The Inheritance of Loss

This chapter aims to study the images of women in Kiran Desai’s novels. These novels are *The Inheritance of Loss* and *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. Kiran Desai, born in 1971 is an Indian author. She is the citizen of India and a permanent resident of the USA. Her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* won the 2006 Booker prize and the National Book Critics Circle fiction award.

*The Inheritance of Loss* opens with a teenage Indian girl. She is an orphan and her name is Sai. She is living with her grandfather who is a retired judge in the town of Kalimpong on the Indian side of the Himalayas. Sai is romantically involved with her maths tutor. He is the descendant of a Nepali Ghurkha mercenary, named by Gyan, but he eventually recalls his obvious privilege. He falls in with a group of Ethnic Nepalese insurgents. Several major issues of modern civilization have been handled by Kiran Desai in her novel. The globalized concept is multisided. It has economic, political, social, cultural, and educational aspects. It may create an opportunity or a danger, due to Globalization situations have changed, new concepts have emerged, and people have stepped out of their areas of confinement to find company and competency among their counterparts. Dr. Shubha Mukherjee remarks:

Kiran Desai’s ‘The Inheritance of Loss’ presents the picture of globalised India. The characters like Jamubhai Patel, Mrs and Mr Mistry, Sai, Biju Nonita and Lolita are affected by Globalization. As intelligent writer and
careful observer of human behaviour, Kiran Desai fulfills the responsibility of writing about current sensational issues.\textsuperscript{1}

It focuses that the women in Kiran Desai’s novel ready themselves according to time and necessary requirement for development. She (Desai) seems far from writers such as Zadie Smith and Hari Kudzu whose fiction takes a generally optimistic views.

Hybridity, impurity, inter mingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, and songs.\textsuperscript{2}

It focuses on the fate of a few powerless individual women. Kiran Desai’s novel explores intimacy and insight, just about every contemporary international issue such as globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism, and terrorist violence. The life of Biju is being shown, the son of Sai’s grandfather’s cook, who belongs to the “shadow class” of illegal immigrants in New York and spends much of his time dodging the authorities, moving from one ill-paid job to another.

Today’s multicultural societies have been challenged. Prejudice and intolerance, especially in connection with differences in race and ethnicity, have been demanding and becoming problematic. Due to variations in culture and religious background, gender roles have been proven difficult in relation to western ideas and other cultures. Eventually, the question of class has been of significance not only in respect of professional skills and social status in the country of origin but also regarding how immigrants settle and integrate into a new country.
In her novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai gives vivid descriptions of multicultural societies from the whole world. The problem of alienation is a recurrent theme in many of the post-colonial Indian English writers. The themes of homesickness, rootlessness, patriarchy, oppression have been studied through the lens of migration and multiculturalism in a postcolonial setting. Specially, the researcher is interested in investigating why some women are discriminated against and how literature represents this discrimination. The researcher emphasizes on the tense relationship. This novel explores the ambivalence that rules the national discourse about globalized women character. In Desai’s novel, the various characters are trapped by the ambivalence that surrounds global, local, and postcolonial politics because the promise of opportunity is invariably conditioned by issues of class and ethnicity.

This liberal Western feminism reductive approach leads not only to much binary opposition but also to a self-representation of the European middleclass women superior, educated, and modern as against the projected view of the *Third World Women* as ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, and victimized.

Thus in comparison to the superiority of the Western feminists, the Third World Women rise above the debilitating generality of their “object” status. This Western feminist approach thus manifests humanism as “a Western ideological and political project that involves the necessary recuperation of the “East and “Woman” as others.”

Gender, class, caste, and race are interlinked from postcolonial point of view. Mohanty quotes at some length in this context:
Ideologies of womanhood have much to do with class and race. As they have to do with sex.... It is the intersections of the various systematic networks of class, race, heterosexuality, and nation that position us as women.4

The fundamental challenge for feminist analysis once it takes seriously the location and struggles of the Third World Women, and this challenge have implications for the rewriting of all hegemonic history, not just the history of people of colour. These issues of intersection of gender, race and so on is pursued at length because it is here that critics like Sara Suleri made their sharp attack on what they implied to be a dangerous coalition between post-colonialism and feminism. Suleri demands historicity for the postcolonial and hence its disjunction from feminism, critics like Mohanty, Trinh and hooks demand historicity on the part of feminism and hence its inevitable intersection with post-colonialism as no one becomes a woman purely because she is female. The woman as subject in any literary discourse is written primarily in the masculine form and interpreted in patriarchal terms. Bhabani Bhattacharya in Women in My Stories candidly confesses:

The women of India have more depth, more richness than men. The transition from the old to the new and the crisis of value adaptation, strike deeper into the lives of women than the men-folk.5

In spite of such confession by a noted Indian writer the works of Indian women writers have been undervalued due to patriarchal assumptions about the superior worth of male experience. Women
writers are found capable of writing from within the private sphere; the works by the male writers belong to grand public sphere.

While identifying the “women question” as central issue, Partha Chatterjee finds that the attempt to modernize the condition of Indian women was soon replaced by “a glorification of traditional patriarchal assumptions under the impact of nationalist discourse.”

The experience of being caught between two cultures has remained a prominent theme in the writings of Indian women. While in the nineteenth century, Indian writers attempted to write about the woman’s life in his/ her patriarchal voice in order to appropriate the representation of woman with the dominant patriarchal discourse of the West and under the impact of nationalist discourses there was a deliberate shift from the westernized concept of woman to a more traditional one.

According to Partha Chatterjee, “Such nationalist construction of woman...nonetheless remains trapped within its framework of false essentialisms.”

Towards the last decade of the twentieth century, however, a gradual change started creeping in, unobtrusively trying to produce a blend of Indian tradition and Western modernity in the conditioning of women. With the emergence of several Indian English women writers the representation of women and fiction-making also underwent a substantial change. Indian women novelists started exploring the problem of East-West confrontation while analyzing the response of women and children towards migration, displacement, and cultural
encounter. In their searching for their own identity in their writing, novelists like Anita Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri and second generation immigrants like Kiran Desai, incorporated a psychological journey to selfhood, towards a critical understanding of feminine aesthetics and about their situation in cross-cultural contexts states of in-between’s and border-crossing. The hands of the nationalists, social reform for women were turned into cultural reform in terms of the entrenchment of the dichotomies of the domains. It is not only enabled them to resist the colonial discourse about India and its women but also gave rise to a new patriarchy. It connected the home and the world in such a way as to produce the new woman or bhadramahila, who would not only be different culturally from the Western women but also distinguished from the common women, who did not attain the superior moral sense and were also oppressed under the old patriarchy.

This was the nationalist mode of challenging the Western claim of superiority on the one hand and to shore up its struggle for emancipation on the other and “thus the new woman was charged with the responsibility of culturally emancipating herself and emancipating the nation.”

Meenakshi Mukherjee observes:

The resultant tension between individual and society “could be studied in sharper contours when the protagonist’s life was restricted within the narrow space with very few options regarding mobility, self-sufficiency, or vocation in other words when the protagonist was a woman.”
Sai is such a protagonist in Kiran Desai’s novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, who becomes the quintessence of the New Woman. In addition, derives her strength from her anglicized cultural refinement, acquired through the Western education in the convents, she attended. She is deeply immersed in her thoughts of loneliness and exile and being an orphan, she seeks solace in books and nature. This feeling of a lineation and isolation is compounded by Sai’s identification with Kanchenjunga: “A far peak whittled out of ice, gathering the last of the light, a plume of snow blown high by the storms at its summits.” (IOL, p, 117)

She is engrossed in an article about giant squid in an old National Geographic, the loneliness warps her through the grey mist that permeates everywhere and the image of the giant squid accentuates her isolation as she feels “...theirs was solitude so profound they might never encounter another of their tribe”. (IOL, p.2)

Sai turns melancholic at the predicament of eternal loneliness and seeks refuge in the thoughts of love and her sense of crisis is a reality. In Arun Joshi’s *The Foreigner*, the plight of the protagonist Sindi Oberoi is similar to Sai as both of them are orphaned at an early age, undergo existential dilemmas, and are intricately affected by the problem of post-independence Indian society. Sai Mistry, being a product of the postcolonial situation, finds the remnants of the colonial past scattered all over her life. Born of the romance between her Zoroastrian father and a Hindu mother, who had died in Moscow, she was entrusted to the care of a convent. She became a westernized Indian brought up by English nuns, an estranged Indian living in India. She was a product of mishmash of cultures Lochinvar and Tagore: “Punjabi dance in dhotis”,
National Anthem in Bengali” and an impenetrable Latin motto “Piscitisci episculum basculum”. (IOL, p. 30)

She learnt the colonial etiquettes and used the superior technique of incorporating in her life the ways and norms of the dominant culture; she accepted that cake should be preferred than ladduoos and fork spoon, knifes are better than hands. “At home, his mother was weeping because she had not estimated the imbalance between the finality of good-bye and the briefness of the last moment.” (IOL p. 41)

Women don’t have right to interfere in home affairs, their voices are suppressed. This indication of the residual effect of colonial domination is clearly visible in the life of the judge and Sai. The dynamic psychological and social interplay between Sai and the judge with their colonial culture and the native indigenous culture of the young gang of boys exposes Sai and her grandfathers’ inadequacy at meeting the insurgents on a dominant plane. In addition to the cultural transformation required of all immigrants to anywhere, the individual transplanted to the U.S. must also cope with the changing world in which nothing, not even the landscape stays the same. Change and adaptability is the key to survival, and that the successful immigrant has the instinct of reinventing oneself in recurrence to adjust with the postcolonial exilic reality. Thus in the flurry of changes there is a nucleus of cross-cultural reality. This exuberance of immigration, which comes with the acquisition of Americanisms and the immigrant Indianness, result in a sort of a fluid identity. This liquidity of identity not only complicate the life of Sai but also the sisters Lalita (Lola) and
Nomita (Noni) and like Sarah in Anita Desai’s *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, they are a product of East-West amalgamation. Lola and Noni in this fiction regret the passing of life, at having never experienced love at all, at never having taken any risk as Noni regrets: “I should have thought about the future when I was young”. (IOL p. 69)

They are caught between two alternatives where they view their private world with rose tinted glass and transitory world which they cannot identify with, where they face humiliation, deprivation, and isolation. Their old way of life and the sudden transition is too violent for them to comprehend “Just when Lola had thought it would continue, a hundred years. Like the one pas- Trollope, BBC, a burst of hilarity at Christmas— all of a sudden, all that they had claimed innocent, fun, funny, Not really to matter, was proven wrong”. (IOL p.241-242) They never strive to learn the ways of their adopted country. As Pramod K. Nayar writes in his essay “*Hybridity, Diaspora, and Cosmopolitanism*”, “Exiles tend to hold on to their traditions in an almost desperate effort to retain/reclaim their original culture...”

Thus the two Afgan princesses stick to their own cultural code and when the reality invades their lives, they become disillusioned and aware of their insecurity and vulnerability as females, unprotected in an alien land among alien people. Desai’s novel suggests that the global call for melting borders that became the political statement of the Indian nation in the last quarter of the 20th century. It Created reactionaries in the localized spaces of the land, and the contending forces generated narratives that challenged not the phenomenon of globalization per se but the politics of exclusivity that invariably conditioned the countries
vision of melting border. This condition of displacement challenges the diasporic to negotiate his gender identity in ways that will allow him to survive in the newly constructed spaces and gender becomes, as Judith Butler argues, “A dramatic and contingent construction of meaning”.

Like Ashima, the protagonist in Jhumpa Lahiri’s book *The Namesake*, the problems of identity crisis which the diasporian people suffer from and the loneliness is projected through the lives of these two sisters as all of them are trapped between two situations one unacceptable and other incepting. Like Anita Desai’s psychological novels, Kiran Desai also presents the image of a suffering woman preoccupied with her inner world, her sulking frustration, and the storm of conflict within. Kiran presents in this fiction Sai’s awareness of the foibles of the society which is exposed through the life of her grandfather. She strives to create a life of her own, far removed from the colonial grasp with which the judge and the two Afgan princesses hold on to the hangover of the past. Through these characters Kiran, like Anita Desai, makes a plea for a better way of life for women. The result of the inculcation of English leaves Sai alienated in his own country. She seeks to escape her loneliness being engaged to her tutor Gyan. But after a brief interlude of romance between the two teenagers, their attachment dries out as each finds the other as alien, belonging to different cultures, and different life patterns. The sight of chickens being hurt and raped by the rooster refers to the colonial situation where the rooster represents the English and the chickens the Indians:

The birds had never revealed themselves to her so clearly. Being hammered and pecked as they screamed and flapped. Attempting to escape from the rapist rooster. (IOL p.48)
This scene illustrates the helplessness and vulnerability of the Indians in a colonial situation. Although Sai’s sensuality traps Gyan, who enjoys prohibited pleasure, sexual dominance of Sai compels Gyan to feel as if, “...she had chased and trapped him, tail between his legs, into a cage”. (ibid p. 249)

When Sai seeks out Gyan and enters the prohibited domain of “other” her face unconsciously mirrors her distaste and Gyan is no longer her beloved “momo” but a “dirty hypocrite”. The act of betrayal by Gyan stems from the fact that Sai is not one of them and that she cannot speak any other languages than English and Hindi. Sai and the two Afgan princesses undergo what Homi Bhabha refers to as “unhomeliness”

This feeling of being caught between cultures, of belonging to neither rather than to both, of finding oneself arrested in a psychological limbo that results not merely from some individual psychological disorder but from the trauma of the Cultural displacement, within which one lives.12

Sai is not the timid, easily subjugated woman, she is superior to Gyan as she defies the norms of a docile of a docile Indian woman and makes Gyan feel inferior. “Gyan is ashamed of surrendering to the feminine pish pash mash, sickly sticks baby sweetness..” (IOL p. 250) His refuge from this smothering suffocating world is to join in the Gorkha movement, to stand tall and to assert his masculinity. Sai, with her free-self expression and unrestrained enjoyment, is a temptation, an unattainable and mysterious empress, a forbidden fruit to be enjoyed. Sai defies God who has forsaken her and decides to create her own world of
happiness and live within it by leaving everything. By resolving to her own mistress, free to adopt and regulate her own life, she typifies the new woman. But Kiran Desai also projects the traditional long suffering Indian woman who seeks to conform to the norms as she has limited alternative options. Jhumpa Lahiri opinions in one of her article: “I think that for immigrants, the challenges of exile, the loneliness, the constant sense of alienation, the knowledge of and longing for a lost world, is more explicit and distressing...”

When Mr. Jemmubhai Patel goes to England for higher studies, he never feels at ease there as the English landlords do not like him and even in the filthy cluster of houses he is refused accommodation before he could get space in the house of Mrs. Rice. Displaced again and again from his sense of home, Jemmubhai is entrapped within a space of the diaspora that continually cracks his sense of himself and makes his space a volatile one. The result of all these humiliations finally creates a warped mindset within him which is hardly human. The judge is his own intimate enemy, caught in a luminal spatiality which continuously challenges his sense of himself. In the scene, depicting the first conjugal night between the twenty-five year old Jeemubhai and nineteen year old Bela, an ancient aunt instructs Jemmubhai to break the bed, suggesting violent activity and subjugation of a passive wife. Her activity is restricted by patriarchy and the new bride resists the chase and seeks to escape through the door that is locked: “The aunt had locked it just in case. All the stories of brides, trying to escape now and then even in account of a husband. Sidling out Shame shame shame shame to the family”. (IOL p.169)
Bela, transformed to Nimi by the Patel family, suffers the countless, faceless, silent Indian women as she becomes an object, a lineament, only to gratify Jemmubhai’s desire and then be relegated to the background. Jemmubhai’s anger has no subject but only a strategic objective. “It is an interdictory desire, a “metonymy of presence” as Bhabha terms it in his Location of Cultures.”

She fails to be aware of the world outside the home that can allow her to venture out as long as she does not deviate from the norms of femininity laid down by patriarchy. Nimi takes the final step of no return; she dares to raise her voice against her husband, to defy his authority and to voice her pent up hatred and fury with clarity: “You are the one who is stupid.” (IOL p.305) This is the death knell for Nimi as she is beaten by her enraged husband and her lack of protest finds her bundled off in humiliation to her parent’s house where she gives birth to a daughter. Nimi accepts all the sufferings and abuses of her marriage since she is controlled by this institution and she cannot become a typical “good” wife. The fight of oppressed women against patriarchy drives them either into madness or death as in Anita Desai’s *The Innocence of the Death* which is a tale about the complete expurgation of women. The women, bereft of the love and companionship they deserve from their husbands, are forced into insanity. In *The Inheritance of Loss* the cook remembers that the judge’s wife went mad due to her husband’s unmitigated hatred and revulsion towards her, which is reminiscent of the mad woman of the attic in Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre. With this novel Kiran Desai takes a skeptical view of the West’s consumer-driven multiculturalism that fails to address the causes of
extremism and violence in the modern society and the predicament of woman in a postcolonial world. Desai’s novel seems to argue that even the theoretical basis of post colonialism, confined to the Western metropolis, and does not address the real issues and causes. “Never again”, Sai concludes towards the end of the novel, “Could she think there was but one narrative and that this narrative belonged only to her, that she might create her own mean little happiness and safely within it.” (IOL:306)

Desai offers little possibility of redemption to her women characters although Sai, at the end of the novel is allowed to transcend her homelessness. The strength that she derives comes from this resolve to cross the boundaries of life: “And she felt a glimmer of strength. She must live.” (IOL:324) So ultimately the novel reaffirms faith in relationships and sustainability of life as Sai recovers her home. She witnesses the reunion of Biju and his father against the background of the five peaks of Kanchenjunga, turned golden with the kind of luminous light that made you feel, if briefly, that truth is apparent.

Actually the novel is about patterns of loss the loss of selfhood, identity, nationality, and loyalty. The Indian immigrants in America long for “home” the root itself and they long for love and acceptance. New identities are generated into new spaces of knowledge that one has experienced. These identities born in such interactive spaces, inevitably retain influences not only from memories of origins or roots, but also absorb influences of the new culture in the transnational space. The individual living in this space, being conscious, constructs himself by uniquely combining the cultures of his roots and of his land of domicile.
This space intensifies the “politics of polarity” by continually highlighting the vision of the individual living in this space rather than elude it as Homi Bhabha suggests in his celebration of this space as the “Third Space of enumeration.”

Carole Boyce Davies quotes:

Migration creates the desire for home, which in turn produces the rewriting of home. Homesickness or homelessness, the rejection of home or longing for home becomes motivating factors in this rewriting. Home can only have meaning once one experiences a level of displacement from it.

What bind these seemingly disparate characters are a shared historical legacy and a common experience of impotence and humiliation. Certain moves made long ago had produced all of them, Desai writes, referring to centuries of subjection by the economic and cultural power of the West. But the beginnings of an apparently leveled field in a late 20th century global economy serve merely to scratch those wounds rather than heal them. Almost all of Desai’s characters have been stunted by their encounters with the West. As a student, isolated in racist England, the future judge feels barely human at all and leaps “when touched on the arm as if from an unbearable intimacy. Yet on his return to India, he finds himself despising his apparently backward Indian wife.

The judge is one of those ridiculous Indians, as the novel puts it, which couldn’t rid them of what they had broken their souls to learn and who’s Anglophilia can only turn into self-hatred. These Indians are also an unwanted anachronism in postcolonial India, where long-suppressed
peoples have begun to awaken to their dereliction, to express their anger and despair. Desai’s characters includes one of the judge’s neighbors in Kalimpong, this comes as a distinct shock: Just when Lola had thought it would continue, a hundred years like the one past Trollope, BBC, a burst of hilarity at Christmas all of a sudden, all that they had claimed innocent, fun, funny not really to matter, was proven wrong. There is no mistaking the literary influences on Desai’s exploration of postcolonial chaos and despair. Early in the novel, she sets two Anglophilic Indian women to discussing *A Bend in the River*, V. S. Naipaul’s powerfully bleak novel about traditional Africa’s encounter with the modern world. Lola, whose clothesline sags under a load of Marks and Spencer’s panties, thinks Naipaul is strange. He has not progressed. Colonial neurosis, he has never freed himself from it. Lola goes on to accuse Naipaul of ignoring the fact there is a New England, a completely cosmopolitan society where chicken tikka masala has replaced fish and chips as the No. 1 takeout dinner. As further evidence, she mentions her own daughter, a newsreader for BBC radio, who doesn’t have a chip on her shoulder. Desai takes a skeptical view of the West’s consumer-driven multiculturalism, noting the sanitized elegance of Lola’s daughter’s British accented voice, which is triumphant over any horrors the world might thrust upon others. At such moments, Desai seems far from writers like Zadie Smith and Hari Kunzru, whose fiction takes a generally optimistic view of what Salman Rushdie has called hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs.
In fact, Desai’s novel seems to argue that such multiculturalism, confined to the Western metropolis and academe, doesn’t begin to address the causes of extremism and violence in the modern world. Nor, it suggests, can economic globalization become a route to prosperity for the downtrodden. Desai observes at one point, could only be harvested in the gap between nations, working one against the other.

This leaves most people in the postcolonial world with only the promise of a shabby modernity, as Desai puts it, in its meanest form, brand-new one day, in ruin the next. Not surprisingly, half-educated, uprooted men like Gyan gravitate to the first available political cause in their search for a better way. He joins what sounds like an ethnic nationalist movement largely as an opportunity to vent his rage and frustration. Old hatreds are endlessly retrievable, Desai reminds us, and they are purer . . . because the grief of the past was gone. Just the fury remained, distilled, liberating.

Unlike Gyan, others try to escape. In scene after scene depicting this process a boarding house in England, derelict bungalows in Kalimpong, and immigrant-packed basements in New York— Desai’s novel seems lit by a moral intelligence at once fierce and tender. But no scene is more harrowing than the one in which Biju joins a crowd of Indians scrambling to reach the visa counter at the United States Embassy: “Biggest pusher, first place; how self-contented and smiling he was; he dusted himself off, presenting himself with the exquisite manners of a cat. I’m civilized, sir, ready for the U.S., I'm civilized, mam. Biju noticed that his eyes, so alive to the foreigners, looked back
at his own countrymen and women, immediately glazed over, and went dead.” (IOL:311)

Desai’s prose has uncanny flexibility and poise. She can describe the onset of the monsoon in the Himalayas and a rat in the slums of Manhattan with equal skill. Poor and lonely in New York, Biju eavesdrops on businessmen eating steak and exulting over the wealth to be gained in the new markets of Asia. Not surprisingly, he eventually becomes a man full to the brim with a wish to live within a narrow purity. For him, the city’s endless possibilities for self-invention become a source of pain. Though another part of him had expanded: his self-consciousness, his self-pity, this awareness only makes him long to fade into insignificance, to return to where he might relinquish this overrated control over his own destiny.

Arriving back in India in the climactic scenes of the novel, Biju is immediately engulfed by the local eruptions of rage and frustration from which he had been physically remote in New York. For him and the others, Desai suggests, withdrawal or escape are no longer possible. Never again, Sai concludes, could she think there was but one narrative and that this narrative belonged only to her, that she might create her own mean little happiness and live safely within it.

Apart from this abstraction, Desai offers her characters no possibility of growth or redemption. Though relieved by much humor, The Inheritance of Loss may strike many readers as offering an unrelentingly bitter view. But then, as Orhan Pamuk wrote soon after 9/11, people in the West are scarcely aware of this overwhelming feeling of humiliation that is experienced by most of the world's population,
which neither magical realistic novels that endow poverty and foolishness with charm nor the exoticism of popular travel literature manages to fathom. This is the invisible emotional reality Desai uncovers as she describes the lives of people fated to experience modern life as a continuous affront to their notions of order, dignity, and justice. We do not need to agree with this vision in order to marvel at Desai’s artistic power in expressing it.

Pankaj Mishra is the author of “An End to Suffering: The Buddha in the World.” His latest book, “Temptations of the West: How to Be Modern in India, Pakistan, Tibet, and Beyond,” will be published this spring. The Inheritance of Loss is a book about the rigid class systems that exist in India and abroad amongst Indians, and the struggles that the people face within these classes after colonialism. The book takes place in a town called Kalimpong, which is near Darjeeling in the northwesternmost point in India. The story begins in the high northeastern Himalayas in Kalimpong. Sai, a seventeen year old, lives with a judge, his dog, and his cook. It is a turbulent time, filled with dissatisfaction among the population of Indian-Nepalese, who want to separate and have their own country apart from India. There is an insurgency to draw new borders create peace in theory, yet violence is the tool to create this peace. They are robbed by members of the Gorkhaland National Liberation Front, who take their food, liquor, and guns. This introduces the political struggle that the region is facing, as well as the breakdown of the social fabric. The judge is Sai’s grandfather, who took her in after his daughter and her husband were killed in a car accident. He takes her in order to pay off the spiritual debts that he incurred from abandoning
his wife, and later killing her, as well as shaming his father. He fights
with his guilt throughout the book, making it seem as though he will one
day change his rough exterior and learn to love again. Sai falls in love
with her tutor, whose name is Gyan, and throughout the story they fight
to accept the natural love they have created. Their love is doomed from
the beginning because he is an ethnic Nepali, and she is an upper-
class, Western-educated Indian girl. The cook watches over them to make sure
that Gyan does not take advantage of Sai’s good heart and at the same
time worries about his own son in the U.S., whose name is Biju.

Biju is the typical Indian immigrant who gets a visa to the U.S.
and stays illegally, working for slave wages in the kitchen basements of
New York City. There he is used and abused by his bosses and is run
ragged by one in particular, who also happens to be Indian. Upset with
the way his life is turning out, and by how much he misses his father, he
decides to leave the U.S. with his earnings and return back to his home
and his father. Throughout the book, the political situation worsens and
each person deals with it in their own unique way. All of them are
consumed with guilt for how they have lived their lives thus far and
desire to change their existences.

Sai is a young girl, who is learning about herself physically and
emotionally in a small town in India. When her parents died, she was in
living and learning in a convent school. At this school she learned
English and Western values and principles and that anything English
was superior to anything Indian. She was sent to live with her maternal
grandfather, who hadn’t had any contact with her or her mother since
either of them was born. Sai begins growing out of her shell and is
pushed by other characters to grow up and experience life. All she admits to wanting to do is travel, though she really wants to be loved by Gyan, her tutor, the way she loves him. When she falls in love with Gyan, she understands the beauty of free love. The cook tried to remind Sai that the capabilities of Gyan were not bright. Sai is affected by Gyan, who gets involved in the ethnic, Nepali revolution. It is observed often that love takes place amidst unequal partners. The result of this love also is unequal. Their bash-up adds to her loneliness too. The extremist rebellion has dented their kinship and spurted out the repressed differences. Both Sai and Gyan suddenly start becoming aware of the class of each other. The turmoil of the public agitation seems to unearth many truths about the characters. The revolution acts symbolic here.

The dormant feelings gets vent with the help of this symbolic revolution. The revolution made the judge, Jemubhai vulnerable, due to his hunting rifles. The Gorkhaland agitation creeps in the lives of the characters. The judge when away from chess would look like a mask put on his face. Suddenly, he would remember his personality and go back to his chess. The desire of the Gorkhaland has led to a revolution. They wanted a homeland where they would not be treated as servants. Young boys in this attempt to become men, looted houses and collected ammunition. There turns out to be so much of chaos that the natives there think of not flushing for saving water. Neighbour turns against neighbour. There was absence of gas and kerosene. Biju, in America was facing the parallel universe of displacement and stumbling from one job to another. The negative aspects of living as an illegal alien in New York are seen. The universe was not in the business of justice. To all these,
even the sun was hot and cast no shadow. This casting of no shadow by the Sun, reminds of noon-time, metaphoric of the crisis at its zenith. The judge, who always identified himself with the British, stands in the width of shade of the knife. The shadows of the nights chomped as if, like his memories of past. This man, Jemubhai, who dressed for dinner, even in the jungle, later, remains without socks all the time. The physical identities seemed to have gone crossed too along with the inner recesses. He has just one friend in his world, Bose. His constant lonely companionship with chess without a dual player reminds and signifies the white British Empire, which ruled many parts of the world without a competitor at par. It was almost a one-sided kingship and domination. This kind of representation coincides with any contemporary age, where there might be just one or a few leaders to follow. The embittered, reptilian judge is lost in the symbolic chessboard and in his memories of humiliation in a foreign land. The life of the judge is so lonely that only a pet dog can fit in his solitude. This also echoes the common cliche that one who thinks and behaves as superior is likely to be left alone. He had no cementing relation in the past with his illiterate wife. Now, in the present, he can build no relation with granddaughter, Sai, although, they lived under the same roof. The signs and themes of loss, loneliness, and racialism-impacts are seen in the life of the judge. He is disgusted with human beings, after bitter racial experiences during the Cambridge days. Actually, we are all historically situated despite it is of contemporary events. Biju is another victim of loneliness and loss, in the dual Indian-American upbringing. Almost all characters are lonely and unfulfilled from each other, in the nation or outside it. Biju is an illegal migrant, who went to America as cheap labourer. The life of Biju can be
compared and contrasted with his father. Both remain labourers. It is ironical that the cook is nationless inside the nation. His son, Biju, is nationless outside. Both are suffering from their own sense of loss, truth, untruths, and loneliness. The American Dream is inadequate to fulfill the emotional and basic needs of Biju. It goes ironical with the Judge who is ashamed and dislikes his heritage, culture and even the colour of his skin. He fuels the sense of rejection in his soul in his whole life. The clashes of races, classes, cultures, generations, are filtered through the characters. There is a concurrent telling of the story of two different kinds of Diasporas that of undocumented and thereby exploited blue-collar immigrants in New York and an ageing, elitist cluster of Indian professionals settled post retirement in a remote Gurkha hill station. Both Diasporas face challenges of a normally globalized society that is paradoxically fraught with increasingly exclusivist, separatist, and nationalistic agendas. Diaspora collapses the boundaries between the first world and the third world while simultaneously enforcing them. Earlier, Britain could not hem the gaps as the colonizer of commonwealth nations. Today, the United States has failed too and the apparel only tatters further. This text of Kiran Desai reveals new subjects and new knowledge about the people of two places located in entirely two different parts of the world. The India that Desai knew in childhood was then a closed door economic policy country. The world arrived only through books and they meant everything. Despite diasporic, to Desai, this book *The Inheritance of Loss* is like a return journey to the fact of being Indian. New York gave half the narrative. For rest half, she has to take help of India. The book deals with the implicit reference to past British colonialism. Jemubhai is filled with
humiliation because of being Indian. The text can be approached with eye to history. The value of history can be rediscovered. This text is influenced by historical reality. We inherit loss from past. Like ants men would make their paths and civilization and their wars once again only to be washed once again. Sai lost her parents. The involvement of Gyan in the revolution was uprooted. The revolution was only a vent passage to his pent-up rage and frustrations. And it becomes a loss to Sai too. The east-west meet is the inheritance and the losses derived from it too are the inheritance. It was an irony that United States, a country built on the finest principles could give only losses to an immigrant like Biju. It is a paradox that the question of homeland was same as in the land of the three Ts land of tea, timber, and tourism as it is in America. And this was the America which is in the process of buying the world. Again, it was stunning that, Biju was jealous of his own son. And, jealousy was a third world chip on the shoulder. Sai, the Judge, and Biju are all dual-nation related. The book has invited diverse interpretations, as being dissolved in rich, eloquent prose, aided by the fictional characters, with themes like. The sense of loss, contemporary global issues of multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism, terrorism, postcolonial chaos, challenge of assimilation, comic joy, nationhood, conflicting desires, modernity, increasingly interconnected world, realism, identity-crisis, love and hate, past and present, dislocation, tragedies of the freed third world countries, exile, American dream, power hierarchy, homecoming, loneliness, truth, untruth, cultural identity, class-system, ethnicity, and racism. These themes are sub-genred with some micro themes, doughed with the aforementioned macro themes. They may be slotted as, the Nepali struggle to enter the
mainstream subcontinent, the unequal love-affair between Sai and Gyan; the dilemmas and despair exploded after colonial suppression; the theme of the intersection of East-West and the changes both the two parts undergo and display inadequate progress. The pain of exile is illuminated; there are the themes of depth, emotion, hilarity, insight, and imagination. National and racial identity is portrayed too. The theme of loss and sadness is a major theme. The Indian class system alienates the citizens further, from the clam of nationhood and so on. The loss of faith in India leads the citizens to become immigrants. The personal anecdotes of the characters twine against the wider social, economic, and political backdrops of the two places. The personal becomes the political and vice versa. The novel’s historical setting of the novel is considered to be the 1980s. But, colonial era of India is invoked too. However, we see post 9/11 elements in this personal and globally exploded-themed novel. Love, which is an important theme of the novel, recurs in the novel. Noni never had love in her life. To Lola, the servants experienced love from the economic structure of relationship. The judge is always filled with detest. To the cook, the greatest love is love that is never shown. To him, love is looking after someone, and someone looking after you. Money was not everything in life and love. Years ago, as a student of oxford, Uncle Potty had considered himself a lover of love. During his practical research trips, he had found pure love in the most sordid of spots, the wrong sides of town where the police did not venture. Some loved him while he did not love them; others he loved madly, deeply, and they, did not love him at all. Again, in these different forms of love, Sai had her own experience towards life around her. Since her romance with Gyan, Sai had a new understanding with cats. It is stunning that her
love-affair only changes her attitude towards cats only. Again, these cats remind of some repressed or hidden physical desires in Sai. It reminds of “The love-song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” written by T. S. Eliot where the lazy cat echoes the hidden desires of Prufrock. Also, after Gyan gets involved in the rebellion, Sai stands before the mirror and thinks upon how in the fight for a new homeland, Gyan has forgotten her. And she was already in a family, which never cared of her. The judge almost wept at the loss of Mutt. To him, a man was not equal to animal. Human life was stinking and corrupt. These beautiful creatures lived with so much delicacy and did no harm to others. He dreamt that Mutt was dying but was hardly aware of his only kin, Sai at home. It was a sad thing that, schools and hospitals only meant civilization. Never again would the father of judge know that another did not adulterate love for a human being. Gyan prefers to death than remain slaved, poster-like and stateless. Mutt, the dog was taken for a winter coat. It was an irony that when all was life and death for the natives there, when the animal got lost, the judge and Sai seemed to have to do nothing else left in their lonely, lost lives, except searching Mutt. The image of broken umbrellas hanging oddly like injured birds, represent the physical and mental condition of the people around them. Time plays another important theme in the structure of the narrative of the novel. It is seen that, condensation fogged the glasses of the clock of Cho Oyu. That is, the people in that house could not see the importance of the present time. The contemporariness is blurred. Noni, the anglophile neighbour advises Sai, never to go by life, where time does not pass. Time should move. But, we see that the beings of Cho Oyu are living lives contradictory to these statements. Language plays an important role in the expression of
the characters. Sai became confused in a capillary web of paths. In this image of web, a giant tiger-striped spider sits. Did language gave relief in all these chaos, or it was the language which eulogized all the thoughts and chaos in physical forms around them? Even the words coming out of the mouths of the characters seem like shadows. Comedy plays important role in the structure. The rooster crows like the colonial. Hunger skips like the little mouse, also coincides with the Hindi phrase in India, of rats running in the tummy due to hunger. A tooth could be found in the bloodshed areas, is comic and at the same time speaks of violence. Memory plays another important role in relation to past and present. Memories are said to be like diamonds. Biju coming among the English was like coming back to snatch the bread which their fathers had snatched from the colonized. Just as bigger places Mary on her bed, Mary’s blind mother Mrs. Dalton enters the bedroom. Bigger reckon that Mary, in her drunken condition will reveal his presence. He covers her face with a pillow and accidentally smothers her to death. Unaware that Mary has been killed; Mrs. Dalton prays over her Daughter and returns to her room. Bigger tries to hide his crime by burning Mary’s body in the Dalton’s furnace. He decides to try to use Dalton’s prejudice against communist to frame Jan for Mary’s disappearance. Bigger believes that the Daltons will assume that Jan is dangerous and that he may have kidnapped their daughter for political purposes. In what can be only termed as misogynistic and lousy, Desai went on to argue that women in New York go to parties in little high heels and tiny clothes that apparently look really horrible. The fact that Desai, a public figure capable of representing India with her words and ideas, made the comment is quite problematic. It’s already bad enough that Indian
women have to deal with the patriarchal mindset that dominates the country; with Desai taking an international platform to promote such a mindset is nothing but callousness. To add to it, she also went on to say, Definitely going to India you look bad if you go in your western clothes. Everyone comments on how awful you look right away. The sky is different, the street is different, the dust is different—only Indian clothes work. When I read these lines, I was almost stupefied; Kiran Desai, a writer who I know as a woman who brilliantly paints an imagery of India with her words, would care to make such a misleading generalization. She must have grown up in an India where western values—like clothes, movies, or even food was not accepted, but surely she has heard of “globalization” and how the phenomena has seeped into every nook and corner of the world for that matter, she also must be watching Bollywood films, some of which depict India in its true form. Desai might not be comfortable wearing “little high heels” with “tiny dresses” on a chilly winter evenings; that is totally up to her to decide. But she cannot pass a judgment on what someone else should not be wearing on a winter evening. When one points towards a woman’s outfits, one is, be it inadvertently, also pointing towards the relation she shares with her community. Desai has to say about Indian women and their attire. Qureshi went on to argue why women should not dwell in the need for acceptance based on someone else’s idea of perfection. Women, not just in India, constantly have had to deal with the pressure of what someone else expects out of them, be it dressing, speaking or merely silencing. When those who have as powerful a platform as the voice, like Desai, promote misogynistic ideas, then dealing with it only becomes harder. Qureshi, being a part of the glamorous Indian film industry, goes on to
agree that even she has to meet the yardstick set by the industry to look glamorous enough to survive the industry; but the point is, she has willingly assigned to that. Same should be the case for every woman. For me that is feminism. For me, the idea behind feminism is freedom. A woman should be free to set her own yardstick of what “perfection” is; and she should be allowed to live her whole life trying to meet that benchmark which she herself has set. A woman should be free to walk around in a short dress in New York and New Delhi both, without Desai having to pass the judgment by saying, A woman should be free to hide behind a layer of foundation and mascara eyelashes as she should be to walk with hair unkempt and arms un-waxed. Feminism is about liberty, liberty to make a choice for oneself without having to meet the expectation of someone else, not even of the word-ful write-ups of the Booker Prize winner, Kiran. The Inheritance of Loss is about various issues of global world; like terrorism, multiculturalism, economic disparities, and immigration.

The issues recognized and elaborated by her in The Inheritance of Loss explain her journey and opportunities to see and identify various backgrounds closely, as her early life demonstrates that she herself has been a part of multicultural society. She lived in India until the age of 14, then went to England for a year, finally became a permanent resident of the US, and thus apparently got to discover the lifestyles and the associated tribulations of the three countries. I am not sure whether the opportunity of close interaction with three countries has been her inspiration for this novel, but the familiarity with the three distinguishing cultures might have played some role in the development of the script.
Desai has successfully attempted to portray two different parts of the world and have captured common vital concerns in the novel. The book beautifully expresses the three important aspects of life; love, family and loss. It raises necessary emotions, creates humor, and develops imagination. It makes the readers laugh and cry at the same time. The amalgamation of diverse characters and their varied settings have been really employed well. Though at times I felt that the situation and contexts in the book wanders from the track, but it soon holds the grip too. I believe Desai has marvelously bound the intricacies of multiple areas covered in the book.

**Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard**

Her first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* published in 1998, won ‘Betty Trask Award’, a prize given by the society of Authors for the new novels by citizens of the Common Wealth of nations under the age of 35. *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* Desai’s dazzling, much heralded debut novel is a wryly hilarious and poignant story of life love, and family that simultaneously captures the vivid culture of the Indian subcontinent and the universal intricacies of human experience.

Sampath Chawla was in born a time of drought into a family not quite like other families, in a town not quite like other towns. After years of failure at school, failure at work, of spending his days dreaming in tea stalls, and singing to him in the public gardens, it does not seem as if Sampath is going to amount to much. No one believes her, until one day Sampath climbs a guava tree in search of peaceful contemplation and becomes unexpectedly famous as a holy man, sending the tiny town of Shahkot into turmoil. A syndicate of larcenous, alcoholic monkeys terrorizes the pilgrims who cluster around Sampath’s tree, spies and ice-
cream vendors and profiteers descend on the town, and none of Desai’s outrageous characters goes unaffected as events spin increasingly out of control.

A finely tuned fable that attests to the author’s pitch-perfect ear.…The author delineates [the characters] with such with and bemused affection that they insinuate themselves insidiously in our minds.17

This is Kiran Desai’s first book. Published in the year 1998, its front cover illustrates a monkey and a summary at its back, seems like it being a humorous jaunt for its readers. And, Kiran Desai proved promising! The story is about a boy named Sampath Chawla who lives in a place called Shahkot. Sampath is a nuisance for his father right from the start. He is a dreamer, a wanderer and insincere. One day, he decided to make his own sweet world in guava trees, leaving his family go crazy. And what else does he do? He starts babbling. The best part is that his family and the Shahkotians take his babbling in a serious way. They start considering a boy who was useless until now, as a saint. The world suddenly becomes Sampath’s devotees. Initially, Sampath felt safe in the trees, but soon, he became weary. And thus comes around countless humorous consequences. The entire Chawla family acts fanatical. Kulfi, who is Sampath’s mother, is a stout lady whom everybody considers of no use. Mr. Chawla, Kulfi’s husband cribs in front of his mother for marrying him off with such a woman. Kulfi’s mother-in-law, Ammaji is contented only for the wealth that Kulfi brought home as dowry. When Sampath grows up, nobody knows what to do of him. He is almost like his mother. Mr. Chawla anyhow gets Sampath a clerical job, whereas Sampath plans to do something else. The last member of the Chawla
family, Pinky, who is Sampath’s sister, is another hilarious character. She eats off a boy’s ear only because she loves him. She is never at ease. Sampath acts just about parallel to the monkeys who live in the trees of Shahkot. When he makes them his friends, people start taking the monkeys as an avatar of a Hindu god. And what does the Chawla family do while witnessing Sampath’s monkey business? They get into this business of bringing devotees for Sampath, who speaks nothing but proverbs. Kiran’s work is indeed remarkable. She sets a very Indian family situation in the case of the Chawla family. Not only the family, the place Shahkot that she portrays is just like another town in the country. You may also like the customs mentioned in the story: a mother bringing a daughter-in-law for the sake of dowry; a father wanting a son to fit the expectations; a wife knowing nothing but to eat and a world who worships a saint, who is sitting on a tree. At one point in the story when Ammaji brings a girl for Sampath, a sketch of a daughter-in-law that Kiran draws here is commendable. Take a glance at one the lines: “She should be fair-complexioned, but if she is dark the dowry should include at least one of the following items: televisions set, a refrigerator, a Godrej steel cupboard and maybe even a scooter.” (HGO, 6)

It is must-read for the humor enthusiasts out there. That summer the heat had enveloped the whole of Shahkot in a murky yellow haze. The clutter of rooftops and washing lines that usually stretched all the way to the foothills at the horizon grew blurred and merged with the dust-filled sky. Problems have been located in the cumulus that has become overly heated, read Mr. Chawla from the newspaper. It is all a result of volcanic ash thrown up in the latest spurt of activity in Tierra
del Fuego. And a little later he reported to whoever might be listening. The problem lies in the currents off the West African coastline and the unexplained molecular movement observed in the polar ice-caps. And: Iraq attempts to steal monsoon by deliberately creating low pressure over desert provinces and deflecting winds from India. And even: Hungarian musician offers to draw rain clouds from Europe to India via the music of his flute. Why can’t they think of serious solutions?’ asked Mr. Chawla. ‘It is too hot to fool about with Hungarian musicians.’ Shahkot boasted some of the highest temperatures in the country and here there were dozens of monsoon inducing proposals. Mr. Chawla himself submitted a proposal to the forestry department for the cutting and growing of vegetation in elaborate patterns; the army proposed the scattering and driving of clouds by jet planes flying in a special geometric formation; the police a frog wedding to be perform by temple priests. Vermaji of the university invented a giant fan which he hoped would attract the southern monsoon clouds by creating a wind tunnel moving north toward the Himalayas, and he petitioned the Electricity Supply Board for enough power to test it. Amateur scientists from Mr. Barnala of Tailor Gully to Miss Raina from the Sainik Farms area attended trade fairs where they displayed instruments that emitted magnetic rays and loud buzzing sounds. Everyone in the town was worried. The mercury in the police station thermometer exceeded the gradations Kapoor & Sons Happy Weather Company had seen fit to establish, leaping beyond memory and imagination, and outdoing the predictions of even Mr. Chawla’s mother, Ammaji, who liked to think she knew exactly what the future would bring. 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. The bees flew drunk on nectar that had turned alcoholic; the policemen slept all day in the banana grove; the local judge bribed immigration official and left to join his brother in Copenhagen. Foreigners in their 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. They raided the shops for palm leaf fans and bought gray blocks of ice that smoked like small fires. They rested their heads against the coolness of melons before cutting into them, held glasses against cheeks and foreheads between sips, 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. It was this year that Sampath Chawla was born to his mother, Kulfi. She was twenty-one years old, newly married to Mr. Chawla, and pregnant. By late September the heat and lack of rain had combined to produce terrible conditions of drought. She grew bigger as it got worse. It got to be so bad that famine-relief camps were set up by the Red Cross to the west of Shahkot. The supply planes flew right over the bazaar and Shahkotians, watching with their heads tilted back, wondered why they didn’t stop for them as well, for surely they were suffering quite enough to warrant the same attention and care being so assiduously delivered elsewhere. The ration shop was
distributing rice and lentils in smaller and smaller portions all the time. There was no fruit to be found anywhere and hardly any vegetables. Prices had risen so high, nobody would buy the scraggy chickens sitting in cages outside the meat shop. Finally the poor butcher had to eat them himself, and after the last one, he was forced to turn vegetarian like the rest of the town.

Nature is omnipotent and man being a part of nature is dependent on it for everything. As literature is the reflection of life, the literary writers reflect man and his life in the background of nature where the writers provide description of nature, the characters love and attitude towards nature in their works. This portrayal of nature is employed in the novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* written by Kiran Desai where Sampath, the protagonist, is fed up with the hectic town life and leaves the place to be alone feeling oneness with nature.18

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 marketplace. They teetered on their bicycles as they looked 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
eexpression 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 Shahkot like this, as distracted as this, as
strange as this. What do you expect?’ asked Ammaji, her mother-in-law,
making excuses when curious neighbors asked about Kulfi's state of
mind. ‘What do you expect from a woman with a baby in her belly like a
little fish?’ But Kulfi was not thinking of the baby in her belly like a
little fish. She was thinking of fish themselves of fish in many forms. Of
fish big enough and good enough to feed the hunger that had overtaken
her in the past months like a wave. She thought of fish curries and fish
kebabs. She thought of food abundant in all its many incarnations. Nuts,
wrinkled in their shells, brown-skinned, milky-fleshed. The house was
small for her big desire. She walked from the tiny blue bedroom to the
kitchen thick with the smell of kerosene, around the table and chairs, up
and down the balcony, down the stairs past the rooms of neighbors who
shook their heads over her, then around the jamun tree in the middle of
the courtyard. ‘Oh dear, what is going to become of this woman?’ said
Lakshmiji, the Raipurs, the Bengali teacher, and all of the others when
they looked out of their windows, when they gossiped at the tea stall or
sat in each other’s houses eating peanuts together.

Meal after meal of just rice and lentils could not begin to satisfy
the hunger that grew inside Kulfi; she bribed the vegetable sellers, the
fruit sellers, and the butcher with squares of silk, with embroidery, a
satin petticoat, an earring set in gold, a silver nutcracker, and bits of her
dowry that had not yet been pawned. She bribed them until they had
nothing left to give her anyway. By then, her hunger was so fierce; it was like a big, prowling animal. In her mind, aubergines grew large and purple and crisp, and then, in a pan, turned tender and melting. Ladyfingers were flavored with tamarind and coriander. Chicken was stewed with cloves and cardamom. She thought of chopping and bubbling, of frying, slicing, stirring, grating. Mr. Chawla watched his wife disappear down the road to the marketplace again and again, as he surveyed the emptying cupboards in the house, the missing items, and the gaps on the shelves. What have you married me to, Amma? he demanded ferociously of his mother, who looked worried as well. However, since she was responsible for the marriage, she put her worry as far from herself as possible, clucked her tongue and said soothingly. She is at a very delicate stage. Wait a little and maybe she will come out of it. Come out of it. She is not going to come out of it. And if the baby takes after her, we are really in for trouble. Oddness, like aches and pains, fits of tears and lethargy, always made him uneasy and he had a fear of these uncontrollable, messy puddles of life, the sticky humanness of things. He intended to keep his own involvement with such matters to the minimum, making instead firm progress in the direction of cleanliness and order. He went to the public library to look for books about babies and waited in line outside the Mission School to enroll the baby well in advance, for he knew how long the waiting lists were. He collected vitamins and tonics from the government clinic. You must take care to boil your drinking water for twenty minutes.’ He followed Kulfi about the house reading aloud from his library book as she ignored him. He held one of his fingers up in the air. He wiped the sweat from his forehead with a handkerchief and continued following his wife; even
though it was clear she had no interest whatsoever in what he was saying. Ammaji had her own ideas. She had her own ideas of how a woman’s pregnancy should be managed. She fussed with pillows and herbs, with hairbrushes and bottles of strong-scented oil for massages. Everywhere there was the feeling of breath being drawn in and held, as if it wouldn't be let free again until the baby was born and it could be released happy and full of relief if the baby was a boy; released full of disappointment and resentment if it wasn't. In Kulfi's stomach Sampath was at first quiet, as if he weren't there at all. Then, as if excited, he grew bolder and fuller of life, until he kicked and turned and even leapt. Kulfi paced up and down, up and down, with her hands upon her belly, and thought she might soon begin to scream, and that, whether she wanted to or not, she might continue to scream all the way up until the birth and maybe even after. Her stomach grew larger, her dreams of eating more extravagant. The house seemed to shrink. All about her the summer stretched white-hot into an infinite distance. Finally, in desperation for another landscape, she found a box of old crayons in the back of a cupboard and, with a feeling bordering on hysteria; she began to draw on the dirty, stained walls of the house. She drew around the pictures of babies Ammaji had put up. Babies fat and fair and male that Ammaji hoped would somehow, through some mysterious osmotic process, influence the formation of her grandchild. Kulfi drew around these pictures and sometimes over them. She drew a pond, dark but leaping with colorful fish. As her husband and mother-in-law retreated in horror, not daring to upset her or the baby still inside her, she drew a parade of cooks beheading goats. 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 window and spilled a wilderness of leaves upon the walls. She began to draw fruit she did not know; spices yet to be discovered in hidden pods 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 ingredients 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 floorboards; fish swam beneath the doors. In the next room was the sound of Mr. Chawla pacing up and down. ‘What have we got ourselves into?’ The sound of Ammaji whispering: ‘Just wait a little, beta, wait and see. When there was almost no space left to draw on anymore, when the walls, floor and ceiling were full, packed tight to the point of bursting, Sampath was born. And he was born in such remarkable circumstances, they were remembered for ever afterward by the people of Shahkot. One day, Kulfi was at the bedroom window looking at the street, prepared to sit through another seemingly endless stretch of time. Until Ammaji finally cooked and served her dinner, all of a sudden a shadow fell across the sun and magically, as quickly as a winter's day tumbles into smoky evening and then night, the white-lit afternoon deepened into the color of old parchment as the sky darkened. Curtains billowed white out of every window. Bits of newspaper and old plastic bags turned cartwheels in the indigo streets. The air thinned and stirred in a breeze that brought goose bumps out upon her arms. She could hear the sound of cheering from the bazaar. And she watched the children in the streets leap like frogs, unable to keep still in their excitement. They wrestled and tussled with each other in an exuberance of spirit, while the grown-ups hurried, in this shifting,
shadowed light, to get to the market and back, to bring in washing, to carry in string cots. Who knew whether it came because of the giant fan, the wedding of frogs, the Pied Piper, because of mercurial powers or magician's marvels? And in the end, who cared? The rain had come to Shahkot. The monsoon was in town. Kulfi watched with unbelieving elation as the approaching smell of rain spiked the air like a flower, as the clouds shifted in from the east, reached the trees at the town's edge and moved in. In the Chawla household, Mr. Chawla bustled about with plastic sheeting, while Ammaji placed buckets outside to catch the rainwater and brought out candles and kerosene lanterns in preparation for the inevitable breakdown of electricity. They paused, though, to test the growing strength of the wind against their cheeks; looked up to check the progress of the clouds. When they were finally prepared for the downpour. They watched from the windows like Kulfi and the rest of Shahkot's residents, leaning from balconies and verandas, from beneath the flaps of scooter rickshaws; the entire town, with anxious, upturned eyes, until an especially strong gust sent the leaves flying like birds before gunshot and brought the first drops of water to sound loud against the parched earth. Kulfi watched the rain. It came down fast and then faster yet. It filled up every bit of sky. It was like no other sound on earth and nothing that was ever suggested by the thin trickles from Shahkot taps. It came down black with dust from the sky and dirt on the trees, and then clears. She stretched out her hands to feel the weight of the drops on her flat palms and then put her face out too, holding it, luminous, pale, in this town enclosed within the dark heart of the monsoon.
As she did so, she felt Sampath kick inside her stomach. Her heart jumped in rhythm. He kicked harder and harder. The jamun tree in the courtyard thrashed and creaked. The rain streamed down Kulfi’s hair and washed over her face. Her husband shouted: Get away from the open window.’ She paid no attention. He wrapped her in a square of plastic, but she shrugged it off. The rain descended in great sweeping sheets. The neighbors withdrew in quick, sharp movements, slammed their windows, barred their doors, but Kulfi stretched out farther still, farther and farther until the rain took up all the space inside her head. It seized her brain, massaged and incorporated her into the watery sounds, until she felt that she herself might turn to storm and disappear in this blowing, this growling, and this lightning flutter quick as a moth’s wing. If she would only let go of the metal window frame, she could take all those tedious days of summer and crash them to the ground, transform them into water, wind, and pounding.

She felt her muscles contract as a clap of thunder echoed about her. 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 raging, rain pouring through windows that would not stay closed and flooding in beneath the doors, Sampath was born. As his face, with a brown birthmark 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. What was that?’ said Mr. Chawla nervously, as the ground shuddered.
Could it be that his son's birth had coincided with the end of the world? Leaving Kulfi and the new baby, he and Ammaji ran to the window to investigate, and discovered that far from being the end of things it was more like the beginning.

Caught in their old jamun tree, 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 townspeople jumping and waving down below as they ran out despite the downpour to greet this unexpected largesse. Draped in the foliage of the ruined jamun, they discovered containers full of sugar and tea, of rehydration mixes, dried milk powder, raisins and digestive biscuits. There were unidentifiable 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 neighbors 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 monsoon? Oh and the food! ... What a baby! Only Kulfi was quiet. She looked at the tiny creature in her hands, a creature that looked as if he had come
from another planet altogether, or had been discovered in the woods, like something alien and strange. The baby's eyes were closed and his fingers were tightly curled. His face was red and his skull pointed. She looked at his strangeness and felt a sense of peace and comfort descend upon her. Soon the storm would end and the world would grow silent and fragrant, the air weathered soft as the hour of sleep. Soon the winged ants would be flying and lizards would grow fat on dozens of multiplying insects. The water would turn muddy and soft. Doors would swell and it would be impossible to close them once opened, or to open them once closed. Fungus and mold would sprout green and voluptuous and armies of mushrooms would gather in the cupboard under the sink. Attempting to include Kulfi in their high spirits, the neighbors assured her that her son was destined for greatness, that the world, large and mysterious beyond Shahkot, had taken notice of him.

Desai drops characters like juicy morsels a father who makes an industry out of his son's lunacy setting up a tea stall for tourists and churning out posters, fliers and newspaper articles; a sister, who bites off the ear of an ice-cream boy to declare her passion for him; the boy himself, who plans to elope with his impassioned suitor, but almost gives in to a girl, as plump as a birthday cake, whom his family has arranged for him to marry. There is Sampath’s grandmother, whose dentures up glaring at her from a chocolate ice-cream cone. And some of India's police and military officers are intent on ridding the town of Sampath’s monkey bodyguards, who have taken to robbing shops and people of their liquor in drunken orgies much like those of their evolutionary betters.
It’s a parable, an allegory, a bitter-sweet reminder of the chaos of Indian women its layers of history, religion, superstition, colonialism and fanaticism. The author doesn't quite know what to do with her heady epic, which keeps unfolding with new levels of intensity and ineluctability. So she puts Sampath to sleep as a guava, held in the palm of the leader of the monkeys, who lands not so quietly in a vat of broth, trapped and stewed by Sampath’s mother. Desai has a lovely ear for dialogue; the monkeys are beautifully evoked; all the female characters are against stereotype active in their desires but the ending is a disappointment. Desai manages to suspend disbelief for a while, but one comes to expect and her own clues suggest a widening sphere of lawlessness and violence, not a funneling toward more lunacy. She seems tied to a linear notion of plot to episodes. Had she broken free of this structure, she might have been able to evoke a more nuanced world, both comic and tragic. Desai creates a whole tableau like a medieval tapestry in which all the people and animals start moving and speaking affectionately describing a village atmosphere and the familial relationships within it. Finally one remembers neither the plot nor the hand that created it, but the characters that might one day appear at your dinner table, halfway between life and fiction, with many more stories to tell. He is made in God’s image. Especially in its Western form, Christianity is most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. “Kulfi looked at the tiny creature in her hands, a creature that looked as if he had come from another planet altogether, or had been discovered in the woods, like something alien and strange.” (HGO p.12)
The guava tree serves as a protector to Sampath and the monkeys as a sort of companion who shares his mind. Fondly, the lady-monkeys groomed Sampath as he sat secretly pleased but shouting, and swatting them. But, with amused, sly faces that looked as if they understood he was playing a little game, they circled back after being chased away to continue their attendance upon his glossy and shining locks, which, to their credit, grew even shinier and glossier with their care. Sampath enjoyed this attention more and more as he became used to the occasional tug or scratch. It is this guava tree that initially protects him, comforts him and gives the feeling of being in heaven. The guava tree embodies all that is warm and blissful for Sampath who tries to live in the tree till his final flight. His affection for the monkeys is that of brotherhood. He was not a fool. He would not climb down to be caught, put into a cage and driven off to the insane asylum on Alipure Road, like the mad man who had interrupted the ladies home economics class of the university and been lured and trapped by a single sweet. So, at the families pleading, Dr Banerjee, who prided himself on being good sport, hoisted himself into the tree, stethoscope, and blood pressure pump about his neck. He climbed all the way up to Sampath so he could look into his eyes and ears, check his tongue, listen to his heart, take his blood pressure, and hit his knee with an expertly aimed karate-like move of his hand. Then he climbed down and got back to the scooter rickshaw he had arrived in. Nobody except God can do anything about that and he disappeared back into town. Unlike the other people of Shahkot, Sampath’s relationship with the tree and the surroundings is that of harmony and peace. Therefore Sampath finds that in no way he is alone in the hill top even before the invasion of his family and the people of
Shahkot. He is not thwarted by the lack of human companionship rather he finds eternal bliss that fills his heart with joy and energy. His thought for survival is quenched by the guava fruit which tastes so good and lives the life of a hunter-gatherer. Sampath settles down, merging into a natural order of the natural habitat the environment around him grants him the solace and the asylum. The relationship is at the best equal. But the Shahkotians on arrival at the hill first exploits nature and subdues her like dominant and perceives the land and the ecosystem to that of the Judeo Christian creation relationship. Their encroachment of the natural habitat of animals often creates a tension between man and animals. Shahkotian encroach these areas of the forest and play the role of the dominant, the animals (subordinate) has to flee to the deeper forest when the monkey catchers are set to tame them and also to capture them for the zoo. The final escape of the Sampath into the forest marks a turning point in the story. While the Shahkotians tries to civilize Sampath into their ways and nature, Sampath’s total rejection of civilization seeking solace in nature, he emerges with nature with the ‘explosion of a guava’ like some nature spirit enraptured him he flees into the hill seeking higher peace, tranquility and meaning in life. The full cycle of the attempts by man to dominate nature, Sampath reverts back as the Shahkotians are left alone while the ‘monkey baba’ and the monkeys return to their higher place of abode. The attempts of the monkeys to create havoc to the Shahkotians can be best taken as natures’ wrath on man. Respect for the land on which we live is a responsibility that every human should have. Desai seems to advocate the call ‘Back to nature’ to internalize the immense problems and destruction to nature and to return to our ancient practices where man and nature lived in harmony.
Conclusion: Moving towards a stage of change towards a stage of change towards the close of the story Sampath Chawala, the ‘monkey baba’ is almost fully merges in the ecosystem when he see himself as a part of nature. Even though he is given opportunity to return to Shahkot he simply rejects that life and escapes from the ancient guava tree into the hills. He understands his metamorphosis, like Kulfi his mother who takes to culinary expertise as her vocation and meaning in life. He finally understands the true meaning of his existence. He finds it is home at last and relishes the experience like a hungry child asking for more. He completely gives up his civilized way, steps into the ‘hunter-gatherer’ stage, and thus destroys the traditional nature/culture dichotomy. He feeds only on the guava like the birds of the air and the monkeys. Now Sampath is fully in tune with nature and is more ‘civilized’ than the Shahkotians who brutally tries to capture the ‘monkeys’ for pleasure and space. Desai brings the message that it is not by domination but being a partner in living with nature that true happiness and identity is achieved. Sampath’s ecological sensitivity is brilliantly captured by Desai and is interwoven into the book to provide insights into environmentalists and city dwellers. Even though the Shakotians had intruded the forest hills for a short time they seem to have caused extinction of various species. Here Desai hints that the forest depletion and denudation can lead to several environmental crises like global warming, ozone depletion and its affects. This would in turn lead to extinction of life on earth. It focuses on the socio-environmental issues with questions of competing claims of human and non human species for existence. Her message comes loud and clear through this parable with its brilliant touch of irony and satire as the story. In great good humor, chewing on famine relief,
they celebrated by the light of a roomful of candles, for the electricity had, of course, gone.

India is home to many religious groups, including Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims. It also has a history of political strife among those groups, exacerbated by the interference of British colonialism and modern globalization. Desai, like other Indian writers in English, combines these elements of India's traditions and history with a secular emphasis on storytelling. Her work explores the toll that these cultural divides have taken on India’s population. Desai’s work is known for its rich and colorful language, and detailed presentations of setting and character. *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* presents a fictitious small town called Shahkot in North India. The town has a mixed culture of traditional Indian social norms and of modern life, wherein the runaway Sampath Chawla, who just wants to be left alone, is forced into being a holy man in spite of himself. Given its popularity, the novel was still in print as of 2008; it was reissued as an Anchor paperback in 1999. The fringes of society are rich with the impressions left by marginalized individuals, who inhabit a reality that operates on principles vastly different from the mores and norms that any cohesive society must establish. Such fringe elements tend to be largely invisible to the mainstream. Strictly, invisibility implies a paucity of overt visual cues to suggest presence. But for those on society’s periphery, it also be speaks a voluntary reticence, a reluctance to furnish the oral and aural stimuli that reveal one’s true self, and the accompanying failure on the part of contemporaries to recognize the still waters that run deeper. In *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, Kiran Desai contrasts two very
different types of invisibility, that of the protagonist Sampath, and his mother Kulfi, in the eyes and ears of the other characters in the novel, and to some extent of the reader. The other inhabitants of Shahkot, are caricatured often as a homogeneous group, by Desai, and it is only in this light that they allow a consideration of the theme of the unseen and unperceived. Though the reader is allowed a slightly more privileged vantage point, occasionally eavesdropping on the stream of consciousness of Sampath and Kulfi, Desai’s breezy style preserves their enigmatic aura for both the internal and external audiences. Kulfi and Sampath are social outcasts their absorbing preoccupations with idle daydreams. And the desire to nurture these fantasies in peace clearly place them outside the folds of Shahkotian society, steeped as it is in the ancient beliefs and superstitions of the subcontinent while caught in the encroachment of post-colonial modes of thought, and necessarily suffused with the thirst for gossip of any self-respecting community. Both Kulfi and Sampath are oblivious of these markers of the society within which they are physically embedded; they are in fact too wrapped up in their own thoughts, on an entirely different mental plane. This marginalization from the community, while largely self-imposed, also necessitates a kind of lone-star persona, one whose quest for silence contrasts sharply with the requisite din of town life. And living as they do outside the sphere of everyday life, their unique dialogue with reality, which constitutes for them a means of survival, becomes akin to artistic genius. Kulfi’s isolation from society is established at the outset; her blooming pregnancy is borne alone, in rooms cut off from the worried whispers of her husband and mother-in-law. During her pregnancy, we
are introduced to the eccentricity which surrounds her persona in the eyes of the townspeople:

“Oh dear, what is going to become of this woman?” said Lakshmiji, the Raipurs, the Bengali teacher, and all of the others when they looked out of their windows, when they gossiped at the tea stall or sat in each other’s houses eating peanuts together. ‘There was always something odd about her.” (HGO p.36)

By the time her son arrives, we get the sense that she has already diminished in importance to the main story line, hardly registering on the radar of her family, an invisible shadow flitting across the page. It is in this status of relegated secondary character that she appears to us and to her contemporaries, for the remainder of our encounter with her.

Sampath, on the other hand, is ostensibly much more engaged with the people around him, even while he is likened to a “vegetable”, a lazy dreamer lacking the common sense that would undoubtedly lift him up from the bottom rung of the social ladder. His innocent cross-dressing and stripping antics at the wedding reception solidify in the minds of both townspeople and reader the strangeness of his way of thinking. It is very telling that he is not at all ashamed of the scene. He makes of himself, yet when he tries to conform to “normal” codes of conduct, echoing to his superior the crisp yet properly obsequious reply sternly advised by his father, he not only feels ridiculous but is self-conscious for the first and only time in the novel. His efforts to sequester himself from the questions, the demands, the noise, of his family and the town are thwarted; and then a guava explodes in his hands, and he is
transformed:

Sampath felt his body fill with a cool greenness, his heart swell with a mysterious wild sweetness. He felt an awake clear sap flowing through him, something quite unlike human blood...He could have sworn a strange force had entered him, that something new was circulating within him. (ibid p.47-48)

At this point, Sampath becomes well and truly exiled beyond the reach of societal confines, both physical and those founded on expectations; his escape to the guava tree in the Orchard is merely a token enactment of his journey to a new state of mind. He has determined to seek and find freedom, far from the madding crowd. This freedom is, in one sense, a keen longing for spatial sequestration. In fact, from this point on, both Sampath and Kulfi hover on the fringes of the novel, above and below the din, respectively. Sampath has a definite association with the sky, and the heavens. It is in the midst of a prodigious raining of gifts from the skies that he enters the earthly realm, after all – both the monsoon torrents and the Red Cross relief package are harbingers of his birth. But in other ways his head is very much in the clouds, in a space between earth and the heavens that presses us with its yearning to be as skybound as possible. The irritating sleep-sounds of his family cause him to run to the roof; the clamor generated by their harping causes him to flee to the crown of a tree, overlooking the ensuing hullabaloo below. And at the end, he disappears as a guava over the crest of a high hilltop, borne by the monkeys:

Still the monkeys traveled. Higher and higher, like a gust of wind that comes out of nowhere,
rustles through the trees, and melts into nothing, like a ghost…the monkeys climbed on. Up into the wilderness, up to 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 then they were gone. (ibid p.208-209)

Kulfi is, in sharp contrast, very earthy. She is never the center of attention, like Sampath is, and partly because of this she seems to lurk below the plot, connected to the murmurings underfoot, of plants, animals, seasons. Ear and nose to the ground, on a treasure-hunt for the ingredients that bring to life her enchanting culinary concoctions, she represents ancient knowledge, and the lost art of sensing the world, rather than pedagogically apprehending it. Hers is the earth-mother role, guardian of its bounty, and her easy transition from a trapped muttering eccentric to a frenzied, driven, brilliant chef gives us the sense that she is heavy with the weight of a memory not her own but the accumulated wisdom of all human consciousness that has preceded her.

Being outside of society initiates the exile of Sampath and Kulfi from the noise that defines it and this in turn reflects their symbolic invisibility to the other characters. This tension permeates the novel, and she uses the marginalization and invisibility of both characters as a vehicle for its expression. Kulfi, in all ways more disconnected from the life of norms embodied by the town, is more extreme in her avidity for silence, though it is actually solitude that she seeks. For example, during her starved and difficult pregnancy, she turns not to her mother-in-law or her husband, but rather to the walls that cage her, drawing out her frustration, her dreams, making the bars of her prison serve the role of
canvas. Yet she also welcomes the majestic and thunderous sounds of
the storm that herald the imminent fruition of her painful gestation,
suggesting that there may be an aural hierarchy, in which the sounds of
nature do not intrude on silence and solitude, but those of human
companionship do. Thus with Kulfi (and later with Sampath as well),
Desai confounds the distinction between solitude and silence, silence
being the necessary absence of verbal communication. This physical,
oral and aural isolation is only heightened in the orchard, where Kulfi
bustles about on her own terms, marching to her own drummer. She
preferentially keeps to herself throughout the novel; even the reader
rarely encounters any vocalized expression of her thoughts, and when
they do appear, they are uncensored outpourings of her mind’s voice,
and exclusively on the topic of alimentation.

Sampath, on the other hand, shuns noise, but until the end he
cannot manage to find and retain the silence he craves. Rather than the
easy calm that Kulfi is able to carve out of her surroundings, we see
Sampath unsuccessfully fleeing the sounds of society, which he finds
demanding and invasive, slicing through him coldly like his father’s
litany of verbal abuse. He, unlike Kulfi, is forced to make compromises
to navigate the dichotomy of intrusive noise and exquisite silence; to
find peace, he must first disturb it. Freedom is his ultimate goal, and that
freedom constitutes a kind of anti-being, a stillness that is at one with
nature and in harmony with the warm murmurs in its depths. But noise is
the medium of communication for the rest of the world, those living on
the inside of reality, for which the airwaves must vibrate coherently.
Thus it is that when Sampath-as-wise-sage, in an act of desperation to secure peace and quiet, alters the frequencies of the airwaves with old homilies in a new context, the sonar of the townspeople kicks in, proclaims it as holy, and begs for more. And thus it is that while all Sampath craved in the Orchard was silence, he has found himself more noise then he ever bargained for, and in fact exacerbated the very din that he desperately tried to escape.

Yet even when he is seemingly the center of attention, he is still fringe-bound, a novelty to be gawked at. He is drawn into the fold more than Kulfi, but it registers as a hollow façade even at the height of his popularity. Importantly, it is his very silence that ties Sampath’s hands, consigning him to sagehood, for, while desperation drives him to initiate the fateful recitation of forgotten secrets and maxims, he never once verbalizes his desire for the devotees to leave him alone. So in what may be the greatest irony in the novel, he is, in essence, still invisible as the revered Tree/Monkey Baba. Even as they flock to his feet, no one takes note of his silent pleas, for such a study would make it quite evident that what he really wants is to be left alone.

In the Orchard, we see the isolation, the air of invisibility associated with Kulfi and Sampath, flower and bloom into what become a kind of artistic genius, like magic to the townspeople, yet their own means of survival. Both Kulfi and Sampath are, in a sense, traders in the commodity of the unseen. Kulfi buys her life’s purpose with the preparation of lavish meals exclusively for Sampath, made with ingredients hidden and mysterious to the rest of the world:

She cooked only for Sampath…for his was the
only judgment Kulfi trusted. Almost all day she worked, trying this and that, producing, even in these early 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… (ibid p.79)

Sampath’s fling with guruhood is founded, if desperately, on drawing the curtain on secret lives that are kept out of the public eye, buying him his stay in the Orchard. The mystique and curiosity these activities generate, by their unfamiliarity to the townspeople, naturally elevates them to an art form, the artistry taking on epic, even apocryphal, proportions. Both characters engage with their reality in highly artistic ways. Kulfi does so vibrantly, Sampath more weakly, as if his claim to artistry is genetically diluted. When Desai draws the curtains back so that the reader can peek into Sampath’s mind, we feel we are entering a different realm. We tiptoe in to leave behind the alternately persistent, prodding, and angry voices of Mr. Chawla, the mob, and government officials, and things seem to come to a standstill. It is like we have entered a portal to an ante-chamber cut off from the din of the outside world, so very concrete is the transition from the noisy, crowded reality of the devotees surrounding him to the limpid, dreamy, underwater stillness of his own mental processes.

Daydreaming, however, is his moonlighting, and deeply personal, occupation. He is hardly a gnani or an intellectual, yet for all intents and purposes, to the townspeople he is the sculptor of their minds and futures, their magic eight ball, obliquely (and unwittingly) offering them advice, because that is what they seek and crave. In fact, Desai gives us
much cause to ponder the disjoint between what people actually hear and what they *want* to hear. Sampath offers them nothing more then he is pressed to do, or is capable of his utterings are like an uncontrollable tape recorder going off of its own volition, spewing forth the homilies he is surprised to learn he has, against his best lack of effort, assimilated since childhood. Unintentionally, he has found a new voice for an old kind of art. Sampath’s apprehensions of the beauties around him, and the wisdom he dispenses which paints the local vernacular and determines the trajectories of lives, render him an artist of the mind, of sorts, but a passive and unwitting one. In sharp contrast, Kulfi’s creative genius of is active and driven. It lies in her marvelous talent for works of art that have a corporeal incarnation, using the walls of her home as her mural and canvas, transforming and bringing together the arcane wild ingredients splayed across the Orchard hillsides into elaborate pulsing dishes. She is a material artist, and her language is gustatory, comprising the tastes, smells, and feel of her intoxicating ingredients. If the protagonists are largely invisible to the rest of Shahkot, they are only slightly more fleshed out for the reader. Desai carefully reveals what amount to quick, hazy mental snapshots, that the reader might be drawn into the worlds of Sampath and Kulfi while keeping one foot planted firmly in the Shahkotian mindset. The establishment of this healthy distance is essential to preserving not only our understanding of the intrinsic gulf separating the two, but also our respect for the enigma that mother and son constitute together.

Kulfi and Sampath inhabit a state of being that is inaccessible and incomprehensible to the town’s people. One can argue that their status as
outcasts renders them freer to explore such “higher” planes, but it is perhaps more likely that the draw silence has for them exploits an innate magnetic attraction for solitude, enhanced by their evident “eccentricity” and consequent societal marginalization. Kulfi is able to sculpt a niche for herself in the wilderness bordering the Orchard, one in which she can enjoy both solitude and self-realization as a brilliant chef. Sampath, on the other hand, struggles; he flounders in a nebulous, precarious compromise between that which he is escaping from and that which he is aching towards. Both flit like shadows across the awareness of the rest of the characters, present in the background but for the most part actively masking their true selves, perhaps because they realize they can never conform, and thus will never be understood. Neither family, nor acquaintances, nor devotees consider making a sincere attempt to penetrate the protective barrier that both Sampath and Kulfi impose between themselves and society. Thus their invisibility to the rest of Shahkot, and the resulting enigmatic personae they acquire, is rendered from both sides, highlighting the tensions between noise and silence, society and seclusion. Kulfi’s genius does not become cause for reverence, yet Sampath’s “gift” for inscrutable wisdom does. Within the theme of noise and silence, it becomes evident that Kulfi can never be the center of attention, for she is already too invisible, too far beyond the grasp of the crowd; her culinary activities engage no one but Sampath. On the other hand, when first confronted in the tree by the mob, Sampath cowers into the corner that initiates his meteoric rise to holiness, blurting out their epistolary secrets. And again we find evidence of the critical role that noise, particularly the spoken word, or shruti (that which is heard) plays, not only in the novel but in Indian religious life in general.
Sampath is listened to, and the aural footprints he leaves render his invisibility that much harder to attain, until his grand finale, his disappearing act, the magician’s final trick. Sampath’s dream-like life represents a journey deep within oneself, to the expanse of emptiness, reminiscent of the Buddhist ideal of nirvana – the being of nothingness.

It vividly portrays the unequal treatment given to women seeking education and alternatives to marriage and motherhood. It is an important section on the portrayal of women in the novels of Kiran Desai.

“The Radical Feminists allege that marriage is at the very root of women’s subjection to the man because, through it, man controls both her reproduction and her person.”

Desai’s first novel is a wild, sad, humorous story about the oldest son of an eccentric family in a small Indian village. Born at the moment a crash of thunder signals the end of a long, hot drought, Sampath grows into a disappointing young man. After he loses a job, Sampath's mother attempts to comfort him with a guava, but it explodes as Sampath is admiring its green coolness, compelling him to flee his family and village to an abandoned orchard, climb into a guava tree, and stay there. He quickly becomes known as the tree baba.

“The rest of the family moves to the orchard with Sampath’s ambitious father, who is determined to exploit the economic possibilities of the newly proclaimed baba. Desai's novel is full of wonderfully portrayed characters and beautifully vivid descriptions of animals, plant life, and the dusty environs of the village. An unqualified pleasure to read, this novel is highly recommended for all libraries.”
In this way, Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard is Kiran Desai’s first novel and won the top prize for the Betty Trask Awards in 1998. It is set in the Indian village of Shahkot and follows the exploits of a young man, Sampath Chawla, who is trying to avoid the responsibilities of adult life. Fed up with his life in Shahkot, Sampath goes to a guava orchard and settles himself in a guava tree, where he uses the gossip he learned while working at the post office to convince people he is clairvoyant and soon becomes a popular holy man. Kiran Desai based this book on a real life story in which a man, Kapila Pradhan, actually lived up a tree for 15 years. This was the author's inspiration for the book and there are similarities between the novel and Pradhan's life in his tree. The Inheritance of Loss is the second novel by Indian author Kiran Desai. It was first published in 2006 and won a number of awards including the Man Booker Prize. For that year, the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award in 2007, and the 2006 Vodafone Crossword Book Award. It was written over a period of seven years after her first book, the critically acclaimed Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard (1998). Among its main themes are migration, living between two worlds, and living between past and present.
References and Notes:


4. Ibid. p. 55


8. Ibid.p.131.


