
**Human Resilience and the Crisis of Industrial Progress in Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea*:
An Ecocritical Study**

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Abstract

This paper examines Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea* (1982) through an ecocritical lens, highlighting the novel's portrayal of the intricate relationship between human resilience and the natural environment. Set in a coastal village threatened by industrial expansion, Desai's narrative exposes the ecological consequences of modernization and the moral costs of human alienation from nature. The study situates the novel within the discourse of human ecology, emphasizing how characters like Hari and Lila embody an ethical consciousness rooted in coexistence rather than exploitation. Through close textual analysis, this paper reveals Desai's critique of industrial greed, pollution, and social displacement as symptomatic of a deeper ecological crisis. The research argues that *The Village by the Sea* articulates an early South Asian ecological awareness, one that envisions environmental ethics not as an abstract philosophy but as a lived reality shaped by poverty, survival, and cultural belonging. Ultimately, Desai's vision affirms the possibility of ecological harmony through empathy and moral responsibility toward the natural world.

Key Words: Ecocriticism, Ecology, Environmental Ethics, Human–Nature Relationship, Industrialization, Moral Responsibility, Survival

Introduction

Anita Desai, born Anita Mazumdar in 1937 to a German mother and a Bengali father, is among the most celebrated voices in Indian English literature. Growing up in pre-independence India, she began writing in English at the age of seven and published her first story by the age of nine. Her early exposure to multiple languages—Bengali, German, Urdu, Hindi, and English—nurtured a sensitivity to linguistic nuance that would later shape her literary style. Influenced by British literary figures such as Thomas Hardy, Virginia Woolf, and D. H. Lawrence, Desai's prose reflects psychological depth and lyrical intensity. Beginning her career as a short story writer, she gained prominence with her debut novel *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), which established her reputation as a novelist of introspection and emotional complexity.

Over the decades, Desai has produced a distinguished body of work including *Voices in the City* (1965), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *The Village by the Sea* (1982), *In Custody* (1984), and *Fasting, Feasting* (1999), among others. Her contributions have been recognized internationally with numerous awards, such as the Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize (1978), the Sahitya Akademi Award (1978), the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize (1983), and two Booker Prize nominations (1984, 1999). Desai's writing is characterized by its subtle psychological insight, cultural authenticity, and exploration of the tensions between tradition

and modernity. As K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar (1985) observes, Desai's strength as a novelist lies in her ability to probe a distinctly modern Indian sensibility that feels disoriented amid barbarism, philistinism, anarchism, and amorality, capturing the turbulence of inner consciousness through a fluid and evocative style.

Among her most poignant works, *The Village by the Sea* (1982) stands out as a deeply human story that reflects Desai's social conscience and her sensitivity to the relationship between people and their environment. Set in a small fishing village near Bombay, the novel follows the siblings Lila and Hari as they struggle to care for their family amidst poverty, illness, and social neglect. Their mother's illness and father's alcoholism leave them to shoulder adult responsibilities prematurely, forcing them to navigate the tensions between rural survival and the lure of urban opportunity. While Lila remains in the village tending to her home and siblings, Hari travels to Bombay in search of work, where he encounters both exploitation and compassion. Through his encounters with Jagu, a restaurant owner, and Mr. Panwallah, a watchmaker who mentors him, Hari matures emotionally and vocationally. The narrative thus juxtaposes the harsh realities of urban industrial life with the fragile rhythms of the coastal ecosystem, weaving a story of endurance, transformation, and ecological interdependence.

From an ecocritical perspective, *The Village by the Sea* offers more than a tale of familial resilience, it becomes a reflection on the moral and ecological implications of modernization. The novel portrays how industrialization and urban expansion disrupt both human and natural ecosystems, emphasizing the need for balance and ethical coexistence. Desai's depiction of Thul, the fictional village, captures a delicate environmental equilibrium threatened by the encroachment of factories and modernization projects. Her narrative underscores how economic aspirations often come at the cost of ecological stability and cultural integrity. Within this framework, human survival is portrayed as inseparable from environmental sustainability, echoing the central concerns of ecocritical thought that literature can illuminate the interdependence of human and non-human worlds.

This study adopts an ecocritical lens to examine *The Village by the Sea* as a narrative of ecological consciousness and socio-environmental ethics. It investigates how Desai represents the relationship between human beings and their natural surroundings, particularly in the context of poverty, industrialization, and urban migration. The analysis also considers how Desai critiques the disconnection between human progress and ecological awareness, offering instead a vision of renewal grounded in respect for nature's rhythms. By bringing together the ecological and social dimensions of Desai's fiction, this paper argues that *The Village by the Sea* articulates a form of environmental humanism, one that locates hope not in domination over nature, but in a restored harmony between human effort and ecological care.

Literature Review

Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea* (1982) has received extensive critical attention for its portrayal of poverty, childhood resilience, and the socio-economic transitions of postcolonial India. However, while most studies explore its social realism, relatively fewer have engaged with the novel's ecological and environmental dimensions. Early criticism often classified Desai's work within the tradition of Indian social realism. For instance, Iyengar (1985) emphasize Desai's humanistic concern with the moral decay brought by modernization. Meena Khorana (1991) emphasized the novel's stylistic subtlety and structural depth, noting how Desai's sensitive prose imbues each image and detail with layered meaning. Subsequent scholarship has examined the text through diverse theoretical perspectives, highlighting its engagement with socioeconomic, and cultural realities

From a Marxist standpoint, Jabeen, Rustam, Bacha, and Umer (2014) interpreted the novel as a reflection of class struggle and socioeconomic disparity, revealing how industrialization threatens both the livelihoods and cultural values of Thul's villagers. Their analysis situates Desai's work within the framework of material determinism, illustrating the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Similarly, Neeta Panday (2015) discussed survival as a central motif, portraying the perseverance of characters like Lila and Hari amid poverty and despair, while also underlining the static socio-economic conditions that continue to plague India's rural poor.

Other scholars have approached the novel from thematic and structural perspectives. The *Literary Yard* (2016) identified survival and adaptation as the novel's unifying themes, linking them to broader concerns of poverty, migration, and gender. D. S. Salunke (2016) read the narrative as a bildungsroman, charting Hari's personal growth and transformation through hardship and experience. In later scholarship, feminist readings began to dominate discussions of Desai's fiction and Sharma (2018) read *The Village by the Sea* as an exploration of women's endurance in patriarchal spaces, focusing on Lila's silent strength and maternal responsibility. These interpretations, while insightful, remain confined to the social sphere, treating the natural landscape merely as a backdrop rather than as an active ecological force. Juhi Birla (2019) explored the tension between tradition and modernity, noting Desai's ability to juxtapose rural simplicity with the encroachment of industrial progress, thereby revealing the cultural dilemmas of modernization. Khagendra Neupane (2022) interpreted the novel through a postcolonial lens, employing Edward Said's Orientalism to reveal how cultural hybridity and internalized colonial hierarchies shape Hari's consciousness as he oscillates between the village and the city. Laskar (2022) expanded this discussion by analyzing the collapse of domestic space as a metaphor for displacement, while Sapna Dogra (2024) examined how Hari's search for stability reflects Desai's recurring themes of alienation, belonging, and existential yearning, aligning with M. K. Bhatnagar's observations on her fiction. Together, these critical perspectives establish *The Village by the Sea* as a complex, multidimensional work that transcends its apparent simplicity. It continues to invite new readings that connect ecological, sociocultural, and psychological concerns, affirming Anita Desai's place as a novelist deeply attuned to the moral and emotional fabric of modern Indian life.

More recent critical frameworks, particularly ecocriticism, have opened possibilities for reinterpreting Desai's works. Scholars such as Buell (1995) and Glotfelty (1996) have emphasized the need to reconsider literature as a site of environmental imagination, an approach that can fruitfully be applied to Desai's fiction. Within the South Asian context, scholars like Ghosh (2004) and Huggan and Tiffin (2010) have extended postcolonial ecocriticism to examine how industrialization and globalization reshape human–nature relationships in developing societies. Yet, within this growing body of ecocritical inquiry, Desai's *The Village by the Sea* remains underexplored.

Although *The Village by the Sea* has been widely discussed in terms of its social and feminist dimensions, there is a discernible gap in scholarship regarding its ecocritical significance, particularly how Desai intertwines environmental degradation with moral and emotional decay. The present study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining the novel through an ecocritical lens, highlighting how the degradation of the natural environment parallels the erosion of familial and communal harmony in the narrative.

Research Design

Ecocriticism, broadly defined as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment, has evolved from nineteenth-century recoveries of nature writing into a plural, interdisciplinary field attentive to representation, ethics, place, material agency, and political economy (Glotfelty, 1996; Buell, 1995). Although the term *ecocriticism* is often traced to William Rueckert's 1978 essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*, the movement gained institutional and scholarly legitimacy through Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's edited volume *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996). From the 1990s onward, the field expanded rapidly, formalized through organizations such as ASLE and journals like *ISLE*, and diversified into multiple theoretical and regional branches (Rueckert, 1978; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996).

Rueckert's (1978) formulation offered an initial call to attend to the natural world in literary texts, but the field's intellectual trajectory can be better understood as overlapping waves that incorporate new methods and emphases as the discipline matured. The first wave, drawing on Romantic and nature-writing traditions, was shaped by figures such as Jonathan Bate (1991) and Lawrence Buell (1995), who transformed Romantic recuperation into systematic literary inquiry. Bate reconceptualized

Romantic poetry as an ecological resource, while Buell articulated methodological contours and the ethical imperatives of environmental reading.

The second wave shifted attention toward politicized and justice-oriented perspectives, broadening the field beyond pristine wilderness to industrial and urban ecologies and the uneven geographies of environmental harm. *The Ecocriticism Reader* (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996) consolidated this agenda, while ecofeminist critiques such as Val Plumwood's *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993) revealed the gendered dualisms underpinning environmental domination. Postcolonial interventions by scholars such as Huggan and Tiffin (2010), DeLoughrey (2007), and Vandana Shiva (1993) foregrounded race, class, and empire as central to ecological discourse. Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011) sharpened these concerns by naming the diffuse, cumulative, and temporally extended harms often obscured by catastrophe-centered narratives.

The third wave reoriented ecocriticism toward planetary scale and material agency. Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann's *Material Ecocriticism* (2014) emphasized entanglement, nonhuman agency, and distributed causality. Actor-network theory and critiques of the nature–culture divide further encouraged attention to networks of human and nonhuman actors. Synthesizers such as Greg Garrard (2004, 2012) translated these developments into accessible pedagogical frameworks. The overlap among these waves ensures that Rueckert's (1978) provocation and Buell's (1995) methodological mapping remain foundational even as newer materialist and planetary approaches extend ecocriticism's reach.

Glotfelty's widely cited formulation of ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (1996) anchors the central research question: how do literary texts mediate human–environment relations, and what work do they perform in representing nature? Lawrence Buell provides the close-reading framework used in this study. His concept of the *environmental imagination* identifies textual registers, foregrounding of nonhuman settings, temporal and ethical orientations, and the moral stance toward ecological subjects that guide the interpretive method (Buell, 1995). In *The Environmental Imagination* (1996), Buell offers a landmark study of how literature represents the natural world. Central to the book are Buell's four earmarks of an environmental text: the nonhuman environment appears as an active presence rather than passive backdrop; the text recognizes pluralistic interests beyond the human; it embodies ethical accountability by emphasizing human responsibility to the environment; and it portrays nature as dynamic and processual rather than static or idealized. These criteria define Buell's concept of the *environmental imagination*—the literary capacity to reshape readers' understanding of human–nature relationships. Beyond his publications, Buell helped institutionalize ecocriticism by cofounding Harvard's environmental studies programs, mentoring new scholars, and supporting the formation of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE). Along with Cheryl Glotfelty, he co-edited early anthologies that shaped the discipline's agenda.

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive approach grounded in literary analysis. It follows the tradition of close reading, where meaning is constructed through attentive engagement with language, form, and context rather than through quantitative measurement. As Guerin et al. (1999) note, literary criticism seeks to uncover how texts generate meaning through their aesthetic and structural choices. Similarly, Belsey (2002) emphasizes that textual analysis is a legitimate form of inquiry, since meaning arises from the dynamic interplay between reader and text. Within this constructivist framework, interpretation is understood as a co-created process in which the researcher identifies patterns of meaning through iterative reading and reflection.

The principal method of data analysis is close reading, an iterative and detail-oriented practice in which passages, imagery, and narrative structures are analyzed to uncover ecological metaphors and representations of nature. Attention is given to setting, and character–environment interactions to reveal both explicit and implicit environmental meanings. As Belsey (2002) observes, meaning is not determined by the individual reader but arises from the interaction between text and interpretation; thus, while the researcher brings theoretical concerns such as ecocriticism to the text, the text itself offers its own interpretive possibilities.

Discussion and Analysis

Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea* (1982) presents a profound reflection on the fragile relationship between human life and the natural environment, making it a key text for ecocritical exploration. Set between the coastal village of Thul and the expanding metropolis of Bombay, the novel contrasts the balance of rural subsistence with the destructive pull of industrialization. Through the experiences of Lila and Hari, Desai underscores the vulnerability of rural ecosystems and the precarity of those whose livelihoods depend on them. Ecocriticism, which examines the interplay between literature and the physical world, reveals how Desai critiques the costs of modernization, particularly the exploitation of land, sea, and local communities. Her detailed portrayal of natural landscapes, polluted cities, and disrupted livelihoods exposes the ethical and ecological repercussions of development divorced from sustainability.

Relationship between Humans and Nature/Environment

Desai's novel intricately depicts the interdependence between human beings and the environment. Set in Thul and extending into industrial Bombay, it shows how nature shapes identity (Ahmad et al., 2022; Amjad et al., 2021; Ramzan & Khan, 2019; 2024), values (Li & Akram, 2023, 2024), and survival (Ramzan et al., 2025, 2023). The contrast between the rural poor who were living in harmony with nature and the urban elite being detached and exploitative, reveals Desai's ecocritical stance on development and resilience. Through characters such as Hari, Lila, and Sayyid Ali, she illustrates how alienation from the environment results in loss, while reverence and adaptation foster ethical growth and hope.

Thul is presented not merely as a backdrop but as a living organism sustaining its people. The sea, coconut trees, rice fields, and fruit groves embody both livelihood and spirituality. Lila's early visit to the sea frames it as a deity and provider, "a kind of temple in the sea" (p. 1). The coconut trees are "the pride of the village," providing nourishment and income, while the family's small garden sustains them materially and spiritually. Lila's nurturing of the pumpkin vines and papaya trees reflects her role as caretaker of both home and earth—a recurring symbol of women's ecological wisdom in Desai's fiction.

Hari: Nature as Identity, Labor, and Loss. Hari's relationship with nature is defined by labor and belonging. His daily work consisting of "dig and sow and break coconuts... and drag nets in the sea" (p. 14) binds him to the rhythms of land and sea, shaping his identity and sense of maturity. In Bombay, he experiences profound loss and alienation, dreaming of "the sounds of sea or wind in the coconut palms or the feel of the clean sand between his fingers and under his feet" (p. 166). His emotional dislocation mirrors ecological exile. Upon returning home, Hari's vision of sustainable work in harmony with nature signifies ethical growth, Desai's assertion that humanity must engage nature creatively, not exploit it.

Lila: Nurturing Within Nature's Cycles. Lila represents the feminine principle of care, extending her nurturing beyond domestic spaces to the natural world. Her morning ritual at the sea temple "the sacred rock, a kind of temple in the sea... freshly consecrated" (pp. 1–2) illustrates her spiritual attunement to nature's cycles. The ebb and flow of tides reflect resilience, while the coconut grove and basil plant symbolize her ethical connection to life. Even amid storms and hardship, Lila endures and adapts, embodying the ecofeminist idea that women sustain ecological balance through compassion and perseverance.

Sayyid Ali: Ecological Wisdom and the Call to Adapt. Sayyid Ali, the retired naturalist, articulates the novel's most explicit ecological message. His warning to Hari "The fish in the sea will die... My little baya birds will find no more paddy leaves for their nests" (p. 255) laments industrial expansion but also urges adaptation "you will adapt to your new environment" (p. 257). His balanced view of accepting change yet advocating harmony embodies Desai's ecological ethic of humility and coexistence.

Villagers vs. City Dwellers: Two Modes of Environmental Engagement. The villagers' lives are deeply intertwined with nature through fishing, farming, and seasonal rhythms. Even during natural disasters, their response reflects respect and resilience. Biju's protest "Go build your factories where the land is barren and nothing grows but stones and thorns" (p. 92) expresses communal defiance against ecological destruction. Conversely, urban dwellers in Bombay are depicted as detached and exploitative. The visitor who dismisses concerns about the sacred hill (p. 61) symbolizes industrial arrogance, while DeSilva's family treats nature as a leisure commodity "they thought the visitors from Bombay definitely touched in the head" (p. 52).

Through these contrasts, Desai underscores that alienation from nature fosters exploitation, while engagement ensures harmony. For Hari, nature is identity; for Lila, it is spiritual and ethical grounding; and for Sayyid Ali, it is moral wisdom. Collectively, their experiences advance Desai's vision of sustainability and interconnectedness, positioning *The Village by the Sea* as a pioneering Indian ecocritical narrative that links human survival to environmental integrity.

The Fragile Web: Dissociation from Nature and Human Accountability

Desai's novel transcends a mere account of rural hardship to emerge as an ecological allegory exposing the perils of humanity's estrangement from nature. It portrays how industrialization, driven by greed and ignorance, severs traditional ecological bonds and threatens both environment and humanity. Through the villagers' suffering and the rise of the fertilizer factory, Desai emphasizes the ethical necessity of environmental accountability.

The Dissociation: Severing the Lifeline. Thul's traditional life embodies harmony with nature as the sea is seen as the sustainer and spiritual center. Desai captures this symbiosis, "it was the voice of the village Thul as much as the roar of the waves and the wind in the palms" (p. 4). The factory's arrival marks the rupture of this relationship, reducing land and sea to exploitable commodities. Villagers' skepticism, "our trees, our fish, our cattle and birds" have to be protected (p. 120) contrasts with the naive optimism of those who see "many jobs, many factories" (p. 13) as progress. The rejection of traditional ecological wisdom like using manure instead of chemicals, fishing with restraint signals cultural and ethical decay. Mocked by younger men, Biju's sustainable practices are dismissed "we will have good, safe jobs... while you go out fighting the sea" (p. 105) revealing how greed displaces stewardship.

The Effects of Dissociation: Ecological and Social Collapse. Desai charts the chain reaction of ecological destruction and social disintegration. Overfishing and pollution decimate marine life, leaving "too many on earth now... not enough fuel, not enough food, not enough jobs" (p. 110). The land, too, becomes barren, while poverty and despair drive migration, family breakdown, and illness. The watchman's contempt, "you villagers... drink toddy and lie drunk under the coconut trees all day" (p. 64) exposes the widening social divide. The mother's mysterious sickness parallels environmental decay, reinforcing Desai's theme that human and ecological health are inseparable.

Human Accountability: An Ethical Imperative. Desai asserts that this crisis is not inevitable but born of human choice. Factory owners, bureaucrats, and economic systems prioritizing profit over sustainability are morally culpable. Their worldview consisting of seeking to conquer the sea, the land is profoundly unethical. Yet accountability also extends to the villagers who succumb to false promises and abandon ancestral wisdom. Lila and Hari emerge as moral counterpoints. Lila's care for her family and environment reflects an ethic of interconnectedness, while Hari's apprenticeship with Mr. Panwallah represents renewal through sustainable learning. Mr. Panwallah's advice, "Learn to mend things... Nothing is useless if you know how to mend it" (p. 192) becomes a metaphor for repairing humanity's broken relationship with nature.

Ultimately, *The Village by the Sea* refutes the anthropocentric illusion that humans can dominate nature without consequence. Desai exposes how industrial greed and ecological ignorance yield both environmental ruin and moral collapse. The dying sea, barren fields, and fractured families of Thul testify to the costs of dissociation but through Lila's compassion and Hari's renewed accountability, Desai offers hope. The novel concludes that ethical survival depends on recognizing interdependence

and embracing stewardship which is a moral duty that binds human existence to the vitality of the natural world.

Plot as Ecology: The Narrative Power of Nature

Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea* begins with a deeply evocative portrayal of a coastal Indian village, where nature shapes not only the landscape but the rhythm of daily life itself. The narrative immediately grounds readers in this environment, where every household "large or small, rich or poor" keeps a sacred basil plant by the door as a sign of piety and reverence for the natural world (p. 37). Even in hardship, tending to the Tulsi plant represents devotion and ecological awareness. Desai's vivid imagery of dawn filtering through coconut groves and dew shimmering on spider webs (pp. 2–3) situates Thul as a fertile and harmonious world, sharply contrasted with the industrial, polluted expanse of Bombay. Through these opening descriptions, Desai presents nature as both setting and spiritual foundation, suggesting that the villagers' lives and beliefs are intertwined with the sea and the land.

Nature and spirituality remain inseparable throughout the novel. Lila's early-morning ritual of offering flowers at a rock temple in the sea during low tide exemplifies how religious devotion is synchronized with natural cycles. Similarly, the sacred basil and the sea-rock temple underscore how reverence for nature is embedded in faith and daily routine. Desai thus constructs nature as divine, a living presence manifest in the sea, groves, temple cows, and flora ensuring that the villagers' existence is inseparable from their environment.

For the children of Thul, nature is both a teacher and taskmaster. Hari's identity, defined by his labor, reveals how nature governs social and economic life. He laments being "the only boy in the village with no boat" (p. 25), a symbol of his lack of belonging within a community sustained by the sea. His daily work of digging, sowing, breaking coconuts, dragging nets (p. 14) reveals a practical education drawn entirely from the rhythms of the earth and water. Similarly, Lila and the younger siblings work in fields and along the shore, their growth and survival dictated by natural necessity. Desai uses their experiences to show how children mature within, and because of, the demands of their environment, developing self-reliance and an intuitive respect for natural order.

However, Desai's depiction of nature is not purely benevolent. Its nurturing face turns destructive during the monsoon, when cyclones devastate boats and claim lives. The storm that kills several fishermen exposes the fragility of a community dependent on nature's mercy. The monsoon's fury extends metaphorically into Hari's own hardships in Bombay, where torrential rains evoke memories of Thul and reinforce the emotional pull of home and environment. The recurring imagery of weather and seasonal change propels the plot. Hari's return to Thul at Diwali marks both an end to the storms and a symbolic reconnection to the land and sea that define him.

The novel's central conflict arises when industrial progress threatens to obliterate Thul's ecological and cultural identity. Early warnings about factory construction, "many factories, hundreds of them" (p. 11) evoke fear and resistance. The villagers, led by voices like Biju's, resist by asserting their collective ownership, "No one can take our land... It is ours, and we will not sell" (p. 91). This resistance reflects a deep understanding of the land not as property, but as life itself, the source of crops, food, and identity. The ensuing protest in Bombay, where a supporter proclaims, "Your green fields and the sea are valuable to all of us... Our trees, our fish, our cattle and birds have to be protected" (p. 120), links the local struggle to a universal ecological plea. Desai thus transforms Thul's small rebellion into a broader allegory of environmental justice.

The novel closes with the melancholic voice of Sayyid Ali, whose lament, "the fish in the sea will die from the effluents... The paddy fields will be built over by factories and houses" (p. 255) echoes the irreversible loss that modernization brings. His grief over the destruction of the sea, fields, and birds encapsulates Desai's warning: when nature perishes, so too does the spirit of the community. Yet amidst this despair, Hari and Lila's perseverance, grounded in their relationship with the land and sea, offers a quiet resilience.

Throughout *The Village by the Sea*, nature is not a static backdrop but an active participant that shapes the narrative's course and moral core. From sacred rituals to storms, from the children's labor to the

villagers' defiance against industrial intrusion, Desai presents the environment as a living force, one that sustains, tests, and ultimately defines human existence. The novel becomes a testament to the idea that the fate of humanity and the fate of nature are inseparably intertwined.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis, *The Village by the Sea* demonstrates that nature is not merely a setting but a vital force that shapes human identity, ethical responsibility, and social cohesion. Through the lives of Hari, Lila, and the villagers of Thul, Desai illustrates how intimate engagement with the environment fosters resilience, moral awareness, and community solidarity, while alienation from nature, exemplified by industrial intrusion and urban detachment leads to ecological degradation, social dislocation, and ethical neglect. The novel foregrounds the interdependence of human and environmental well-being, emphasizing that sustainable survival requires respect, adaptation, and stewardship of natural resources. Ultimately, Desai's work conveys a clear ecocritical message: the preservation of both ecological and human systems depends on ethical accountability, harmonious coexistence, and active engagement with the environment.

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