



UGC Approved Journal

IJELLH

**International Journal of English Language,
Literature in Humanities**

Indexed, Peer Reviewed (Refereed) Journal

ISSN-2321-7065

Impact Factor : 5.7



Editor-in-Chief

**Volume V, Issue XII
December 2017
www.ijellh.com**

[About Us](#) | [Editorial Board](#) | [Submission Guidelines](#) | [Call for Paper](#)

[Paper Submission](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Terms & Condition](#) | [More.....](#)

Nongmaithem Suraj Kumar

Research Scholar,

Department of English, Nagaland University.

surnong5@gmail.com

THE ART OF PORTRAYING NATURE IN KIRAN DESAI'S
"INHERITANCE OF LOSS"

Abstract:

Kiran Desai's "The Inheritance of Loss" talks about the life struggle of the people in the hilly regions. She won the Man Booker Prize in 2006 for the said novel and she is the youngest person to receive such an honourable prize. The novel is also filled with full of stylistic playfulness, emotions, love and beautiful description of nature and its elements. The natural elements like mountains, lakes, peaks, hills, valleys, seas, birds are also seen. The intense feeling of fear of insurgency by the people of the hilly regions especially by the immigrants could also be seen in the novel. The havoc shown by the insurgency group is beautifully portrayed by the author. The researcher here is trying to find out the art of portraying nature in the book.

Keywords: Kanchenjunga, Arabian Sea, Kalimpong, Buddhism, Jamuna.

Main Paper:

Nature is vast and surrounded by various mysteries. One can only truly understand the mysteries if one are with nature and vice versa. Those people who are truly in deep touch with nature can only be able to understand its meaning. Natural elements like mountains, hills, seas, valleys, oceans birds and animals, all conveys some meaning and its purposes.

The significance of the mysteries of the water world is found in the novel. "No human had ever seen an adult giant squid alive, and though they had eyes as big as apples to scope the dark of the ocean, there was solitude so profound they might never encounter another of their tribe." (2) The behaviour of the water animal seems to be quite different from those who are on land. The wonders of water are far more beautiful than to be described by the words of

man. Unlike those who are on land fighting for land and property of the same race, the creatures of the ocean hardly fight when they see each other. They live happily and peacefully unlike those living on land. Here, the water represents peace and harmony.

“From there he had journeyed to the Bombay dock and then sailed to Liverpool, and from Liverpool he had gone to Cambridge.” (35) The beautiful description of the communication link of the past in between the East and the West is shown. In the past all the communication from one part of the world to another is done only through the sea and ocean voyages. It also beautifully describe the link of communication of various places in a country is all done in the water ways and water plays an important role in the communication link. Besides land, water is the only way of communication since in the olden days few transports were done in the air ways. The judge explores communication through water ways. Here, nature represents communication.

“The ship moved, the water split and spilled, the flying fish exploded silver above the unravelment and the party atmosphere reached a crescendo.” (37) The beautiful description of the sea voyages is shown. The movement of the ship in the water, the excitement of the people in the ship after watching the vast sea and its creatures are depicted. The author too believes that the excitement of the people travelling would be extravagant and the party in such a journey would be filled with the loudness and happiness of the crowd present there.

“The Himalayas were once under the water, Sai said. She knew this from her reading; there were ammonite fossils on Mt. Everest.” (69) The theme of exploration is shown beautifully and further signifies that the younger generations have the eagerness to study and find out about the nature and its habitants. Sai, a young girl knows about the Himalayas after studying books about the origin and nature of the Himalayas.

“He read a book entitled Expedition to Goozerat: The Malabar Coast undulates in the shape of a wave up the western flank of India, and then, in a graceful motion, gestures towards the Arabian Sea. This is Goozerat. At the river deltas and along the malarial coast lie towns configured to trade....” (110) Here, the author beautifully portrays the past life of the judge. The judge once read a book called “Expedition to Goozerat” where the judge gets to know that India is a land filled with full of sea coast and it was great for trade and commerce.

The book also portrays the surrounding of Gujarat and its natural beauty. Gujarat is an area filled with river deltas and it ends towards the Arabian Sea.

“Briefly visible above the vapour, Kanchenjunga was a far peak whittled out of ice, gathering the last of the light, a plume of snow blown by the storms at its summit.” (1) The above lines portray the beautification of Kanchenjunga, one of the highest peaks in the world, which is situated in India. Throughout the year the peak is filled with snow all around just like the Himalayas. And if by chance a storm comes through the way then the storm would have no effect on the peak and only some snow would be blown off and nothing else would change. Unlike the changes that a storm has on the valleys leading to the destruction, it will not do any changes on the peak. The judge is not disturbed by the external atmosphere and stands like a peak. Here, nature stands for the supreme power and glory of human beings.

“Rarely was there something unexpected in the mail and never anything beautiful. They looked at the deserts, the mountains, the fresh spring colours of green and yellow, the snow at the poles; somewhere on this glorious orb was Biju.” (18) The above lines beautifully portray the beauty of nature in India. Even the tourist who travelled in India were greatly amused by the beauty, they wondered and looked at symmetric creations of the lines of the deserts, mountains, the fresh spring colours of green and yellow, the snow at the top of the poles i.e the Himalayas. In this beautiful creation of nature something was missing in Biju, the son of the cook who went to America to work. When Biju went to America, he could not enjoy the beauty of nature like he did at his home.

The beautifully signified values of the mountain and its support to the inhabitants are shown in the novel. “Kanchenjunga glowed macabre, trees stretched away on either-side, trunks pale, leaves black, and beyond, between the pillars of the trees, a path led to the house.” (19) It talks about the surroundings of the peak. It was surrounded by the beautifully decorated trees with its branches stretched on both sides. On the slopes of the mountain there were lots of trees, tree trunks that were cut down to make house hold things and other things. And in between the trees many paths lead to the house of various people and one of the path leads to the house of the old judge and Sai.

“Outside, passionately coloured birds swooped and whistled, and The Himalayas rose layer upon layer until those gleaming peaks proved a man to be so small that it made sense to

give it all up, empty it all out.” (29) Here, the glorification of Himalayas is shown. It is known for its heavy structure and wonderful views; it also acts as a home for various kinds of birds with various colours. The layer of snow covered layer by layer making the peak beautiful and white. It also stands as a barrier to human beings making them so tiny that man cannot do anything in front of them. It also acts a reminding figure that besides intelligence, man can never imagine what lies beyond the boundaries of this huge natural structure.

Nature plays an important role, when Sai loved her tutor. Nature adds more beauty to her love. “Suddenly to the right, The Teesta River came leaping at them between white banks of sand. Space and sun crashed through the window. Reflections magnified and echoed the light, the river, each adding angles and colours to the other, and Sai became aware of the enormous space she was entering.” (31) The beautiful description of the realization of Sai, the young lover while they were at the river side is shown. It was believed that the river was flowing towards them between white banks of sand. She also beautifully portrays the natural beauties of the sun and its rays. Sai also gets an aware that there was a vast gap between her and the natural elements like the light of the sun, river which adds natural beauties in various angles and colours to life forces.

“Cows mooed oo aaw, oo aaw; women worked through the cotton fields to collect water at the mud-muddled river, a slow river, practically asleep.” (57) These lines beautifully display the actions of the animals especially cows mooing in a different sound. It also states that the animals are happily and eagerly waiting to go to river to bath or drink water. Their happiness could be predicted through their actions. Moreover, in the early period people used to get their sources of water either from lakes, rain or river. One can also see through the novel that women who are working in the fields also used to get drinking water from the river, especially to those part of the river, which are still and not moved, practically saying a slow and steady one where the water will be clear as crystal and good or else there would be mud if the water is collected from the disturbed ones and are unfit for drinking.

Beautiful scenery of the past life of the judge and the narration technique is used. “Your grandfather would drive in his car if he could, but the district was mostly without roads, and hardly any bridges spanned the rivers, so more often he had to ride out on horseback.” (60) The cook told Sai about the past life of the judge. Due to the lack of the transport system the judge had to ride on horseback for travelling on various parts of the land.

In the district where the judge had stationed, there were no roads nor did any bridges build on the rivers. He had a car where he would travel wherever it was possible otherwise he depended mostly on horse and other available source.

The significance of cunningness is shown through snake. “It has been over hot summer afternoon and they sat on the Mon Ami veranda. All over the mountain side, the heat had reduced the townspeople to a stupor. Tin roofed sizzled, dozens of snakes lay roasting on the stones and flowers bloomed as plushly and perfectly as on a summer outfit.” (65) The effect of the change of season and its effect on the surrounding especially to the people and animals living around are described beautifully by the author. By the heat of the scorching sun, the people who were residing on the mountain side were made to be rest on their veranda to overcome the heat. Moreover, the animals like snakes, which love average temperature, due to heat they were forced to come out of their holes and began to lay on the roof tops and stones to bear the heat. The flowers of various kinds on the other hand were blooming in their full beautiful form.

“She stared out at the mountains, at the perfection of heir stillness.” (69) The beautiful description of the mountains and its structure is shown. It also beautifully portrays the stillness and silent nature of the mountains. Here, she refers to Noni, a young girl who is very fond of nature and its wide beauty. She believes that no one can harm the mountains nor it can be conquered naturally by mankind. The mountain is standing silently, watching at the activities of mankind and wonders whether their activities might harm him one day or the other.

“The muffled thunder of prayer rumbled down the mountains as the mules and horses stepped pom-pom med out of the fog, bells singing, and prayer flags flying from the saddles.” (84) The line depicts the reaction of the hull animals, the enjoyment of the music and vice-versa. When the prayers of the monks were sung from the mountains it was heard all over the mountain. Then, the most amazing part came when the mules and horses stepped down the mountains for delivering the parcels out of the thick fog, with their bells around the neck singing and ringing. They are going with the tune of the music and were revolving around them. The prayer flags too were flying from the saddles.

Freedom is represented through nature. “Flying squirrels chased one another through the circination of the ferns and mist; the mountains were like ibex horns piercing through. He returned to his chessboard and made his move, but it felt like an old move in the game.” (89) Here, these lines show that the world around the old retired judge is still revolving like a game of chess. He is still in his old game but it feels like the way he is living like an old move in the game of chess. The beauty of the nature too is revealed in the above lines. The squirrels were chasing one another in the midst and ferns, and in between the trees, flowers running through. All these activities were happening in the mountains, it acts as a role in which the animals can run happily, freely and do all the activities without any trouble.

Nature represents destination of human beings. “Down a dry gully through the grasses, you reached a tributary of the Jamuna where you could watch man travelling downstream on inflated buffalo skins, the creatures’ very dead legs, all four, sticking straight up as they sailed along, and where the river scalloped shallow over the stones, they got out and dragged their buffalo skin boats over.” (103) The above lines indicate the name of one of the famous rivers in India (Jamuna). It is a holy river where any man travelling in the water could see the body of dead animals and all its parts like the skin and legs. As one sails along the river, it would reach to certain point that would be filled with stones which is the destination of the journey. Just like a person has a certain destination point in life and does all sort of activities, the people travelling in boat also got out after reaching their destination point and dragged their buffalo skin boats over the stone.

“The world vanished, the gate opened onto nothing –no Gyan around the band of the mountain –and that terrible feeling of waiting released its stranglehold. Even Uncle Potty was impossible to visit for the jhora had overflowed its banks and carried the bridge downstream.” (107) The above lines beautifully combine the beauties of two items Viz. mountain and river. Due to heavy rain there were no human activities, there was also lack in the communication link between parts. Gyan, the home tutor was not seen for several days and the mountainsides were quiet and lonely. Uncle Potty was also unable to travel and visit his place due to heavy flood and the streams were very powerful that it can even carry away the bridge that the people used to travel. The bridge acts a communication link between two places.

“Gyan was twenty and Sai was sixteen, and at the beginning they had not paid very much attention to the events of the hillside, the new posters in the market referring to old discontents, the slogans scratched and painted on the side of the government offices and shops.” (126) Here, the above lines convey that the youths who are in love have no idea or attention to the situation around them. Same like it, in the novel Gyan and Sai had no attention around them. When they came to realize what was happening, they were shocked and frightened. The insurgency about the place came too much that even the market place was in full confusion. The new posters of the separate land were pasted and distributed in different parts of the area especially to the market place, government offices and shops. People were getting tensed to what is happening around them, no one knows what will happen to them.

“While it didn’t snow in Kalimpong, just turned dull, all around the snow line dipped, and the high mountains around town were brindled white.” (151) Here the above lines show the change in the season with the course of time. Without snow the whole area looked dull, the regular snow line just dipped in. And even the high mountains were not looking beautiful as its beauty had gone without snow; just like it the whole town was not beautiful to its mark. Without snow the mountain and town were half white and brown, which is not good to look at.

“In the morning, they found in the runnels, frost on the crest, and frost in the crotch in the hills.” (151) Here, the above lines beautifully portrays the early morning around the hilly regions. Further, the winter season had started in the area and due to it, in every place where there is water present, it was frozen into ice. Though winter in the area came late, it was amusing that the people around were happy and they welcome the season with warm greetings. This shows the bond of people with nature.

“The forest of that time were fierce and enormous –if you were told a magical beast lived there, you’d believed it. We’d managed to the tops of mountains where monasteries limpet to the sides of rock, surrounded by chortens and prayer flags, the mountains rugged lines of indigo. Buddhism was ancient here; more ancient than it was anywhere else.” (153) These lines describe the origin of Buddhism that it was first set up in the forest of the unknown Himalayas. During that time the forest was full of trees, flowers and animals. The forest was vast and enormous. On the top of the mountain one could see monasteries being

set up as it would be the best place as there would be peace all around without any disturbances.

Thus, the creative works of contemporary women novelist are quite beautiful not only in the form but also in the content. The novel represents the change in the life and reality of a person artistically. As a work, it represents the social, cultural and spiritual behaviour of the people of the contemporary Indian society. Nature, takes the main role in the novel. The likes of the natural elements Viz. trees, birds, animals, rivers and seas are seen throughout the novel. One can easily know after reading the novel that the author loves nature and wants to be with it. She also believes that, nature is a source of powerful element which helps a person to wonder in natural beauties. Further, she firmly believes that nature is the only thing that binds humans to live in this world. The language used by the author is quite easy and simple to understand. She beautifully portrays, the bond of beautiful relationship of nature with humans and shows that both are inter related to each other. Lastly, the author shows the beauty of Kanchenjunga and believes that preserving culture should be dealt and living together with nature without any disturbances should also be preserved. Nature also plays a unique role in portraying the culture of a particular community. We should also know that without nature the comfort that we are having is not possible and preserving them should be a priority. Without nature human beings cannot survive alone.

Works cited

Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. New Delhi: Cengage Learning India, 2012.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to literary theory and cultural theory*. New Delhi: Viva Books Private Ltd, 2008.

Desai, Kiran. *The Inheritance of Loss*. New Delhi: Penguin Books Publication, 2006. Print.

Lemon, Lee T. *A Glossary for the Study of English*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Waugh, Patricia. *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.