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Anita Desai's Ecofeminist Heroines Nanda Kaul And Maya

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Abstract

“One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.” –William Shakespeare

Anita Desai portrays the difficult matters of life through her life. She gives importance for the nature and the ecosystem in her writing. Her works connect the female characters to have a sense of attachment with the ecosystem and the soul relationship with nature. Her famous works “Fire on the Mountain” and “Cry, the Peacock” describes the importance of nature and women. Desai portrays the nature to prove her relationship with human being to forget about all their problems in life. Through her writing she displays how nature shows its beauty and power and the potential of destructiveness faced by human being. Desai's characters have the mercy of natural forces and generously blessed by her.

In terms of environmental concerns and ecosystems, Desai's works openly address the present-day ecological problems like, the duty of nature and its' anger towards the people. A deeper reflection about her portrayal of nature often highlights the human condition and the impact of environmental changes on personal and cultural identities based on women. In the modern society nature and women have to be saved, instead both are facing problems. This paper analyses Desai's portrayal of women who loved nature and the importance of protecting nature.

Keywords: ecological, ecosystem, environment, emphasize, potential, portrayal

Ecofeminism

A movement which is based on the morals mainly speaks of environmental deals with women. It connects women with nature in the point of rights and philosophy. The well known author Anita Desai has been known for her depiction of female characters in connection with nature. The depiction of connection in her works creates passions that incorporate human existence with nature. In both the novels the depiction of women and nature is genuinely connected by the themes of oppression, individuality, and the look for meaning in life. In the current society, both women and nature are frequently dishonored and misused. The subject Ecofeminism and the handling of nature and women have been explored in both the novels.

Importance of women and nature

The tradition has been respected from the beginning of myths and the same admiration has been given for both in most part of the world. There is a great change in the current society, the life of women and nature has been in the position of danger. Nature and women are indication for devotion, calmness, sacrifice, purity and heavenly qualities. Practices followed by generations in Hindu tradition have been encircled by women. Nature is worshipped as mother. Women are appreciated and motherhood is extremely valued. Anita Desai's vision of nature is both graceful and representative, serving as a background that interacts and pressured. Myths emphasize the impact of jungles which are capable of caring the entire universe. In the Vedas it is pointed that human beings worship nature and get the blessings from pancha bhutas. Nature saves the human being as long as by providing her riches through natural resources.

Cry, the Peacock

Desai's first novel discusses the protagonist Maya. She loves nature and almost compares her life with the nature. Nature is the moral support to her both as a shelter and the guardian and mirrors her inner life. The peacock symbolizes her and contrasts with Maya's internal position. The natural world echoes her disturbing state, between her exciting life and misery and supports her struggles and longing for freedom. Maya is a figure of disturbing mind which mirrors her imprisonment within communal standard. Maya's mental health has worsened the struggle with loneliness and the limitation positioned on her.

Elliot in her article

“Women, Gender, Feminism, and the Environment” eloquently states that: Women must also be seen not just as victims of environmental degradation, but also as agents who must participate equally in the solution of these problems. Women's knowledge, experience and potential are untapped at policy levels because their crucial roles are not recognized. What is required is a transformation of the institutions of global governance, not only to acknowledge the centrality of women's roles, needs and experiences itself an exercise which goes further than simply inscribing women's issues on the agenda- but in a way which ensures that women are able to participate fully as decision makers and agenda settlers at all levels and in a way which explores solutions and processes that fully reflect

women's lived experiences and their values. The voices of women need to be heard. Gender issues rather than women's issues have to be integrated into environmental debates at the same time as the connections between environment and development, and environment and militarism, are acknowledged (13-34).

The ecology around her repeats her of the relationships that exist within the natural world. This insists her own developing associations and the understanding that she is part of a superior. Her sensation reflects the changing seasons and landscapes. The instant clearness matches her with the peaceful natural settings, while her inner turmoil aligns with harsher weather which reflects in her outer life.

Ruether states:

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this society. (204)

Nature is gorgeous and secure for Maya. She takes pleasure in natural world from her childhood. Maya's interactions highlight the complication of female unity and support. However, she finally finds herself lonely, highlight the challenges women face in considerate and association in a male-dominated world. Peacock symbolizes Maya's longing freedom and beauty. Her inherent wish tries to break free from communal restriction. Nature plays as a backdrop that mirrors Maya's exciting state. Nature reflects a status of displeasure of her internal life. Maya often request comfort in nature, using it as a break for reflection and escape.

Peacocks play a pivotal role in Maya's life. She feels her life is totally alienated.

I felt their thirst as they gazed at the rain-clouds, their passion, as they hunted for their mates. With them, I trembled and panted and paced the burning rocks.... (46)

Maya is always romantic and enjoys nature as contrast her husband Gautama. He doesn't know to maintain the relationship with his wife. This makes a sense of alienation between the husband and wife. She says

How little he knew of my misery or of how to comfort me.... Telling me to go to sleep while he worked at his papers, he did not give another thought to me, (9)

She yells out, "Father, brother, where are you?" as she turns to face her father, brother, and husband. "Father! Brother! Husband! Who is my savior? I am in need of one. I am dying, and I am in love with living. (Desai 84)

Maya herself come across that her life is unpredictable. The expected love from her husband is abandoned. So she finds her death.

Torture, guilt, dread, imprisonment - these were the four walls of my private hell, one that no one could survive in long. Death was certain. (Desai 88)

Fire on the Mountain

Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* loves nature and has led a calm life without the trouble of the family. As a wife of a Vice Chancellor of an Indian University she has completed all her duties for the family. She leads a natural and isolated life. "Fire on the Mountain" examines the connections between the misuses of women. The novel's setting is in the Indian Himalayas which serves as a backdrop for exploring themes of environmental degradation and the roles of women within that context.

Nanda Kaul's uncaring eye in nature: she gazes at the

Ripening apricots and the pair of bulbuls that quarreled over them till they fell in a flurry of feathers to the ground,...a spinning of sunlight or of the globe on its axis (p-xi)

The mountain is an unsympathetic power nearly a character in the novel represents both beauty and a harsh. It mirrors the difficulties of women, who find themselves at odds with their atmosphere. Women characters often symbolize a deep association to the natural world. Their experience and emotion are tied to the background; demonstrate how their uniqueness and struggle are knotted with environmental issues.

Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* searches isolation to escape the burdens of her past. Her life in the mountains is a purposeful choice for privacy. Nanda's retreat to the Himalayan Mountains signifies her wish for loneliness and a profound relation with the natural world. The mountains serve as a sanctuary, on behalf of both liberty and a space for expression. Her association with nature throughout the novel resists societal force and the opportunity positioned on women, particularly in a patriarchal environment. Her choice to live separately in the mountain signifies a refusal of customary roles.

Nanda's journey is one of self-identity. She fights with her earlier period wounding and begins to understand her place in the world. Her change can be viewed as an Eco-feminist search for empowerment. In spite of her earlier lack of involvement, Nanda shows sympathy toward others, particularly the young girl, a symbol of future generation. These aspects of her character highlight the Eco-feminist belief on people and the environment.

Throughout the novel, Nanda shows rigidity of her past and find strength within her reflects Eco-feminist spirit. This does not just about exist; it's about flourishing in a world that seeks to marginalize both women and nature. Nanda's character predicts the intersection of various forms of oppression—gender, class, and ecological utilization. Her understandings highlight how these issues are unified, a key principle of Eco-feminism. As a result of examining her resistances, readers are encouraged to think broader universal unfairness and require for a holistic thinking to social change.

The loveliness and silence of the mountains contribute her emotional medicinal healing power of nature. Nature resist habitual roles and collective pressure, figuring out her identity and place in the world on her own terms. This battle is a journey toward self-empowerment. The severity of the mountains points resilience and flexibility. Nanda learns to find the way to escape from her inner troubles from nature which echo violently to tolerate and flourish in the middle of the challengeable life. Her journey of life interacts with the younger

generation and reflects her growing empathy and sense of community. Throughout the novel, she changes from a woman distressed by her past to somebody who attains her autonomy and purpose.

The novel becomes the symbol of ruin of a cruel world of many Nanda Kauls and Ila Dases, of uneven circumstances in which women suffer from the throw of misfortune, social variation and unfairness devoted on them by a violent society of men.” Nanda accepts the true things which happened in her life at the end of the novel.

Nor had her husband loved and cherished her and kept like a queen-he had only done enough to keep her quiet while he carried on a lifelong affair with Miss David,...and her children –the children were all alien to her nature. She neither understood nor loved them. She did not live here alone by choice-she lived here alone because that was what she was forced to do reduced to doing (p-158)

Ila Das a friend of Nanda Kaul attempts to stop the marriage of a seven year old girl with an aged man who has already married and have five children. This infuriates the girl’s father and murderd Ila das.

‘Ila?’ she murmured, ‘Ila Das?’

Yes, madam’, the sure voice repeated, slightly impatient of her histrionics.‘Her body was found on the path to the village Timarpur. She was found by the villagers. She has been strangled. The doctor is here. He claims she been raped. She is dead. Kindly come to the police station at the earliest to identify...’(p157-158)

Ila herself falls as an miserable state, yet she has sympathy on the pitiable people of that village, Kassuli. She has been struggling against the spiritual forces at the risk of her life and met a martyr’s death.Nanda Kaul's life is connected to nature, serving as an indication of her internal struggles and a source of remedial and empowerment.

Conclusion:

Desai analyses patriarchal domination in the society. The conflict in the character makes us to show interest how societal norms can lead to neglect the both women and nature. Both the novel stresses the connection of social and environmental issues suggesting the exploitation of women. Both the novel displays ecofeminist theme advocating social justice and environmentalism. Desai’s work encourage readers to think the compound relationship between nature, gender and culture making “Cry the Peacock” and “Fire on the Mountain" a prosperous text for ecofeminist analysis. Both Maya and Nanda Kaul of Anita Desai's can be seen as ecofeminist heroines due to their thoughtful connection to nature, their resist against public norms, and their journey toward self-realization and self-sufficiency.

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