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## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/22911  
DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/22911>



### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## ECOFEMINIST INTERCONNECTIONS IN ANITA DESAI'S SELECTED NOVELS

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#### Manuscript Info

##### Manuscript History

Received: 19 December 2025  
Final Accepted: 20 January 2026  
Published: February 2026

#### Abstract

The ecofeminist themes present in Anita Desai's novels enable to conduct complete literary examinations which reveal how her primary critique of patriarchal systems stems from the dual oppression that women face together with environmental resource exploitation. Through her writing Desai shows how women experience oppression in the same way that natural environments face destruction because she describes examples of environmental damage which result from gender discrimination according to the earth democracy philosophy of Vandana Shiva and the study of gender-based environmental harm by Maria Mies. Through her selected works of *Cry the Peacock*, *The Village by the Sea* and *Fire on the Mountain* Desai presents female leads who use their psychological scars and their connections to polluted places to create artistic forms of rebellion against their environment.

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#### Introduction:-

*Cry the Peacock* leads her to experience a state of overwhelming existence. The natural environment suffers from her husband's home-based imprisonment which prevents her from accessing outdoor areas. Through her home-based oppression of women, she demonstrates how patriarchal powers restrict both women's freedom and earth's natural resources. Maya experiences a deep relationship with nature because the people around her use violent methods to control the environment. Maya experiences a deep relationship with nature because the people around her use violent methods to control the environment. Lila must work continuously because the industrial pollution and urban development of Thul force her body to become an exploited resource which extends to the nearby natural environment. She defends her family through her unbreakable strength which equals the earth's ability to endure chemical factory pollution that contaminates the sea and fields. Nanda Kaul from *Fire on the Mountain* moves to Carignano hills to find peace. The wildfires which he discovers, devastate his mental state and the mountain ecosystem. Women who endure their oppression will create environmental harm according to his evidence.

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### **Ecofeminism Overview:-**

Ecofeminism as a critical theory maintains its fundamental principle that both women face oppression and nature suffers exploitation in patriarchal systems because they arise from the same dualistic thinking which values mental capacity above physical existence and cultural attributes above natural elements and male dominance above female equal rights. Vandana Shiva through her studies in *Staying Alive* (1988) Theoretical pioneers show how British colonial powers and capitalist systems exploit indigenous women and their natural resources because these systems establish control through their methods of resource extraction. *The Death of Nature* (1980) by Carolyn Merchant shows how Enlightenment rational thought led people to view nature as a resource for exploitation just as they treated women as objects to be owned by different cultures which gained acceptance in India after its colonial period. Ecofeminism in India started during the 1970s when women led the Chipko Andolan movement by hugging trees to protect their forests against state-corporate logging operations because they relied on forest resources for their survival against patriarchal authority.

The movement supports Shiva's concept which states that "women's environmental knowledge" serves as an answer to development methods that exacerbate rural caste and class and gender division. Anita Desai composed her postcolonial Indian novel which features tropical settings that include monsoon-drenched coasts and polluted villages and fire-scarred hills as a reflection of feminine experiences that have experienced colonial and patriarchal wounds. Desai creates three novels which show how his characters face environmental challenges because they reflect their personal internal battles against their exterior surroundings. Maya's monsoon-based mental state connects with Shiva's earth rhythms which have been disrupted while Lila's coastal village shows industrial pollution damage that resembles Chipko's deforestation and Nanda Kaul's dry hideaway faces wildfires which represent Merchant's concept of nature ending. Through these symbolic connections Desai demonstrates how ecofeminist divisions between humanity and nature continue to exist because postcolonial power structures want to restore their essential existence.

### **Methodology:-**

This analysis adopts a qualitative close reading methodology to interrogate three seminal primary texts by Anita Desai—*Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *The Village by the Sea* (1982), and *Fire on the Mountain* (1977)—with a deliberate emphasis on ecofeminist themes.

### **Cry, the Peacock:**

Maya's oppression combines with nature's degradation through her use of entrapment motifs and disrupted cycles to show the flaws of patriarchal dualism. The peacock appears as a main symbol because its call shows Maya's desperate need for emotional bonds during her experience of childless loneliness while demonstrating how women face vocal oppression because men dominate both women and nature. Her hallucinatory visions show flood dangers that approach her fortress-home which represents Gautama's patriarchal boundaries that prevent her from experiencing both fertility and natural life cycles while squashed silk-cotton tree blooms show her mental emptiness and experience of toxic environmental conditions. The dialogues show this through Maya's statement about her dog Toto's death which she links to her childless status because she believes that "childless women do develop fanatic attachments to their pets" and because Gautama shows no interest in his dog or wife, he uses his power to exploit both vulnerable beings which connects his behaviour to feminine intuition about nature's value.

### **Analysis:**

Maya's hypersensitivity connects her internal struggles with natural elements through peacocks and monsoons and wild animals which represent her hidden instincts that oppose Gautama's logical male authority. Her prophetic dreams and animal bonds show ecofeminist rejection of cultural and natural boundaries while demonstrating women's psychological connection to environmental systems. The connection between two elements shows how male ownership of power over women resembles environmental domination.

### **The Village by the Sea:**

Lila demonstrates ecofeminist resilience through her sea motifs and dialogues that showcase women's work in their struggle against industrial patriarchy which spreads environmental contamination. Lila invokes the sea through her prayers because it functions as a protective yet threatened element which her mother used to pray to while their family faced their father's alcohol abuse. The factories which use poison to destroy the sea operate as a mirror that reflects her bodily winter suffering through her life in poverty. Pollution symbols—fouled waters and dying fish—parallel Lila's exploitation because she tells her siblings "We must manage... the sea will provide" but Hari's

Bombay journey reveals how urban greed destroys rural ecology. The brother-sister dialogues show resistance through Hari's protest against the fertilizer factory because "it threatens to pollute the coastline and destroy our livelihood," which Lila demonstrates through her homefront work that connects gender and environmental activism in a similar way to the Chipko movement.

**Analysis:**

Lila's cries to the "mother sea" and her coconut gathering show how women face different challenges because of industrial waste while they work in their rural jobs which depend on natural ecosystems. The sacred conversations use feminine deities to resist industrial progress which mirrors how men treat both the ocean and women. The urban change brought by Hari shows a different path from Lila's sustainable life which demonstrates essential ecofeminist principles.

**Fire on the Mountain:**

Desai uses fire and barren landscapes to connect women's inner violence with environmental destruction that happens because of patriarchal systems. Nanda Kaul's retreat to Carignano's desolate pines symbolizes her vengeance against wifely duty, craving "to be left to the pines and cicadas alone", yet army camps and tourists ravage the hills, which parallels her husband's numerous betrayals. Raka's fire-starting climax ("Look, Nani, I have set the forest on fire") motifs radical resistance by using fire as a tool to break free from patriarchal oppression while her father abusive behaviour defines her existence. Ila Das's dialogues expose direct confrontation—"it's so much harder to teach a man anything... their men will not let them" —the culmination of her rape-murder by Preet Singh creates a violation of earth through the oppressive force of dual oppression which uses the ravines as a dumping ground for animal ashes.

**Analysis:**

Nanda Kaul's isolation in drought-scarred Himalayas demonstrates how women face societal exclusion through her experience of using the landscape as both a safe space and a restricted area. Raka's disconnection symbolizes a generational rift from nature while the fires show how patriarchal systems bring destruction. Desai shows how women endure through their environmental knowledge which leads to her message about mutual dependence between humans and nature.

<b>Novel</b>	<b>Woman-Nature Bond</b>	<b>Patriarchal Critique</b>
Cry, the Peacock	Psychic motifs (peacocks, monsoons)	Gautama's detachment
Village by the Sea	Sea rituals, foraging	Factory pollution
Fire on the Mountain	Mountain isolation	Generational exploitation

**Conclusion:-**

The novels of Desai serve as strong affirmations of the main goal of ecofeminism because they demand the elimination of all systems which support gender and class and species discrimination and women should restore justice through their natural bond with the earth. Through her stories Desai shows how female characters in her works can escape from patriarchal control systems because they use their natural understanding to navigate these oppressive structures. The narratives expand their scope by turning into instruments which support postcolonial resistance and they link women's symbolic acts of defiance to actual environmental movements which operate in India. Lila's family faces industrial pollution which destroys their land just as Chipko women use tree-hugging battles to protect their trees and Nanda Kaul shows how urban development destroys native territories through her work which advocates for partnerships to protect gender rights and environmental conservation. The work of Desai maintains its relevance to current Indian problems which include Gujarat's coastal erosion and Himalayan tree loss because it inspires people to take action through ecofeminist advocacy work which influences both policy development and grassroots movements such as Narmada Bachao Andolan.

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