a shopping bag with supplies, while Ammaji alerted neighbours to the birth by shouting out of the window near Kulfi’s bedside. Soon the house was full of well-wishers, chattering excitedly not knowing whether to talk of the baby or the rain or the food. ‘Wonderful,’ they kept exclaiming water dripping from their clothes to form pools about their feet. ‘What a beautiful baby... and can you believe the mansoon? oh and the food! ...what a baby! (HIGO, 11-12)

The discovery of the crate of Red Cross supplies is like a magic. Since it happens at the time of the birth of Kulfi’s son, the credit is given to the new born. There is a turning point in the life of the people of Shahkot they were in despair due to the failure of the monsoon rain. It
had affected very seriously. With the birth of Kulfi’s son there is a positive transformation in their life. They have got a good rainfall and the supply of basic goods through the crate of Red Cross Supplies. It creates an impression that the newborn is god send and bestowed with supernatural powers.

While Mr. Chawla, Ammaji and others exhibit their joy loudly, Kulfi remains quite she observes her infant keenly and feels as if it has come from another planet altogether or has been discovered in the woods like new and peculiar. The neighbours treat the child as an incarnation some supernatural power which is evident in the narrative as follows:

Attempting to include Kulfi in their high spirits, the neighbours assured her that her son was destined for greatness, that the world, large and mysterious beyond Shakot, had taken notice of him. ‘Look! Even people in Sweden have remembered to send a birthday present.’

And: Let’s name him Sampath, they said. ‘Good fortune.’

For though he might not be very plump or very fair, he was triumphantly and indisputably male. In great good humour, chewing on famine relief, they celebrated by the light of a roomful of candles, for the electricity had, of course, gone. (HIGO, 12-13)
As noted above, the birth of Sampath Chawla is narrated with the touch of fantasy. It traces the eccentricity in the family of Kulfi’s mother side in many generation. Then it is shown that Kulfi has inherited the eccentricity which is manifested in her sleep-walk. An element of satire observed in the attitude of Kulfi’s father. He fails in his responsibility in providing medical treatment to cure her of the sleep-walk problem. Instead he tries to get ride of her by getting her married off to Chawla in hurry. This aspect of realism is presented in the manner of fantasy. Then Kulfi’s pregnancy is depicted with surrealism. Where the entire town undergoes a severe draught, Kulfi seems to be unaffected. She buys things from the market and keeps on consuming more and more food and fruits. There is a fine stroke of magic realism in the depiction of the coincidence between the birth of Sampath and the fall of a Jamun tree a crate of Red Cross supplies. Mr Chawla and the neighbours regard that Sampath is god send and he is going to become a great man in the future.

It is only an irony that Sampath has not shown any sign of supernatural quality. On the contrary, his performance in his studies and employment is very poor and dull. Mr. Chawla gives an account of his son’s backwardness during his education in the words as follows:

One by one, all Sampath’s classmates had found employment. Even the ones with the report cards that were
just like his. His report cards with so many red Fs the letter seemed to have multiplied with abandon, run wild by the absence of competition from the rest of the alphabet. Only Sampath had been left idle, spending many blissful hours dreaming in the tea stalls and singing to himself in the public gardens. (HIGO, 2-3)

The predictions and expectations of Mr. Chawla about Sampath meet with failure. He finds his son to be good for nothing. However, he struggles and gets a job for him in the post-office as a alerk. But Sampath continues to careless and negligent in his duties. It is

Sampath examined the post cards and letters that had just been brought in on the bus from Delhi for him to sort out 17 into the order in which they were to be delivered. He turned them over, smelled them, looked at the stamps, studied the names, the strange-feathered words.....

By evening, when it was discovered that he had finished of the things he was supposed to have done, he was sent home with warning of dire consequences to follow; he was to come in before everybody else the next day and complete the work. (HIGO, 34).
He becomes a burden to his father due to his carelessness. Unlike others, he could not make progress in his career. He commits one more act which causes displeasure to the chief in the post office when he is assigned the duty of serving cool drinks to the guests in one of the family functions of the chief, he spoils the whole work. Subsequently, he is terminated from his job. Thus it is only farcical that there were predictions that Sampath would emerge as a great personality.

It is at this juncture, the narrative take a very different turn. Sampath runs away from his house as it is unbearable for him to face the humiliation his father and sister cause to him. He chooses a guava tree in an orchard and settles down on a branch like a mad man. Though it becomes a matter of mirth at the beginning, he is regarded as a hermit with supernatural power later. From this event to the end of the novel, the narrative is filled with the aspects of magic realism.

At the beginning his behavior seems to be eccentric. On the day he has fixed to leave his house, he waits for the member of his family to go out to attend a wedding. As soon as they leave the house, he moves to the bazaar and boards the first bus he sees there. This is the bus which takes the milk sellers home after they have brought for sale in the town. He takes the seat between dozens of cold, empty canisters upto the entry of the outskirts of town. Then an old woman moves to sit closer to him. She
asks him a series of questions. At this juncture, the bus passes a beautiful hill. The beauty of this hill arouses an intense passion for the nature. As a result he gets off the bus. This event is evident to depict Sampath as eccentric as shown below:

Sampath felt the marvelous emotion that had overtaken him begin to sag. The bus groaned its way up the slope of the hill. For a brief moment the engine hiccupped and the bus stopped. In this moment, before the driver changed gears and proceeded up the hillside, Sampath leapt from the window of the stalling bus, spurred by his annoyance at the old crone’s voice. Amazed passangers who happened to be looking out at the view as they continued their journey saw Sampath racing into wilderness towards an old orchard visible far up the slope. He ran with a feeling of great urgency. Over bushes, through weeds. Before him, he saw a tree, an ancient tree, silence held between its branches like a prayer. He reached it base and feverishly, without pausing, he began to climb. He clawed his way from branch to branch. Hosting himself up, he disturbed dead leaves and insect carcasses and all the bits of dried-up debris that collect in a tree. It rained down about him as he clambered all the way to the top. (HIGO, 49-50)
When he settles down among the leaves, the spirit with which he left his house is relieved from. The passengers in the bus feels that Sampath is a sort of monkey man. The tree Sampath has climbed happens to be a guava tree which is unusually larger and more magnificent than any guava tree he has seen earlier. It has grown in the orchard. Though it belongs to the national forest now, it was previously owned by the old district judge of Shahkot.

He experiences a great sense of content with his settling down in the guava tree. It is a fulfillment of childhood mission and vision. The presence and chirps of trees and birds give him a great joy. The orchard is his really home which is presented in the narrative thus: “he was in right place at last. 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.” (HIGO, 51)

The sudden disappearance of Sampath causes a great shock to the members of his family. They approach the police in the local police station where they happen to stay for a very long time. Later, Sampath’s where about are revealed by the watchman of the university research forest who visits the town everyday to buy curd for his sister. While he goes to the town to get curd this time, he spreads the news that someone has climbed a tree and has not returned down. The reason for his strange act is unknown.
On hearing this news, Mr. Chawla guesses that it must be his son, Sampath. He also expresses a sign of relief because the orchard belongs to the District Judge on longer. If it had been so, his son would have been the bars. Since any delay to get him down from the tree and back is likely to create problems, he rushes to the orchard at once. The members of his family board the same bus Sampath has taken earlier and reach the orchard. It is very hard for them to tread along the hill path. Their search and discovery of Sampath is narrated as follows:

With determination and purpose, the Chawla family clacked about, shouting up into the leaves. At last, at the far corner of the farthest guava grove, right near the crumbling wall that bordered the forest, they discovered Sampath sitting in his tree eating a guava, his legs dangling beneath him. He had been watching their efforts with some alarm. What on earth was he to say? He imagined himself declaring: ‘I am happy over here.’ Or asking in surprised fashion: ‘But why have come to visit me?’ He could not answer their accusations with a defiant: ‘But for some people it is normal to sit in trees. ‘Or, serene with newfound dignity, he could say: ‘I am adopting a simple way of life. From now on I have relatives. Perhaps he could
leave out the last line and add instead that everybody was his relative. He could hold on to the branches and shout: ‘Pull at me all you want, but you’ll have to break my arms before you try to move me.’ In the end, as it happened, he said nothing at all.

‘What are you doing up there? Shouted Mr. Chawla Get down at once. (HIGO, 53-54)

Mr. Chawla’s order to Sampath to come back down bears no fruit. He and his daughter feel Sampath has caused embarrassment and disgrace to their family. But Kulfi has a different view about her son. His present position in the tree reminds her of her past. She approves her son’s decision and informs Mr. Chawla to let him be in the tree. Mr. Chawla is surprised by his wife’s attitude. According to him it is always the act of monkeys to climb up trees. On observing his son’s strange behavior, Mr. Chawla gets confused. Hence he takes the help of Dr. Banerjee from the clinic in the bazaar. He holds a medical degree from the medical school in Ranchi. He is also an energetic man. He fails to persuade him to get down through words. So he climbs to Sampath to examine his eyes, ears, tongue, heart and blood pressure. But he is unable to succeed. Therefore he returns down and remarks on Sampath like this: ‘He is a crazy person,’ he said beaming, the mirth of the entire situation too much for him. ‘Nobody except God can do anything about that. (HIGO, 56)
Subsequently, Sampath’s family approaches a series of doctors of different fields like doctor of Tibetan medicine, homoeopathy, Ayurveda and naturopathy. Mr. Chawla could not get any fruitful help from any of them. Then he decides to seek the advice of a holyman living outside the tea stall near the deer park. After a few questions, he suggests a marriage for him. The conversation with the holyman shows a tinch of satire which worth while to notice as given below:

‘Sorry to disturb you. Our son is afflicted.’
‘How is he afflicted?’
‘He is suffering from madness.’
‘How is he suffering? Is he shouting?’
‘No.’
‘Having fits?’
‘No.’
‘Is he tearing his hair out?’
‘No.’
‘Is he biting his neighbours? Biting himself? Is he sleep-walking? Does he stick out his tongue and roll his eyes? Is he rude to strangers?’
‘No. He eats and sleeps and takes good care of his hair. He doesn’t shout and he doesn’t bite himself. He has never rude to strangers.’
‘Then he does not exhibit any of the sure signs of madness.’ ‘But he is sitting up in a tree!’

‘Arrange a marriage for him. Then you can rest in peace.
You will have no further problems. (HIGO, 56-57)

Besides, the holyman gave some instructions to Mr. Chawla while selecting a bride for his son. Accordingly, the girl should belong to a good family. Her personality had to be pleasant. Her character should be decent but not be shameless and bold. She should be obedient by way of keeping eyes and head lowered. Her complexion should be fair failing which she should bring additional dowry like a television, a fridge a Godrej steel cupboard and a scooter. She should be a good student with proficiency in a variety of different fields. She should have learnt music and dance. She should not be a handicap physically. She should be a healthy person without defect in her hearing and speaking. She has to be a slim person with large hips and bosom but a small waist. Though generosity is a virtue, she should not waste the wealth on charity. If all these qualities are found in a girl, that can girl can be chosen for Sampath’s marriage through the arranged marriage system.

However, the family of Mr. Chawla could not find a girl who fits the instructions of the holyman. Through Lakshmi, their neighbor, a girl is selected against the wish of Kulfi and Ammaji. She is dark and
scrawny according to them. The families of Sampath and the bride arrive at the orchard on one day. But Sampath is never ready to cooperate with them by get down from the tree. Consequently, the girl is made to climb the tree to reach Sampath yet the marriage is not conducted. The pilgrims, who have gathered there, allege that Sampath has failed in his duty as a son.

It is at this juncture, a turning point takes place in the narrative in which Sampath is transformed from a madman into a hermit. Sampath identifies a few people among the pilgrims and reveals their personal matters. Those, who are identified, feel surprised and come to the conclusion that Sampath is not an ordinary person. They regard him as a man with supernatural powers. It creates a sense magic which is evident in the illustration as under:

In desperation he looked around him. Among the crowd of faces down, he recognized that of Mr. Singh, the brother-in-law of a neighbour is Shahkot. Mr Singh, whose letters he had sometimes read in idle moments in the post office. As if in a frantic plea for help, he shouted: ‘Mr. Singhji.’ He remembered one particular letter sent by him to his father. ‘Is your jewellery still safe buried beneath the tulsi plant? Mr. Singh turned pale. ‘How do you know about my
circumstances?’ he asked. Sampath then caught sight of Mrs. Chopra. How is that lump in your throat that travels up and down your windpipe, whispering threats and almost bursting right out of your chest? (HIGO, 66)

In hearing this, Mrs Chopra is also taken back. She wonders as who has told him that she suffers from hiccups. Sampath gains more strength on discovering that Mr. Singh and Mrs Chopra are wonderstruck. Thus he reveals the secret of one more person called Ratan Sinha. He states that he has got some secret oil from the doctor in sidegully. He adds that the oil has not created any improvement in his hair. Then he suggests a good massage with mustard oil for the growth of his hair. The surprise of these three persons is presented in the narrative as follows:

Their eyes wide with what they had seen, important in the news they were carrying, and the devotees drove back into Shahkot. There was a man up in the guava tree, a remarkable man. He had known all sorts of things. The decoits were blackmailing boor Mr. Singh. An evil spirit had established itself in Mrs. Chopra’s stomach. Ratan Sinha had been using a special hair oil to no effect. Clearly, there was more to this post-office clerk than to ordinary mortals. In his eyes they had detected a rare spirit. (HIGO, 67)
This is witnessed by the news paper reporters. A modest column is written about Sampath in the news paper the next day. Sampath’s behavior is interpreted as that of an unnatural spiritual nature and as a mixture of unfathomable wisdom. This news is responsible for promoting the image of Sampath as a holyman. After this news spreads across the town, the orchard becomes, the ashram of Sampath who is treated as a wise sage. The narrative hence forth is filled with fantasy and humour indicating the use of magic realism.

The first person who takes the advantage of Sampath’s fame as a sage is his father, Mr. Chawla. He, who kept of degrading him for his backwardedness in education, employment and for his strange behavior of not leaving the quava tree, treats Sampath as the fortune of his family. Mr. Chawla’s attitude of opportunism is noticeable in the illustration as shown below:

Sampath might make his family’s fortune. They could be rich! How many hermits were secretly wealthy? How many holymen were not at all the beggars they appeared to be? How many men of unfathomable wisdom possessed unfathomable bank accounts? What an opportunity had arisen out of nowhere! Already there was a change in the way people looked at Sampath! no longer did they snigger
and smirk or make sympathetic noises with their tongues. He, Mr. Chawla, must move as quickly as he could to claim these possibilities for his family, possibilities that stretched, he was sure, well beyond his sight’s furthest horizon... He stopped berating Sampath for having climbed up the tree, and turned his attention to other matters. (HIGO, 68)

Mr. Chawla, Kulfi, Ammaji and Pinky sit and plan as how to improve Sampath’s stay in the tree. After contemplating many things, they decide that they should get a string cot to place in the branches so that Sampath can feel comfortable. Ironically, it causes inconvenience rather. He is irritated to sleep on the cot so much so that he gets down to sleep on the grass land while his family member absent there. Then an old large stripped garden umbrella is also brought and provided to Sampath. it is followed by many more materials for Sampath’s comforts. It is portrayed thus:

Thus Sampath was gradually provided with all sorts of comforts and, the more elaborate his living arrangements, the happier he was. He made a lovely picture, seated there amidst the greenery, reclining upon his cot at a slight angle to the world; propped against numerous cushions; tucked
up, during chilly evenings, in a glamorous stain quilt covered with leopard-skin spots, chosen by Ammaji in the bazaar. On his head, he sported a tea-cosy-like red woolen hat, also given to him by Ammaji, who had knitted it and raised it to him on a stick. He was particularly fond of his hat, for it kept his head snug and warm at night when the breeze was chilly, and it kept the night rustlings, the crawling of little black beetles, ants and moths, out of his ears as well. (HIGO,70)

Water is sent up in the buckets to the tree with which Sampath bathes himself. It is followed by break fast which pinky herself takes to Sampath by climbing the tree. Thus Sampath is pampered by all members of his family.

After Sampath has been elevated to the status of a holyman, many visitors begin to arrive at the orchard to see him. Among them his colleagues Miss Jyotsna and Mr. Gupta are the first ones. On their first visit, they notice that Sampath’s face appears to be very different. According to them, it is nothing but the evidence for the thorough transformation he has undergone. His face shows the signs of being happier and calmer. In the ensuing conversation between Mr. Gupta and Sampath, he reveals some secrets of Jyotsna suggesting the device of magic realism. It is worth while the provide the illustration from the novel as shown under.
‘Namasteji,’ said Sampath, greeting them cheerfully from his cot in the trees, his new position of power. Really, he thought, he was quite fond of them. They had always meant well, unlike many others he could name. ‘Hello, Sampath,’ said Mr. Gupta. ‘Why did you not take me with you? I could have had a little rest from this one here: He pointed at Miss Jyotsna with a comic expression upon his face. ‘Any time you want a rest from her you should send her to the sari and Salwar Kameez shop,’ laughed Sampath. ‘You know how much this lady loves clothes... Oh, but may be that is not such a good idea. Already she owes the Ladies’ fashion shop 152 rupees and eighty paisa.’ (HIGO, 73)

It takes Miss Jyotsna aback. She feels her blood rushing to her face because of the revelation of this secret. She begins to feel panic about what more he is going to reveal about her. As she has heard from other that he had stunned the devotees of the Krishna temple with his clairvoyance, she fears that he has begun to examine her life with that power. Subsequently a few more visitors join Mr. Gupta and Miss. Jyotsna. One among them is a pregnant woman who has come to Sampath to know whether her child is a boy or a girl. On seeing Sampath, she elulogizes him by stating that he has the same expression as the Tejewala sage in Samadhi.
However the relative of Lakshmiji overtakes the pregnant woman in placing her problem before Sampath. She informs Sampath that her son keeps bad company and requests him to suggest a solution. Sampath replies symbolically that if lemon is added to milk, milk is bound to get spoilt and if sugar is added to milk, milk is bound to become tasty. This is a common sense which she need not learn from him. He reminds her that she must have also behaved like her son while was young. She poses another question which he deals with like a wise man. This instance is illustrated thus:

By this do you mean I should remove him from the presence of these undesirable characters? Lakshmiji’s relative asked ‘If you put a chicken on the fire and leave it, in a little while it will no longer be a chicken, but ash and bones. Leave a kettle on the flames, the water will grow hot and then, if someone does not lift it off, it will all boil away until there is nothing left. If your child is playing with a dead smelly mouse, you will not debate: “Should I let him be, should I let him play?” No, you will throw away the mouse and take your child no doors to wash his hands.’ Mr Chawla and Pinky, who had just arrived from a trip to the market in time to hears this last sentence, looked at each other in disbelief when they saw how closely people listened to Sampath. (Sampath, 75)
Sampath’s wise counsel to his followers brings joy to his father, mother, grandmother and his sister. They feel very proud of his exceptional wisdom. In an encounter with another man with a round face, Sampath uses riddles to answer his questions. His first question is how he can concentrate on his family responsibilities when he is overtaken by the spiritual matters. Sampath answers in a riddle thus: “If you talk to a young girl as she stands before the mirror, it is like talking to a deaf person. And can you keep a moth from flying into the lantern by saying she should worry about her three children?” (HIGO, 76)

Again he asks Sampath whether he suggests that he should forgo his duties to his wife and children. He answers this question through a anecdote like this: “Once my uncle had a rooster and an insect laid eggs in the flesh of its rear end. It knew the young ones would have a warm place to live and plenty to eat before they were old enough to leave.” (HIGO, 76)

The round faced shoots his third question fast and furiously. The question is as which way between devotion and knowledge is better to realize God. Sampath responds to this question again indirectly thus:

“Some people can only digest fish cooked in a light curry. Others are of a sour disposition and should dot eat pickled fish. In the south they enjoy fish cooked with coconut water. I myself have a preference for pomfret in a sauce of chilli and tamrind thickened with gram flour.” (HIGO, 76)
The visitor seems not to end his questions. He puts forward one more question by asking as where he can begin his search. Sampath has become tired so that he responds to this question by throwing a smile. Then he shows the signs of falling asleep. Sampath’s answers are not emanated from any of his spiritual and supernatural powers. As a matter of fact, he is nowhere related to spiritualism at all. He has read these matters in the letters stealthily while working in the post-office. He repeats those matters at random but his followers regard them as an example spiritual discourse.

The role of Kulfi is given prominence at this juncture. She undertakes the responsibility of cook food exclusively for Sampath. She feels that she has gained an adequate space for her after shifting to the orchard. She has had an inherent visions regard food at the time of her marriage. Yet there was little scope for her to transform them into reality.

However, she is free to experiment with any sort of dish she likes. She regards the old method of cook as wrong and she tries the methods her visions indicate. There is an element of magic realism in this instance as it shows that the passers by feel that the mere smell of Kulfi’s cooking provides them fulfillment. The following illustrates this thus:

Almost all day she worked, trying this and that, producing, even in these days of apprenticeship to her imagination,
meals of such flavor and rarity that others could merely guess at what they were missing by the smells that rose from her pots, so intoxicating them by evening’s end that they had barely any recollection of what had passed when they departed from their audience with Sampath. They felt filled, though, with a sense of magic and well being. By the look of Sampath, he too was permeated with a similar feeling, but to a much greater degree. His cheeks grows slowly plumper day by day; his tense, worried expression melted into one of contentment; the soft movement of the days and nights rising and falling about him were gently reflected in his face and his eyes mirrored the quiet of the distant hills. (HIGO, 79)

Kulfi recollects the storm on the day Sampath was born. A Jamun tree had fallen down but it contained the a bag filled with various food materials. The neighbours viewed it as a divine act. Since Sampath birth coincided with this mysterious event, Sampath was predicted to become a great spiritual man. Kulfi realizes that the prediction has come true now. According to her, the orchard represents the vision she has had earlier.

In this process, a month has passed. Mr. Chawla has completed the task of establishing proper living arrangements for his family in the
orchard. He could get the electric connection from the hospital electricity lines. A private water tank has been arranged. He could get provisions like matches, kerosene, candles and soaps from the shop in the town as a special courtesy. His house in the town has been rented to a secretary from the fertilizer company and new account has been opened. Mr. Chawla utilizes this opportunity to earn wealth as much as possible.

In the meantime, Sampath has become so much popular as a holy man that numerous visitors keep on coming to the orchard to take his blessings. Thus the path to Sampath’s tree improved. This is depicted with a touch of humour like this:

The path to Sampath’s tree had been widened and kept swept clean and sprinkled with rose-water; a small ladder had been set against the trunk so those interested in asking for blessing (and everybody was interested, of course) could climb up to the spot where Sampath dangled his legs. With his toes placed reverently upon their heads, they would claim his blessing and descend feeling smug and rather proud. Other arrangements had been provided too.” (HIGO, 92)

While Sampath fame has prevailed as a holyman in many places and his father has started earning money through some strategies, there is
a negative reaction from a section of people called Atheist society and Branch to uncover Fraudulent Holy Men. A spy belonging to these organizations begins to pay visits to Sampath with a strong intention expose Sampath as a fraud. This spy belong to a poor family. His parents have got eleven boys and girls. He has nursed a great ambition of overcoming the poverty of his family. Since his job as a school teacher is too inadequate to fulfil his ambition, he quits it and becomes a secret news reporter.

He visits Sampath one day and puts forth a question of existential problem. Sampath tries his usual strategy by his ambiguous questions but in vain. The spy notes that Sampath avoids questions by pretending otherworldliness and is unable to discuss deeper matters of philosophy. Sampath feels irritated by the questions of the spy and gets tired of answering him. This is misinterpreted by Ammaji as temporary departure of Sampath’s mind from the earthly plane. Lakshmiji supports her by stating that the holy men sit completely still sometimes and they are like a child though they are frivolous and laugh; leap and dance some other times. They may also instruct others to share their wisdom. At this juncture, Ammaji describes Sampath’s evolution from ordinary to extra ordinary thus:
“‘Oh,’ said Ammaji, chiming in delightedly as she rolled a betel leaf, he was born with a spiritual tendencies. Everybody was saying may be he is a little made, may be he is a little simple minded, but it is just that he could never interest himself in the material world. One time I gave him five rupees to pay the milkman and the next thing I heard was the milkman shouting: ‘Oi, ji, Look, ji, what your grandson has done.’ There was a strong breeze that day and while the milkman was measuring the milk, he had made a boat out of the bill and floated it into the canister. And hai, hai, when it came to school what a terrible time we had. All the time: fail in Hindi, fail in Sanskrit, fail in Mathematics, fail in history. Never could he concentrate on his studies. ‘Ah! for one like him, it is hard to keep the mind on such petty and mundane matters. He will look out of the window and everywhere there is the glory of God. (HIGO, 96-97)

At this juncture, Kulfi’s search for jungle birds for cooking for Sampath is depicted with humour and fantasy. It is well known that the sages are vegetarian in India. But Sampath is portrayed to eat meat in the narrative in order to satirize the false-sagehood which is prevailing in
India during post independence period. Kulfi lays traps in the forest and catch birds. her behaviours is characterized by strangeness of fantasy is employed in presenting it. Her movements inside the forest for the birds appear like magic which is evident in the illustration provided as under :

Far an hillside roamed a lady responsible for Sampath’s nutrition, a tiny figure on the crest of the university research forest, disappearing and reappearing among the trees, emerging at the point where the forest bordered the fields so as to check the cane traps she had set for pheasants and other water water fowl. They lived in the forest but ate from the grain crops and were as fat and delicious as wildfowl could be. When she spotted one in the trap, she pounced upon it and, without flinching wrung its neck with a grip of iron. The profusion of greenery and space exhilarated her. And while it reduced her son to a happy stupor, it incited her to a frenzy of exploration. (HIGO, 100)

She moves into the deep forest fearlessly. Indeed, the goat herders are surprised to see a town woman like Kulfi moving into the dangerous and deepest parts of the forests. She follows the paths treaded by the

Despite the caution and warning from the goat herders, she wanders
inside the forest and collects lotus stems from the ponds. She rides bird’s nests for eggs and breaking the tightly sealed pods. She also bites the grasses and removes the roots. She gathers fruit from the trees. At the end, she returns to her shed in the orchard like this:

Returned home with her hair wild, her muddy hands full of flowers, her mouth blue and red from all she had Sampled. The corners of her sari were tied into knots containing ginger lilies and rain-fever mushrooms, samples of seeds and bits of bark. Sometimes she brought back a partridge or a jungle quail, strung on to a stick and carried over her shoulder. She returned via the sleep path that led to the back of the watchman’s shed so as to avoid the visitors and the talk which had ceased to interest her. (HIGO, 100-101)

Kulfi is obsessed so much with the meat of the birds and roots in the wild that she treads into the forest everyday and brings water fowls or partridges. She cooks them and serves the food to Sampath whose image is that of a holyman now. This depiction contradicts the Hindu tradition. The aim of this factor is to evince the sharp degradation of the tradition of sage-hood in India. Though it is a matter of fact, the mode of realism is not adopted to present it. On the country, the device of fantasy and surrealism has employed.
Though Mr. Chawla gains a lot of wealth by utilizing his son’s image as a sage, he faces a setback in the next few days. The visitors to Sampath carry bottles of liquor with them and throw the liquor bottles in the orchard after drinking it. Unexpectedly, some monkeys happen to taste the few drops of liquor that remain in the bottles. Consequently, they develop interest for liquor. As a result, they begin to attack the visitors hoping to get the liquor from them. It becomes a serious crisis not only in the orchard and in the entire town also. The collector of Shankot is informed about it. It becomes difficult for the police force to contain the monkeys from creating menace. The help of army is also sought subsequently. It is realized that unless Sampath is separated from the monkeys by bringing him down from the guava tree, their operation to eliminate the monkeys will cause danger to the life of Sampath. Thus the combined force of army and police moves heaven and earth to descend the guava tree in vain. A large net is brought to catch the langurs but it is pinky’s lover who falls into it.

It is at this juncture two mysterious things. i.e., the disappearance of Sampath and the spy. It is depicted like the disappearance of objects and persons in magic.

Firstly, the instance of Sampath’s vanishing is undertaken for elucidation. On the scheduled day for chasing the monkeys from the
orchard, the task force of army and police arrives. Mr. Chawla reminds Sampath that the team has already arrived. Kulfi leaves the location of the guava tree and moves into the forest. Sampath notices the last guavas of the season in the tree with a glittering shine. He plucks one guava and speculates about it’s flesh inside. He sits holding the guava without any movement. Subsequently Mr. Chawla, Ammaji and Miss Jyotsna realize that Sampath is not there on his cot in the guava tree. Sampath seems to have vanished. His disappearance is presented with a tinge of magic realism thus:

They looked here. They looked there. Up and down the guava tree. In the neighbouring trees. In the bushes. Behind the rocks. They started up into the branches again and again, into the undisturbed composition of leaves and fruit bobbing up and down. Its painfully empty cot. But wait! upon the cot lay a guava, a single guava that was much, much bigger than the others: rounder, star-based, weathered... It was surrounded by the silver langurs, who stared at it with their intent charcoal faces. On one side was a brown mark, rather like a birth mark.... wait, shrieked Ammaji. ‘Give me that fruit. Wait! Sampath! Sampath! But the Cinema Monkey picked up the fruit
himself before anybody had time to move and, calm-eyed and wise, holding it close to his chest, with the other monkeys following in a band, he leapt from the guava tree’s branches and bounded away. (HIGO, 207-208)

Sampath metamorphosis. The cinema monkey picks it up and flees from the tree followed by other monkeys. They travel higher like a strong and mysterious wind and they also disappear with the guava. Kulfi notices them a while later but they vanish from her eyes also. This magic like instance is depicted as follows:

High in a mossy magnolia, gathering orchids, Kulfi was caught up for an instant in a shaking storm, saw a pale blur flash pat her. She stood up on the branch where she had has become a guava though the mysterious been sitting, shielding her eyes against the rays of the sun, to watch a the monkeys climbed on. Up into the wilderness, upto the shoulder of the highest mountain. Here the trees at the very summit wavered for a moment, bowed their heads as if in farewell and they were gone. Without a trace. (HIGO, 209)

Secondly, the spy, who has devoted his entire time and energy to detect the truth about Sampath, also vanishes in a strange manner. When arrangements are made by the army and the police to capture the
notorious monkeys, the spy hides himself in the orchard to discover the fact about Sampath. When the operation force approaches the guava tree, he also climbs a tree stealthily to observe what is going to happen. At the bottom of the tree, Kulfı’s cooking pot is ready on the local stove of fire woods. When Sampath vanishes, the spy also disappears suddenly. The depiction of this resonates with realism. Hence it is illustrated here thus:

The sound reached Kulfı in her tree. She turned back down towards the valley. ‘What was that?’ ‘Did you hear?’

Pinky fired at the Brigadier with her beautiful big eyes.

‘Did you hear that sound?’

‘What was that?’ asked Mr. Chawla and Ammaji, the army men and the policemen, the devotees and towns people. Despite themselves, they drew their attention from the mountain top. Above Kulfı’s enormous cooking pot hung a broken branch. In the pot were spices and seasonings, herbs and fruit, a delicious gravy.

And some thing else. (HIGO, 209)

There is a clue that the spy might have fallen into the pot. He was moving from one branch to the other to observe the operation to capture monkeys and get Sampath down from the guava tree. He settled on a branch under exactly which Kulfı’s cooking pot was boiling with the spice. The branch might have broken due to which he must have fallen into the pot. What is to be noticed is that the spy has also vanished now.
IV. Conclusion:

The analysis of the narrative in Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard shows that Sampath undergoes a transformation from an ordinary post office clerk into a powerful holyman. The depiction of Sampath’s mother before he marriage and Sampath’s birth foretells that Sampath is going to become a great person in the future. However, the mode of magic realism is adopted in the depiction of these instances. After twenty four, Sampath comes to be viewed as a holyman. His interaction with the visitors evinces the employment of fantasy and surrealism. At the end of the narrative, the portrayal of Kulfi’s strange behaviour and the disappearance of Sampath and the spy reveals that they are presented in the mode of magic realism. The narrative defies the social realism by adopting magic realism. Hence Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard is regarded as a novel of magic realism.

Magic Realism in Hullaballoo in the guava Orchard – A Study, Hullaballoo in the guava Orchard has been examined and the examination has shown there are elements of magic realism in the depiction of Sampath’s mother, Kulfi and Sampath. She behaves in a peculiar way of over eating, night walking and her discovery of the bag of clothes and food is an example of magic realism. Sampath’s revelation of the secrets of the his followers are also in the form of magic realism. Is sudden disappearance surprises the readers like magi. Thus this novel is called a novel of magic realism.
References: