Anita Desai’s Fire on The Mountain: An Ecofeminist Reading

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Abstract

Ecofeminism, as a social, political and philosophic movement, considers the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature as interconnected phenomena. This paper analyzes Anita Desai’s Fire on The Mountain (1977) in the light of ecofeminist critical theories. The text explores how oppressive practices linked to patriarchal society operate forcefully on levels of gender and environment. It deploys a deft patterning of botanical, zoological, atmospheric and color imagery to convey the symbolic centrality of the narrative and the diverse analogies of the darker shades of nature and the darker aspects of femaleness.

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Complete summary of Anita Desai's Fire on the Mountain. eNotes plot summaries cover all the significant action of Fire on the Mountain. The plot of Fire on the Mountain is relatively brief and uncomplicated, the significant action occurring within the psyches of Nanda and, to a lesser extent, Raka, her great-granddaughter. When Ila Das is raped and killed, that violent action happens “offstage” at the end of the novel, almost simultaneously with Raka’s announcement that she has set the forest on fire. While there are few important “events” in the rest of the novel, Anita Desai prepares the reader for the horrific ending by carefully embedding violence in her imagery and in her symbolism. Fire on the Mountain is a 1977 novel by Anita Desai, an Indian writer. Desai has been recognized three times on the Booker Prize short list and is a British Guardian Prize winner. Fire on the Mountain received a Sahitya Akademi Award. Publishers Weekly said of Anita Desai, “But what’s so refreshing about Anita Desai is that she's a modern literary writer with a straightforward approach to her work. For all the awards (and there have been many, including India’s top literary accolade, the Sahitya Akademi Award), the Ph.D. theses, and the literary journalism that has been devoted to her, Anita Desai talks of her writing as simply ‘stories,’ and of herself as a storyteller.