

Ecology and Human Concerns in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

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Kiran Desai belongs to a new breed of writers who set a new trend in English Literature and lent a gust of freshness through their multiethnic, multicultural, and multiracial approach. She is a writer of global village who is born in one country, raised in another, and lives in another. More than being the daughter of a celebrated writer Anita Desai, Kiran Desai is a writer who has carved a niche for herself in the literary world with her two novels – *The Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). This paper proposes to suggest that in *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai gives ample evidence of entwinement of human concerns and ecology, something that emanates from her own concerns towards environment.

The key term here is 'Ecology' which according to Richard Kerridge "is the scientific study of natural interdependencies: of life forms as they relate to each other" (535). Ecology is derived from 'Oikos,' which means home. The term ranges wide as it also deals with the whole group of living organisms interacting with each other. Thus, the domain of ecology as a discipline includes the study of the whole inhabited earth.

Ecology and ecological concerns in the present context have assumed great significance because of the looming specter of global warming and the increasing loss of biodiversity due to human intervention. Ecological balance has played a decisive role in the evolution of human species. Man belongs to this earth in the same manner as animals and plants do. In this context, it is worthwhile to quote Donald Hughes who, in his work *Ecology in Ancient Civilizations*, remarks,

[Human ecology is] a rational study of how mankind interrelates with the home of the human species, the earth; with its soil and mineral resources; with its water, both fresh and salt; with its air, climates and weather, with its many living things, animals and planets, from the simplest to the most complex; and with the energy received ultimately from the sun. (3)

Environment affects human psyche deeply. Man's actions towards the environment are defined by how he sees himself in relation to his surroundings. Kerridge asserts that the study of a text from the point of view of its negotiation of nature demands two things to be considered – what it says about nature and how well it communicates the ecological urgency. Nature is what earth is and what it does without human intervention. Kerridge believes that a landscape in novel should not function merely as setting, background, or symbol; rather it should act as a vibrant force (537).

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* presents nature as a vibrant force in the lives of its character through the problem of destabilization in Kalimpong. Life in Kalimpong is made difficult due to its natural instability which is compounded by political instability. Developed by British East India Company as an alternative to Darjeeling to escape the summer heats of the plains, Kalimpong was famous for its natural beauty and tranquil atmosphere. The text opens with a vivid description of an

evocative natural setting. The author describes seasons, topography, and variety of vegetation, rivers, animals, and insects in a beautiful poetic way:

All day, the colours had been those of dusk, mist moving like a watery creature across the great flanks of mountains possessed of ocean shadows and depth. Briefly visible above the vapours, Kanchenjunga was a far peak whittled out of ice, gathering the last of the light, a plume of snow blown high by the storms at its summit. (1)

The description of Kanchenjunga at the very beginning of the novel lends freshness of thought to the readers. Desai's observation of minute details of characters as well as that of every nook and cranny of their living spaces and the sustained vigour of her narratives leave the reader spell bound. Desai grapples with different ways of nature, self in relation to nature, different views of social relations, and different ways of coming to know and of what constitutes knowledge. Nature and landscape described extensively in the text speaks of her love for Indian landscapes and her fine aesthetic sensibility. Desai's vision is reflected symbolically through the majestic peaks of Kanchenjunga. Desai, being a female writer, gets the privilege to suggest a notion regarding nature in her text. It is generally believed that women are closer to nature than men. Deborah Slicer, in "Wrongs of Passage: Three Challenges to the Maturity of Ecofeminism," supports this notion: "A fair number of ecofeminists have either intimated or said outright that women's voices ought to be given some special privilege in articulating a new environmental ethic or ethics" (32). Slicer, while quoting Roach and Griscon, asserts that women are for some reason ontologically and/ or epistemologically "closer" to nature than men, and it is suggested, if not plainly asserted, that women's voices thus ought to be privileged in ethical discussion of interspecies relations. This thesis has been called "nature feminism" (Slicer 33). Desai vividly recognizes and empathizes with the exploitation of nature and with the degrading relationship of human with nature. It is worth mentioning here that Desai not only puts her comment in her own words in the text but also her characters also speak out her environmental sensibility.

The female characters like Sai, Lola, and Nimi live with nature as its integral part. Susan Griffin in "Woman and Nature" writes, "Woman speaks with nature that she hears voices from under the earth. The wind blows in her ears and trees whisper to her. That the dead sing through her mouth and the cries of infants are clear to her . . . But for him this dialogue is over . . . But we (women) hear" (1). The female characters in the text are more sensitive to nature than men.

Sai, the main character of *The Inheritance of Loss*, is able to perceive the sublimity of nature in the opening chapter itself. While reading an article about giant squid in an old National Geographic, Sai observes Kanchenjunga's "wizard phosphorescence with a shiver" (1). Her experience of the "wizard phosphorescence" has a sense of wonder or awe. Sai's connection with nature is spontaneous. She has a harmonious relationship with the surrounding environment of Cho Oyu. Desai puts forth Sai's affinity with nature in a poetic expression. She writes, "The caress of the mist through her hair seemed human, and when she held her fingers out the vapour took them gently into its mouth" (2). In these lines Sai and nature have intermingled. It seems as if nature understands and is complementing the feelings of Sai for Gyan, her tutor. Nature has become her true companion since she came to Kalimpong. The lonely Sai develops an intimate relationship with nature after the death of her parents and after not being welcomed by her grandfather. When she comes to Cho Oyu for the first time the moon shines "fluorescently enough to read the name of the house" (19). Nature shows her a path to new life ahead after the death of her parents. She feels the magnificence of Kanchenjunga that "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." The magnificence and grandeur of the place makes Sai feel herself small. She feels the vastness of the place. She senses "the swollen presence of the

forest,” and could “hear the hollow-knuckled knocking of the bamboo, the sound of the jhora that ran deep in the décolleté of the mountain . . . She had a fearful feeling of having entered a space so big it reached both forward and backward” (34). Sai, on one hand, feels herself trivial in comparison to the natural splendor, on the other hand, feels one with nature.

Sai is not the only character in the text who feels an affinity with nature. Even the judge, Justice Jemu Bhai Patel, Sai’s grandfather, must have felt an affinity with nature which made him select Kalimpong as his home after retirement. However, his affinity with nature is not as deep as Sai’s. When the judge was introduced to Cho Oyu by the Scotsman who had built it, he felt he was entering a sensibility rather than a house. Desai’s description of the house shows that the house is a part of nature: “The floor was dark, almost black, wide planked; the ceiling resembled the rib cage of a whale, marks of an axe still in the timber. A fireplace made of silvery river stone sparkled like sand. Lush ferns butted into windows, stiff seams of foliage felted with spores, curly nubs pelted with bronze fuzz” (29). Here, the judge feels the depth, width, height, and an elusive dimension. This is clearly foregrounded in the following description as Desai writes, “. . . 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 up all, empty it all out.” Like Sai, he too feels his triviality in comparison to nature.

Sai and her grandfather have a different relationship with Kalimpong and nature. A typical anglophile that he is, he misses his life in England. He feels alienated from the surrounding. Where Sai feels at home in natural surroundings, her grandfather feels barely human. The judge missed “the beauty of carved colleges and churches painted with gold leaf and angels” of England and “didn’t see the green river trembling with replications of the gardens that segued one into the other or the swans that sailed butterflyed to their reflections” (40). The judge feels alienated in the new surroundings and longed for the environment where he could identify himself. Eventually, he felt barely human at all.

The judge chooses Kalimpong as his shell where he could spend his retired life in the ecstasy of nature. He does not allow it to be disturbed even by Bose, his only friend. He reluctantly agrees to meet him at the Gymkhana and that too only to avoid his visit to his Cho Oyu. Desai describes the judge’s feelings through a question and self-answer round: “He had written to the judge that he would stay at the Gymkhana. Why did the judge go? Out of some vain hope of putting his memories to sleep? Out of curiosity? He told himself he went because if he did not go to the Gymkhana, Bose would come to Cho Oyu instead” (202). Bose’s visit threatens the peaceful existence of the judge. He is not only alienated from his surrounding but from every human relation. Whether it is his granddaughter Sai or his wife Nimi, he remains aloof from his relations. He lives in a cocoon of his own, an alien to everybody around him. He does not want any intrusion into his private space. This is the reason why he does not want his friend, Bose, to come to him. He undoubtedly loves the loneliness and the beauty of nature but he does not seem to belong here.

The only connection that the judge has established is with Mutt. The judge is introduced to the readers on the very first page of the novel, absorbed in playing chess with himself where his pet dog Mutt “Stuffed under his chair felt safe and snores gently in her sleep.” The judge who does not want anyone to perturb his peaceful life allows Mutt to share every single second of his day. “Each night Mutt slept with her head on his pillow, and on cold nights she was wrapped in a shawl of angora rabbit wool. She was asleep, but even so, one of her ears cocked as she listened to the judge while she continued snoring” (35). The lovable treatment of the pet by the judge brings forth a different aspect of his personality. The judge who still lives with his airs of authority, a typical anglophile with his colonial bent of mind takes refuge in the warmth of love and care for his pet. His relationship with Mutt can best be described in the words of Fritjof Capra. Capra in *The Tao of Physics* writes, “the

world is a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole” (71). Thus, all the species from dignified to the most lower on the scale, are interdependent on each other for their survival. The notion of dependent co-arising or *pattica samuppada* which is central to the philosophy of Buddhism also speaks of interconnectedness. But man under his superiority complex fails to understand this connection. People could fall in love beyond any limits with flora and fauna, animals and birds, as well as with humans too. Such love is a blessing. This experience of blessings makes the man to realize the connection and interdependencies. Nature provides man unconditional love but in return we destroy it indifferently. Nature, through its creation Mutt, gives the judge what he missed all his life, a relationship of care and intimacy that he could not establish with anyone else. When the GNLF insurgents threaten to kill Mutt, the judge, without any second thought, gives away his rifles and bears insult at their hands. His filial love for Mutt is also reflected through his loving way of calling it “my darling,” “mutton chop,” etc. He gets depressed to the extent of nothingness when Mutt is kidnapped. Desai, here, exposes the truth of the value of human and animal life in the self-styled civilized world. Desai writes “human life was stinking, corrupt and mean while there were beautiful creations who lived with delicacy on the earth without doing anyone any harm” (298). The SDO while observing the flowering creepers in the garden of the judge feels the presence of God, he believes if a man wants to escape the growing chaos in the life of modern man, it is essential to revive and re-establish the lost connection with nature. Nature allows man to escape the struggle and stress of life and elevates him to a higher plane of ecstasy and peace. However, the burgeoning insurgency in Kalimpong changes the attitude of the SDO. He angrily shouts at the judge, when he enquires about Mutt: “A dog! Justice, just listen to yourself. People are killed. What can I do?” (298). The SDO does not want to waste his time on finding the dog during the critical time of emergency. The human world has failed Mutt and its grace. While the judge pictures himself and Mutt getting cozy with each other, the army comes out to enforce the curfew in the area.

The prevailing mood of the novel is of bitterness and despair due to insurgency by Gorkha National Liberation Front formed by Subash Ghisingh in 1980. GNLF led an exhaustive and violent campaign demanding a separate Gorkhaland state on the basis of ethno- linguistics rights. They targeted Darjeeling district and the adjoining Dooars areas of Jalpaiguri of northern West Bengal. The ecology of Kalimpong known for its serenity, peace, and beauty has been destroyed and damaged by the activities of GNLF. Nature, despite its enormous resources, cannot cater to the needs of the infinitely increasing masses. It becomes obvious for the powerful to monopolize the resources for his personal use and for the disadvantaged to rebel, resulting in insurgency. Desai puts forth how the innocents have to bear the brunt of such rebellions. Not only the human beings but animals, plants, and mountains are also affected adversely in this fight for land. The terrorists who are fighting to have their own space and land, in their endeavour have destroyed the serenity of the place for which they are fighting. Desai does not only hold insurgency responsible for this destruction but also the increasing demands of man on nature. She depicts how unrestrained population growth has ruined nature and resulted in natural calamities. She writes, “In order to accommodate the population boom, the government has recently passed legislation that allowed an extra story to be built on each home in Darjeeling; the weight of more concrete pressing downward had spurred the town’s lopsided descent and caused more landslides than ever” (196-197). Desai has very aptly brought forth the reason of landslides in hilly areas. Even the Darjeeling government’s report on landslides records, “Rapid expansion of settlement and towns especially along the roads is one of the important causes of frequent landslides hazards in the hills. Multi storied building without proper planning along the roads and on the steeper slope increase the load on the already deteriorated slopes.” Not only the buildings but the increase in vehicles has also added to the threat. As human pressure increases on land, forests are depleted for agricultural lands and for the new settlements. When Lola tells Gorkhas that their settlement may cause landslides, the Gorkhas reply, “they aren’t building big houses like

yours, Aunt, just little huts of bamboo. In fact, it's your house that might cause a landslide. Too heavy no? Too big? Walls many feet wide? Stone, concrete?" (244). It is actually the increasing pressure of concrete on hills that causes landslides. However, the accusation of Lola is also correct when she says that growth in population has caused "cut into the hill, land weak, landslides may occur" (244). Both the factors are responsible for the landslides in Darjeeling. Jesse Patrick Ferguson in "Violent Dis-Placements: Natural and Human Violence in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of loss*" points out that landslides are linked to social decay and poor land management . . . increasing threat cannot but destabilize the residents sense of security and place-ness (37). The novel portrays this approaching threat which clearly disturbs the human society and human life and most importantly upsets the sense of belongingness.

Desai, in the text, pictures the landscape of modern industrial society as consisting of urban cities, industries, and factories on one hand and associated it with rural and regional spaces that provided labourers and other resources on the other. Not only India but almost every part of the world confronts the issue of unsustainable number of people. People are displaced from their own space to search for better prospects of living. The novel maps the contours of the ethno-racial and historical relationship between people from different cultures and backgrounds, thus presenting cross-cultural ecocritical perspective.

The story of the novel moves between the Indian and American landscapes through the story of Biju and that of Kalimpong. The landslides at Kalimpong have resulted in the breakdown of communication between the son and the father living thousands of miles away. Biju, the only son of the Judge's cook, works in the USA. The only way they keep in touch is through letters. Due to the landslides and heavy rainfalls, Biju is not able to receive his father's letters, so he returns to Kalimpong but he has to face the road problems. Later, he takes a lift to Kalimpong from GNLf men. After crossing ten landslides on the way and being robbed by insurgents, Biju reaches home penniless but alive. The landslides are caused by GNLf men who use detonators when their negotiation with the chief minister of West Bengal fails.

Not only GNLf movement destabilizes the ecological balance but the judge also, as a civil servant in the colonial rule, had played his role in the exploitation of natural resources in India for the benefit of England. Desai very minutely describes how ecopolitics affects nature. Kalimpong's richer residents are suppressed by poor Gorkhas. They take advantage of landslides and are not concerned about peace in the region, neither political nor natural. Desai writes, "Kalimpong was transformed into a ghost town, the wind tumbling around the melancholy streets, garbage flying by unhindered. Whatever point the GNLf might have had, it was severely out of hand; even one man's anger, in those days, seemed enough to set the hillside alight" (281). In such a situation, it is the responsibility of government to maintain the stability in Kalimpong. SDO could not help the judge in the case of Mutt because of the critical political situation. The curfew, clashes between army and insurgents instead of solving the issue add to the misery. The use of arms and ammunition further degrades the natural environment. Desai points out the eco-political thoughts by exploring the interrelation between political and ecological issues and the related problems. She explores the predicament of discrimination and mal-governance. The problems of Kalimpong are caused by government apathy, increased population, and political instability. It will be apt to quote Ian Welsh who in his article "In Defence of Civilization: Terrorism and Environmental Politics in the 21st century" writes,

The evocation of civilization as part of a 'war' implicitly and explicitly legitimates the introduction of extraordinary measures consistent with war time contingencies. Such measures apply to both internal and external affairs of state and include those sections of environmental movements explicitly linking environmental degradation with critiques of

contemporary neo-liberalism . . . Such movements render visible elements of a prevailing neo-liberal civilization inimical to environmental and societal integrity. (356)

Thus, situation can be brought under control only with the help of genuine government intervention. Until and unless the residents have the support of government, they cannot fight back the atrocities of insurgency.

The insecurity in their hearts alleviates the courage of insurgents. The GNLF's attack on the residents deprives them of their sense of security and pride as well as the feeling of being home. Ferguson notes, "An understanding of how natural and human violence are intertwined can help us mitigate the latter, even where former is beyond our control" (48). Desai symbolizes it through an incident where Sai and the cook are picking the ticks off Mutt, both of them tried to kill them but they resurface failing every attempt made by humans.

[Sai and the cook] hit them with stone but they didn't die but in a flash were up and running . . . then they tried to drown them in a can of water, but they were tough, swam about and climbed on one another's back and crawled out. Sai chased them down, put again in the can, rushed to the toilet and flushed them, but even then they resurfaced, doing a mad-scrabble swim in the toilet bowl. (88)

Despite repeated attempts, the ticks managed to survive and re-establish themselves. Desai points out how nature is capable of survival and regeneration despite human attempts to destroy it. Man may control nature and humiliate its grandeur for his purpose but it has the power to reinforce itself. GNLF insurgents who were mere boys, the oldest of them being under twenty, humiliated the judge by asking him to lay the table and by sending him to the kitchen which he never entered before, to prepare some snacks with the cook. The judge has to face much humiliation at the hands of Gorkhas too. Before leaving they ask the judge to speak "Jai Gorkha... Gorkhaland for the Gorkhas." "Say, I am a fool" to which judge replied, "I am a fool." Desai writes, "On the dining table was the tablecloth he had spread out, white with a design of grapevines interrupted by a garnet stain where, many years ago, he had spilled a glass of port while trying to throw it at his wife for chewing in a way that disgusted him" (8). Through this incident, Desai efficaciously draws a parallel between the exploitation of women at the hands of men and the deplorable condition of judge at the hands of GNLF insurgents. Mutt who has been made the target by the insurgents tried to respond after their departure but with the fear still inhabited in her eyes: "She tried to wag her tail, although it kept folding back between her legs" (8). Later, when Mutt sees her own reflection, she gets afraid mistaking it for a jackal. The fear in the eyes of Mutt because of the insurgents and the silence at the lips of Nimi speak of the exploitation of nature and women by men. The conversation between Lola and Pardhan of GNLF also testifies this exploitation of women as well as nature for the mean purposes of men. Here, Desai picks up the issue of ecofeminism by portraying that women and nature are destined to inherit the loss.

Though the men are trying to draw boundaries and enforce their authority, nature blurs all such distinctions with the help of "mist charging down like a dragon, dissolving, undoing, making ridiculous the drawing of borders" (9). The love affair between Sai and Gyan is one such attempt of nature to dissolve, undo, and ridicule the boundaries laid by men. Sai and Gyan who belong to different backgrounds fell in love with each other. Both of them felt each other as unexplored mystic terrain. They enjoy the extravagance of nature and feel the spirit of nature in the bosom of Kanchenjunga. Nature too gives them its pleasure in abundance. When Gyan walks his way for two hours to Cho Oyu for the first time, he experiences "a refreshing and simple happiness, although it took him two hours uphill, from Bong Basti where he lived, the light shining through thick bamboo in starry, jumping chinks, imparting the feeling of liquid shimmering" (71). The natural beauty of the

place pleases his soul and hints at the happiness waiting for him at Cho Oyu. Similarly, Sai remains cheerful and calm in the season of monsoon. She experiences a perfect peace with no chance of communication with anyone. Desai describes, "She sat on the veranda, riding the moods of the season, thinking how intelligent it was to succumb as all over Kalimpong modernity began to fail" (106). She likes the way all connections are lost, reducing the world into nothingness. She feels electrified at the release of strange hold of waiting for Gyan. The love of nature has more soothing effect on Sai than the love of Gyan. Conversely, when Sai enjoys the tranquility of nature, Gyan stays worried about the tuition, about his payment, and the delay in the completion of the syllabus. He chooses to slip about the slopes while clutching the plants but after reaching Cho Oyu, he feels guilty for asking Sai, who looks like "an empress of a wild kingdom glowing against its lush scene," to study (108). The rain signifies the close bonding between Sai and Gyan. Desai describes,

. . . the sound of water came from every direction: fat upon the window, a popgun off the bananas and the tin roof, lighter and messier on the patio stones, a low-throated gurgle in the gutter that surrounded the house like a moat. There was the sound of *jhora* rushing and of water drowning itself in this water, of drainpipes disgorging into the rain barrels, the rain barrels brimming over, little sipping sounds from the moss. (116)

Desai, through the description of rain water and its sound, depicts metaphorically the increasing intimacy between Sai and Gyan. The growing impossibility of speech makes other intimacies easier. Sai and Gyan take refuge in Mong Pong Nature Reserve, Delo Lake, sericulture institute, and Darjeeling Zoo which witness the bubbling affair between the lovers. They picnicked by the Teesta and the Relli, and visited Zang Dog Palri Fo Brang Monastery on Durpin Dara. Desai describes the spiritualistic aspect of nature in the following lines: "From Durpin Dara, where you could see so far and high, the world resembled a map from divine perspective. One could see the landscape stretching below and beyond, rivers and plateaus" (141). The world of Sai and Gyan shrinks to their dream land, excluding everything else. They feel the divine love in their relationship. However, their happiness is short lived as Gyan gets involved in the rebellion and abandons her for the cause of the political movement:

At the beginning they had not paid much attention to the events on the hillside, the new posters in the market referring to old discontents, the slogans scratched and painted on either side of government offices and shops. "we are stateless," "it is better to die than live as slaves," "we are constitutionally tortured. Return our land from Bengal." (126)

Such calls from Gyan's tribe were powerful enough to awaken him for the cause of liberation. Gyan's love for Gorkha tribe triumphs over his love for Sai. Gyan, who has loved to walk to Cho Oyu during his first visit, reaches Cho Oyu in bad mood and restless: "[He is] upset at having to undertake that long walk in the cold for the small amount of money the judge paid him. It maddened him that people lived here in this enormous house and property, taking hot baths, sleeping alone in spacious rooms" (160). Desai portrays how Gyan's sympathy with GNLF has not only changed his attitude towards Sai but also destroyed his affinity with nature.

Sai comes to know that it was Gyan who informed the insurgents about the guns at the judge's house. His involvement with GNLF upsets Sai and she distances herself from him. Though Gyan feels bad for Sai later but it was too late. "Anger strained at Sai's heart" (223). The betrayal by Gyan has shattered her world. Desai very beautifully described the condition of her heart in the following lines: "Hanging over the mountain, hearts half empty-half full, longing for beauty, for innocence that now knows. With passion for the beloved or for the wide world or for worlds beyond this one . . ." (223). Sai was a teenager in love with the world around her. GNLF has not only destroyed the loving relationship between Sai and Gyan but also deteriorated the relationship of Sai with nature. She has

inherited the loss of her relationship with nature: "Sai thought of how it had been unclear to her what exactly she longed for in the early days at Cho Oyu, that the only longing itself found its echo in her aching soul. The longing was gone now, she thought, and the ache seemed to have found its substance" (223). With the changing human relationship, the relationship between human and nature changes too. The whole town of Kalimpong turns into a battlefield, people are murdered and curfew is launched to control the violence: "*The incidents of horror grew*, through the changing seasons, through winter and a flowering spring, summer, then rain and winter again. Roads were closed, there was curfew every night, and Kalimpong was trapped in its own madness. You couldn't leave the hillsides; nobody even left their houses if they could help it but stayed locked in and barricaded" (279). During the time of crisis, the relationship between man and nature again emerges as a strong bond. Nature provides its support in the form of fruits and vegetation to the residents of Cho Oyu:

The garden was feeding them almost entirely. For the first time, they in Cho Oyu were eating the real food of the hillside. Dalda saag, pink-flowered, flat-leaved; bhutiya dhaniya growing copiously around the cook's quarter; the new tendrils of squash or pumpkin vine; curled ningro fiddleheads, churbi cheese and bamboo shoots sold by women who appeared from behind bushes on forest paths with the cheese wrapped in ferns and the yellow slices of bamboo shoots in buckets of water. (282)

When everything in human world fails to support life, nature rescues man from hunger. People in Kalimpong collected the oyster mushrooms in Father Booty's abandoned garden: "After the rains, mushrooms pushed their way up, sweet as chicken and glorious as Kanchenjunga, so big, fanning out" (282). Nature does not distinguish between the rich and the poor, its resources are open to each and every human being whereas man in his attempt to monopolise and control its force, damages and exploits it to the fullest.

To sum up the argument of the paper, it can be concluded that nature stands strong with its grandeur despite all human attempts. All the characters in the text undergo a change in their personality, living in their shells threatened and shattered by human violence, but nature emerges undaunted and glorious. Desai ends her novel with the following lines: "The five peaks of Kanchenjunga turned golden with the kind of luminous light that made you feel, if briefly, that truth was apparent. All you needed to do was to reach out and pluck it" (324). The novel begins and ends with the description of the majestic peaks of Kanchenjunga which after bearing all the brunt stand tall. Desai presents us the truth of the value of human and animal life which is visible only if humans consider themselves as integral part of nature.

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