

# THE INFLUENCE OF CLIMATE AND SEASONAL CYCLES ON HUMAN EXPERIENCE IN ANITA DESAI'S *THE VILLAGE BY THE SEA* AND *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*

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## Abstract

Applying the study of Green Studies and Ecological Psychology, this paper discusses climate and seasons in Anita Desai's works, such as *The Village by the Sea* and *Fire on the Mountain*, where a line of questioning for conditions of nature displays their ability to enforce on human experience. Thus, applying a critical study of Desai's symbolic use of weather, this paper is set to analyze how such natural elements as climate and seasons reflect the inner lives, emotions, and development of her characters. In *The Village by the Sea*, arrival at monsoon season is a both promising and challenging that reflects the resolve and apprehensions of the villagers towards their survival. Desai's account of seasonal cycles has depicted a poignant connection the villagers carried with respect to their surroundings, in which nature's time cycle forms a part of their life and traditional culture. In the same way, while the searing summer heat and the inaccessible mountain landscape intrude into the emotional loneliness of the heroine, Nanda Kaul, the great-granddaughter Raka brings in a contrasting temperament which is that of wild curiosity and freedom in the relationship she shares with the wild hills. But what is used in Desai as climate is indeed more than a descriptive background feature that holds deeper symbolic features for the nature-as-reflection and the active force which alive in her characters. This paper places the works of Desai within the frameworks of Green Studies and Ecological Psychology, in which the issues intersect with what the author focuses on, drawing the attention of the reader to reflect upon cultural and personal meanings ascribed to different climatic conditions. A very nuanced relationship between individuals and their surroundings is unfolded through Desai's narrative, which underscores the deep influence of ecological contexts on both personal and cultural identities. This is an ecocritical contribution because it throws light on how literature can unveil nature as a force that informs and molds human experience.

**Keywords:** climate, seasons, symbolism green studies, ecological psychology.

## Introduction

Climate and seasons have, for long years, been necessary symbolic tools within the literary world. Not only have they formed an environmental background for the texts but also presented deep metaphors to describe the emotional and psychological dimensions of human life. The pattern of weather change, with every shifting season into another, has always carried great meanings behind them, applied to reflect the moods, desires, and struggles of characters. These natural changes characterize people's interior dynamics, their emotional states and reactions to the world around them. As "natural phenomena, the changing

seasons are full of symbolic meaning, reflecting both the cyclical nature of life and the varied emotional states of characters" (Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 89). Climate has been known to be powerful in shaping not only the physical worlds but also the psychological worlds of writers' characters. The writers, through images of weather patterns or changing seasons, dig deeper into complex human experiences connecting emotional states to broader rhythms of nature thereby depicting their intricate relationship with human behavior and natural environment. More than serving as the backdrops to human experiences, climate and seasons feature prominently in

literature. Many of the natural elements in a literary work turn into very potent symbols, closely connected to the inner lives of characters, their emotional and psychological states. The theme of changeable seasons and climes in literature symbolizes the cyclical pattern of human life, taking in cycles of development and decay, hope and despair. Seasons may represent the actual changes in a character's emotional being: inner conflicts, desires, struggles that are embodied through the human condition. The climate and seasons thus do not serve as neutral settings but rather forces that sculpt and mold the narrative.

Many literary traditions acknowledge a deep connection between nature and human experience. As Glotfelty and Fromm remind the reader, "The natural world is not merely a setting for the human drama, but a participant in it" (The Ecocriticism Reader 8). Under these circumstances, a natural environment connects with psychological dimensions of characters, and weather patterns and seasonal changes tend to symbolize emotional states. In this context, for example, a bad winter would mean coldness or alienation from within; renewal by spring would restore hope with new beginnings. Such metaphors reflect nature as an extension of the human soul, and any transition of seasons is analogous to the broader arcs of emotional characters' lives. The symbolic power of climate and seasons has been something on which scholars have written for many decades now. As J. Scott Bryson states, "The seasons are metaphors for human life, with each season symbolizing specific stages of the emotional and physical journey" (Ecocriticism 34). Whether it is the warmth of summer signifying vitality and passion or the chill of autumn suggesting introspection and loss, these seasonal shifts provide a way to explain life's greater themes—the impermanence of life and change in human emotions. Such images allow individual experiences to become tied into much wider universal cycles. They enable readers to comprehend the complex interplay of outer environments and inner human experiences.

There are two major ways of thinking about this relationship: through Green Studies and Ecological Psychology. Green Studies is an interdisciplinary practice devoted to the study of literature's environmental

thematics, from how landscapes and ecosystems determine human identity and narrativity. On one hand, literature would then be seen as a form of dialogue between a people and nature, with the suggestion that people have changed the relation they carry with the outside world and that this change holds resultant consequences to the ways in which people experience their lives or, more importantly, value their worlds. As Glotfelty and Fromm argue, "Ecocriticism works to reveal how humans have always been profoundly shaped by the environments in which they live, and how literary texts give voice to these complex, dynamic relationships" (The Ecocriticism Reader 4). The very idea of this is that literature is not only a reflection of humankind's concerns but also a representation of how human beings interact with, adapt to, and are shaped by their surroundings.

Parallel to this, Ecological Psychology examines how the human being psychically responds to his environment. It is concerned with how the actual physical world can affect cognitive and emotive states. This approach posits that behavior and perception cannot exist outside the environments in which they are located; what exists outside of the human being, such as climate, landscape, or weather, can influence human psychology and decision making. As Robert G. Stevens explains, "The environment is a fundamental determinant of human behavior, not just in terms of its immediate material effects but also in the way it shapes our psychological responses" (Ecological Psychology and Human Behavior 102). In this regard, the environment-climatological conditions included—is not only merely a passive observer but is in fact an active creator of human consciousness and perception, which further gives it a dynamic role in literature, where it often symbolically serves to further develop characters and themes.

Together, Green Studies and Ecological Psychology provide complementary perspectives on the symbolic and psychological roles that climate and seasons play in literature. In recognizing how humans can be held in tandem with their environments, these disciplines reveal the depth of knowledge about how components of nature are well beyond a mere descriptive place; they are elements to illustrate something about the emotional, cognitive, and social experience of characters. When seasonal changes and climatic shifts occur within the

literary work, these reflect the inner transformation of the characters it involves and reveals the profound influence of nature about the life of individuals. As Garrard points out, "Ecocriticism invites us to read the natural world as a text in itself, one that interacts with and informs the human narrative" (Ecocriticism 107).

Anita Desai has a long good writing career. Anita Desai's works have gained various accolades, not to mention Booker Prize nominations and prestigious awards such as Sahitya Akademi Award and Padma Bhushan. She is considered one of the precursors of Indian English literature, continuing to give her characters the introspective and psychological depth in the form of women who take into consideration issues of identity, social roles, and personal sacrifices. Born of a German mother and an Indian father, Desai's bicultural upbringing enriched her perception, permitting her to bridge Eastern and Western sensibilities. One can see this very same cultural duality in her nuanced maneuvering around the theme of identity and dislocation, especially in the post-colonial context where her characters are always caught between two worlds, tradition, and modernity. She often places isolated or estranged characters battling emotional conflicts within what seems to be very daunting and intramental exterior environments. As critic Meenakshi Mukherjee indicates, "Desai's novels explore 'the intricate web of relationships within the family, often highlighting the alienation and loneliness experienced by women' (Mukherjee). She elaborates that close attention to detail and atmospheric descriptions by the novelist bring both the characters and their settings alive. As a result, one is able to feel the depth of psychological as well as the physical texture they occupy.

Anita Desai's novels *The Village by the Sea* and *Fire on the Mountain* stand to resonate poignantly with the human struggle, resilience, and self-discovery against the backdrop of the natural environment. Published in 1982, *The Village by the Sea* is a story set in a small village along India's seacoast, where two orphaned siblings, Lila and Hari, have to cope with some of the worst personal drawbacks of adult responsibilities thrust upon their childish shoulders due to the difficult circumstances surrounding their family. As the eldest among her siblings and mother, Lila supports all of them as Hari remains a

child who is still fantasizing about running away from poverty and hardships that surround their lives. Desai vividly, amazingly, paints the hardships with which the villagers are confronted, in the economic as well as in the environmental sense, so that a reflection of those who live on the margin-to-take a wish and stay there and thrive-will be threaded into the story. The recurrence of the monsoon season in the novel presents it as a cycle, both of hope and threat: it brings about sustenance from the dry season but carries the risk of floods and disease. As Desai writes, "The rains, a blessing and a curse, brought both life and destruction" (*The Village by the Sea*). She portrays a microcosm of village life in India, capturing its beatific moments as well as its struggles, through very sensitive portrayals.

*Fire on the Mountain* is the third in the collection, focusing attention on the life of Nanda Kaul, an elderly woman, who seeks isolation at Kasauli, a hill station far away from human contact. In the end, after a lifetime of service, taken upon herself as wife, mother, and caregiver, Nanda Kaul retires to her isolated house with the idea that there she would find solitude and contentment apart from the claims of the earlier life. The stark, rugged mountainous setting of the novel reflects both her inner emotional desert and her desire for separation. But the solitary solitude is broken by her great-grand-daughter Raka, who goes to the scene. Raka is a wild young girl as much a recluse as the place around her. Like the wild, untamed landscape she finds, Raka too, is feral and wild roaming the hills like a creature of the forest (*Fire on the Mountain*). It is these themes, such as that of isolation, search for identity, and freedom where this mountainous and rather isolated landscape serves to portray Nanda Kaul's psychological state in Desai's version. Critics have noted of *Fire on the Mountain* that "Desai's use of setting reflects the characters' inner landscapes, with the arid hills symbolizing Nanda Kaul's emotional detachment" (Rao 35).

Both the novels, it is possible to notice the talent of Desai in incorporating natural settings to become reflections of the emotional journeys of her characters. *The Village by the Sea*, with natural cycles nearly completely supporting the village, is a depiction of identity with the surroundings of the children, while the mountain in *Fire on the Mountain* is a symbol of Nanda Kaul's loneliness.

Desai's characterization of family, responsibility, and identity and contrasting settings she describes allow the very close interplay between people and their environment to emerge as a significant theme. Observes critic Ranga Rao, "Desai's novels probe deep into the psychological and cultural dimensions of her characters, using nature as both a backdrop and a mirror" (Rao 42). From such works, Desai depicts an interlocking pattern that explains human endurance, how people face their exterior environments and interior landscapes.

## Discussion

### I. Climate as a Mirror of Human Emotion

Anita Desai, in *The Village by the Sea* and *Fire on the Mountain*, used weather and climate as emblematic images of her characters' emotional experiences and tied the external environment to human emotions and struggles. The climatic elements of Desai have enhanced the themes of hardships, resilience, and isolation in characters' lives because ideas such as rain, sun, and storms found their echo in the psychological states of the characters.

In *The Village by the Sea*, monsoons have been a metaphor written in the text for hope and danger. When the rains start, Desai writes, "The rain was a relief after the long, hot, dry summer, but it also brought floods and disease" (*The Village by the Sea* 108). This duality of renewal and risk represents the fragile lives of Lila and Hari, who suffer through poverty and family responsibilities. Although rain comes as relief and hope, risks of rain equal the uncertainty they face every day. Lawrence Buell, in *The Environmental Imagination*, argues that weather can "act as a metaphor for cycles of human existence, reflecting both continuity and fragility" (Buell 134). For Lila and Hari, the monsoon symbolises these cycles of hardship and fleeting reprieve, positioning their lives within more effective, brutal forces of nature. The rain also underscores how, as a village depends on nature, so too do environmental rhythms evoke human emotional states. To Hari, dreaming of a city elsewhere, the rain speaks to disappointment and frustration as it does to hope. Thus, Desai describes the power of the monsoon as follows: "The monsoon's fierce rhythm beat down on everything, making it seem as though nothing could ever

escape its grasp" (*The Village by the Sea* 112), suggestive of how Hari is trapped in his trying situation. In this respect, the monsoon season itself turns into a powerful symbol of both entrapment and changing potentialities.

In *Fire on the Mountain*, Desai uses the desolate, hot climate of the mountainous landscape to represent Nanda Kaul's alienation and emotional withdrawal. A novel whose location is the isolated hill station under a relentless heatwave, the desolate landscape in general is representative of Nanda's preference for alienation from the rest of society. Desai writes, "The summer sun beat down mercilessly, turning the hills into a scorched, lifeless landscape" (*Fire on the Mountain* 58), thus describing Nanda's emotional barrenness. The cruel sun and desolate land signify her withdrawal from the world and the expectations that defined her life in the past, thus sealing the feeling that she craves solitude within an unattractive landscape. This unfavorable landscape multiplies her isolation into a place where "the silence of the hills was both comforting and oppressive" (*Fire on the Mountain* 61). It is this setting which parallels her longing for serenity but which underlines the cost of her alienation. Ecological Psychology supports this connection, which is that environments can influence and also reflect inner states. James J. Gibson suggests that "environments actively shape our perceptions and internal states" (Gibson 47). In *Fire on the Mountain*, the tough landscape reflects Nanda's mental state, showing how setting can add to emotional isolation.

Novel metaphors of nature also signify changes in character. In *The Village by the Sea*, the monsoon represents a time of transformation. For Lila, the rain brings hope; for her it is a reinforcement of the position of caretaker; for Hari, it is an escape from the grimness of life. Desai writes, "The monsoon". It changed the entire mood of the village as if it were a time for everyone to reflect on the way things were" (*The Village by the Sea* 114). In *Fire on the Mountain*, it is the oppressive heat and barren hills that symbolize Nanda's loneliness and disconnection with the former life of hers. Through climate as an extension of human emotion, Desai brings invigoration to her characters' inner lives to show how the natural world resembles the personal experience. According to Ranga Rao, "Desai's novels reveal an

intricate interplay between the inner lives of her characters and the environments they inhabit, using nature as a reflection of emotional and psychological landscapes" (Rao 42). Desai's imagery-based symbolism connects the human being even deeper to nature by showing how emotions, as felt by the human being, are echoed in the surroundings.

## II. Seasonal Changes and Character Development

In *Fire on the Mountain* and *The Village by the Sea*, Anita Desai brings about changes in seasons as crucial markers of development within characters, reflecting their emotional, relational, or personal growth. Using these changes, Desai points out how those very circular seasons mirror the characters' transformations as well as some inner voyages for hope, renewal, or despair.

Bringing spring brings a symbolic renewal in *Fire on the Mountain*, subtly affecting the emotional state of the protagonist, Nanda Kaul. After a rather long period of isolation in the dry, barren hills of Kasauli, spring somehow tries to point towards a change in her usual emotional demeanor. Initially unwilling to forge any emotionally enduring connections, she is especially hesitant towards her great-granddaughter Raka. However, the sprouting of early signs of spring and renewal in nature around her mirrors her growing receptiveness toward this un-hoped-for connection. As Desai writes, "The first blossoms on the hillside brought an unsettling feeling to Nanda, as if something was stirring that had been long asleep" (*Fire on the Mountain* 86). This renewal in the natural world parallels the subtle stirring of consciousness in Nanda, who becomes aware of relationship and heritage at the same time that she is despairing of relationship and heritage. Critic A. K. Mukherjee writes: "Desai employs natural metaphors to mirror psychological shifts, as seasonal cycles serve as backdrops for internal conflicts and eventual reconciliations" (Mukherjee 162). Spring itself brings about a kind of catharsis for Nanda, and the change marks the beginning for her to move away from the rigid solitude to a more complex acceptance of her relationships.

In *The Village by the Sea*, seasonal transitions impact family relationships and life in the village significantly. Every season brings with it a share of opportunities and

challenges and through characters' resultant decisions about interacting with nature. For instance, at the end of the monsoons and when autumn was upon them, the villagers received relief along with the hope of new beginnings. Lila and Hari, the two protagonists of the novel, consider autumn as a season of renewal, for with the harvesting season comes not only stability but also promise in the times ahead. Such is the atmosphere captured by Desai in this regard: "With the fields brimming and the harvest season approaching, it was as though the land itself smiled, filling the people with optimism" (*The Village by the Sea* 178). This season signifies the end of immediate distress for Lila and Hari but goes on to enter an emotional rebirth, which motivates them further towards strength. This shift enables them to imagine a steadier future even when their family life is at the time of struggling.

The seasons in *The Village by the Sea* reflect the resilience and survival of the characters because they have to undergo change, not much different from the cycles of seasons. The change of season reminds Lila and Hari constantly of the struggle they face but, at the same time, strengthens them to confront those struggles. Scholar Lawrence Buell states that "seasonal change functions both structurally and thematically as a framework for hope in adversity" (Buell 134). Hence, the cycles of seasons symbolize hopeful resilience and change that empower the protagonists. This is one reason why the spring plays a key role in *Fire on the Mountain*, and why the harvest moon is particularly significant to *The Village by the Sea*. One of the key aspects that symbolically outline seasons is that the cyclic changes between nature and human emotions so effectively bring out how a change in nature often makes one reflect, strengthen self, or become transformed.

## III. Cultural Meanings Associated with Climate

In *The Village by the Sea* and *Fire on the Mountain*, Anita Desai uses climate as a lens for the exploration of cultural meanings. She elaborates how survival strategies and communal practices and beliefs are ingrained in the environment and how climate interprets and features in the development of communal rituals, festivities, and daily rhythm in great detail. She underlined how culture and

climate are connected to each other with the example of the changes in the seasons defining communal rituals, festivities, and everyday life, while showing how nature influences human identity and social structures.

Truly, in *The Village by the Sea*, the characters were very much dependent on the agricultural calendar, which regulates their livelihoods and community practices. For the villagers, monsoon rains will depict a celebration of the water as well as the toil of farming. Like other villagers of the coast, Lila and Hari's family depends on rain to have a successful yield, and their financial stability and well-being is connected with the intensity and timing of the monsoon season. Desai finds that "with the first drops of rain, the fields seemed to come alive, and so did the people" (*The Village by the Sea* 73). The relationship between rain and life underscores the community's reliance on nature yet, simultaneously, maps how climate fits in with social conditions and cyclical rhythms of the village. Scholar Vandana Shiva expounds to *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* that "rural communities are intrinsically connected to their environment, finding identity and purpose in the cyclical patterns of the natural world" (Shiva 45). In this end, the monsoon is termed a symbol of life and prosperity to villagers while indicating the agricultural season's critical role in defining cultural practices and individual responsibilities. Rituals and festivals are also on the agricultural cycle schedule throughout the book, focusing on how Desai provides the cultural practices to have some form of reflection of that close bond by the community with the natural world. For example, during harvest time, there are festivals in the village celebrating abundance, unity, and thanks to nature's bounty. As Desai writes, "The village gathered, with each family offering fruits from their fields, to thank the gods for the monsoon's blessing" (*The Village by the Sea* 98), symbolizing unity and shared cultural identity through dependence on the environment. These moments illustrate the cultural importance of natural cycles, which unveil how climate influences traditions and collective values in the village.

In *Fire on the Mountain*, fire is such a consummate part of the text, both culturally and symbolically speaking, for it signifies nature's ability to be at once destructive and transformative. The very title conveys the idea of fire and

its full potential, which is already such a composite symbol in the novel, particularly for Nanda Kaul and her great-grand-daughter Raka. The mountain setting, prone to dry heat and occasional fires, attests to a cultural acknowledgment of fire's transformation potential. For Raka, flames symbolise a rejecting power, but at the same time, powerful enough to confront the existing environment and get away with the conventional norms. Desai has described how Raka was captivated by the flames in the following words: "The fire danced at the edge of the hill, fierce and consuming, like a force that could alter everything it touched" (*Fire on the Mountain* 104). Fire embodies both resistance and renewal, a natural force that can challenge social constraints and bring forth new perspectives, according to postcolonial scholar Dipesh Chakrabarty, describing the symbolic nature of fire in literature, Fire is the harsh-isolating aspect of Nanda's life in the hills; it reminds her of solitude, a loneliness she so desperately looks for and, in a way, is unable to find fulfilling.

Both novels use climate and elements of the natural world to create richer meaning in culture as a setting for community rituals and individual struggles. The lives of these characters are organically determined by their surroundings, reinforcing the notion that all aspects of human experience, belief, and identity are in fact bound up with the cycles of nature in which they live.

#### IV. Ecological Psychology Perspective

*The Village by the Sea* and *Fire on the Mountain*, by Anita Desai, are fine examples of deep psychological experiences among characters with relation to nature, something which is intensified with Ecological Psychology. This theory points out how a person's thought and behavioral process differs according to their environment; therefore, "place attachment" shows that the way one feels or acts changes with the circumstances and one's identity in that place.

It is interesting in *The Village by the Sea* how the connection of characters to their coastal village signifies influence that their natural surroundings have upon their emotional states and identity. For example, Hari feels intensely bonded to the land but feels sorrow torn by the hardships of village life and seems to be wanting freedom

out from such a dependency yet remains dependent on its familiarity. Telling the conflict of Hari, Desai relays this through the desires of change against the rootedness in the land and reflects how "the waves crashing against the shore felt like the only constant in a life of relentless struggles" (*The Village by the Sea* 152). This landscape is both soothes and constraints, one which gives expression to the ambivalence in Hari's feelings toward his responsibility and dreams of a different future. As Ecological Psychology theorist James J. Gibson puts it, "the environment provides affordances, or opportunities, for action and experience that shape human behavior and emotions" (Gibson 37). For Hari, the ocean's rhythms remind him of hardships that life metes out and also serve as a stable anchor amidst family and economic problems, and so how attachment to a place—the village—significantly affects his psychological resilience. The monsoon season further stratifies the attachment of villagers to the environment, relief and a challenge at the same time. During the rainy periods of the monsoon, Desai writes that "the air filled with the rich scent of wet earth, and for a moment, it was as though every worry had been washed away" (*The Village by the Sea* 108). Such sensory detail not only brings the environment to life but also reflects the villagers' relief, as the rain replenishes their resources. However, the possibility of flooding also evokes tension, emphasizing the way their psychological states are inextricably linked to environmental conditions. The concept is later developed by scholar Yi-Fu Tuan who writes that place attachment involves "both the physical and emotional experiences people associate with their surroundings" (Tuan 112). This engages the climate of the village in every step of the lives of citizens, in the formation of their personalities, and in the reaffirmation of their bond with the land.

In *Fire on the Mountain*, Nanda Kaul's decision to retreat into the mountains symbolizes a quest for solitude and disengagement from the roles that the society imposes on her. The isolation of the hill station replicates her withdrawal into emotional isolation, wherein her surroundings become a sanctum sanctorum of refuge from social obligations. As Desai relates, "She loved the silence, the barren rocks, yet felt as if the hills themselves were indifferent to her presence" (*Fire on the Mountain* 53). This is consistent with Nanda's ambivalence to the world

around her wherein solitude brings a peaceful condition but states to remind her of isolation within her self. Ecological psychologist J.J. Gibson says, "environments do not simply reflect human needs but influence their psychological states, fostering feelings of connection or alienation" (Gibson 49). Nanda's experience in the hills illustrate this: attachment to mountainous solitude brings her a sense of identity but further underlines her emotional distance from others. Raka, Nanda's great-granddaughter, is the other extreme, completely fascinated and belonging to the natural sceneries. The rugged landscape that Raka attaches herself to brings an adventurous spirit, and this is what resists the social norms. Desai conveys Raka's natural affinity by, "Raka watched the hillside fires, as if drawn by the ferocity and wildness of the flames" (*Fire on the Mountain* 97), portraying a power for wild, untamed things in that world. Her tie to it parallels her requirement of rebelling against the normal; this is how she can build an identity in this isolating environment. In the words of Yi-Fu Tuan, a cultural geographer, "place attachment provides a sense of security and meaning, allowing individuals to establish their identities through their relationships with specific environments" (Tuan 134). The attachment of Raka towards the mountainous landscape develops her psychological strength and the sense of solitary defiance, which contrasted to Nanda's isolationist withdrawal.

Ecological Psychology is the lens through which the good novels by Desai focus on the way in which the relationships between characters and their environments deeply influence their mental states, identities, and behaviors. By this, these connections transcend to state how place attachment offers comfort, while others tend to instead drastically amplify one's isolation, illustrating the influence of nature on psychological well-being.

## Conclusion

In both *The Village by the Sea* and *Fire on the Mountain*, Anita Desai skillfully weaves climatic factors, seasons, and natural environments into her storylines, indicating deep influences that nature has on human experience and psychological states. What she does through climate as a mirror with the emotional struggle and desires of characters' underscores much of what environmental

conditions impose on individual and collective identities, especially in cultural contexts where there is an intrinsic connection between people and land. In Desai's work, nature is both comfort and metaphor of complexities in inner lives of her characters, as always it seems, the cultural identities and personal resilience have so frequently been forged against the environment. At the same time, Desai weaves in her representation of nature a deeply rich cultural knowledge of her characters. Rituals, agricultural practices, and even everyday life are understood to be steeped in rhythms of seasonality. The rains during the monsoon season of *The Village by the Sea* do not only foretell a moment of renewal and apprehension but also highlight the extent to which the villagers are tied in living life to seasonal rhythms to survive. Meanwhile, in *Fire on the Mountain*, Nanda Kaul, as she retreats to a mountain home on the periphery of life, illustrates an escape from the world and the tensions it brings upon her, while Raka, in her time, sees connection to the landscape that yearns for freedom and a sense of identity in a world full of cultural expectations that often constrict the choices that women can make. For Desai, the natural settings themselves are more than backgrounds for her novels. Instead, they form integral parts of what shapes the psychological landscapes of her characters and reflects environmental ties that form part of cultural identity. Desai's work opens up new lines of inquiry toward an understanding of how ecological and psychological experiences interact and leaves scope for more research. Perhaps comparative studies of other Indian authors such as R.K. Narayan or Arundhati Roy may well reveal commonality or a contrast in the expression of ecological themes in Indian literature by examining how differently writing authors express nature's role in human life. This way, one would be able to understand, in a much more

thorough manner than before, how ecological themes of the author's work condition identity, resilience, and community within South Asian literature.

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