

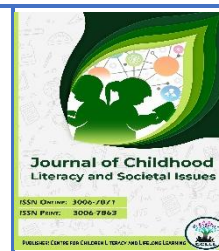


Journal of Childhood Literacy and Societal Issues

Peer-reviewed, Open-access, HEC-recognized Y-category

Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.71085/joclsi>

P-ISSN: [3006-7863](#) E-ISSN: [3006-7871](#)



Gendered Oppression and Environmental Exploitation: An Ecofeminist Study of Selected Pakistani Novels

Muskan Khan¹  Azhar Shah² 

^{1,2}Researcher, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan.

Correspondence: Azhar Shah, Email: shahazhar359@gmail.com

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.71085/joclsi.04.01.62>

Article information

Article History:

Received: 2025-04-27

Received in revised form:
2025-05-21

Accepted: 2025-06-11

Published Online: 2025-06-20

Keywords:

Ecofeminism; Patriarchy;
Environmental Exploitation;
Gender Inequality; South Asian
Literature; Resistance.

ABSTRACT

The study seeks to analyze the intersection of gender oppression and ecological violence in contemporary Pakistani literary works from an ecofeminist viewpoint. It, therefore, focuses on four selected novels: *Before She Sleeps* (2018) by Bina Shah, *Trespassing* (2003) by Uzma Aslam Khan, *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2013) by Fatima Bhutto, and *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) by Jamil Ahmad. The research has used a qualitative method to study the connections between the patriarchy, economic exploitation, and ecological destruction in these texts because of the anthropization of women and nature. The study employs a painstaking textual analysis and thematic approach to depict micro-level recurring themes of female subjugation, environmental change, and resistance towards socio-political order. The analysis is guided in particular by the ecofeminist approaches of Vandana Shiva and Greta Gaard, which explain the combination of gender and ecological violence in a capitalistic society with patriarchy. This work contributes to the existing body of knowledge on ecofeminism by extending its application to the Pakistani literature and addressing complex interrelations of gender and nature.



© 2025 by the Authors. Licensee Khan & Shah. This article is an open-access distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) License
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Introduction

For centuries, women and nature have been discussed in cultural narratives, mythology and literature as sources of life, fertility and sustenance. But within patriarchal and capitalist systems, this natural connection has been embedded into a collective kind of oppression where women and the environment are simultaneously exploited, regulated and commodified. Ecofeminism is an interdisciplinary approach that has garnered academic interest across many fields. It studies feminism, ecology and the connection between gender oppression and environmental degradation. Ecofeminism as a branch of the feminist movement was first conceptualized in Western academia in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Vandana Shiva, a distinguished ecofeminist scholar, contends that the capitalist patriarchal system is chiefly accountable for the exploitation of women and nature. This viewpoint posits that the oppression of women and environmental degradation are intrinsically connected, propelled by the same patriarchal rationale that emphasizes domination and control over harmony and sustainability.

Pakistan is a country notorious for entrenching patriarchal norms and burgeoning capitalist endeavours. It is known as a place where both women and nature experience systemic marginalization and exploitation. In Pakistan's patriarchal society, both women and nature suffer due to exploitation. According to Shah and Nawab (2024), “[p]atriarchal beliefs are assimilated into Pakistani society, ensuring the subordinate role of women. Patriarchal supremacy over women is perpetuated through institutionalized behavioural constraints, gender bias and violence” (p. 139). This mirrors the treatment of women, whose autonomy and labour are often controlled, devalued, or erased. The land is commodified for profit, just as women's bodies are policed by strict societal norms. Both face exploitation and subjugation under the pressures of patriarchy.

Pakistani literature, while extensively scrutinized through postcolonial and feminist frameworks,

has not been substantially explored from an ecofeminist viewpoint. This research aims to address that deficiency by examining four modern Pakistani novels: *Before She Sleeps* (2018) by Bina Shah, *Trespassing* (2003) by Uzma Aslam Khan, *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2013) by Fatima Bhutto, and *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) by Jamil Ahmad. These novels weave complex plots where women's problems are a reflection of the degradation of the natural world, so showing the impact of patriarchal forces on ecological and gender-based oppression. The research viewed through an ecofeminist lens shows how these texts depict women's resistance as a way of regaining agency and reconnecting with the environment.

Problem Statement

Despite the increasing interest in ecofeminism, there is a dearth of substantial analysis of South Asian literature, especially Pakistani novels. Existing studies on ecofeminism focus on Western literary traditions, neglecting the ecological and gendered concerns of postcolonial societies. This research aims to bridge the gap by examining how selected Pakistani novels weave together gender oppression, environmental exploitation and capitalist patriarchy. By doing so, it shows how literature can critique ecological injustices and gender inequalities in Pakistan.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the parallel oppression of women and nature in Pakistani novels, focusing on themes of patriarchy, exploitation, and environmental degradation.
2. To analyze how capitalism contributes to gendered ecological destruction by commodifying natural resources.
3. To explore female agency and resistance in narratives that connect climate change, displacement, and resource control to women's struggles.

Significance of the Study

This study is of prime importance as it analyzes Pakistani literature from an ecofeminist perspective. This research looks at selected Pakistani novels to see how literature depicts the systemized exploitation of women alongside environmental degradation. It shows how Pakistani literature mirrors the struggles of marginalized communities, especially women, in ecological devastation, resource extraction and gendered violence. This research shows how literature can be a tool of resistance, thus contributing to the academic discourse on ecofeminism and opening up further research on similar topics in other South Asian novels. Moreover, this research adds to the understanding of ecofeminism in Pakistani fiction and piques interest in comparative literary analysis, encouraging further research into the broader ecofeminist discourse in South Asian literature.

Delimitations of the Study

This research paper is limited to four Pakistani novels: *Before She Sleeps*, *Trespassing*, *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* and *The Wandering Falcon*. It doesn't look at ecofeminist themes in Pakistani poetry, short stories or non-fiction. While this research considers capitalist patriarchy as one of the key factors in ecological and gender oppression, it doesn't analyze economic policies or environmental laws in detail. The focus is on textual analysis, exploring ecofeminist themes in these narratives.

Literature Review

Spretnak (1993) argues that cosmic time controls both natural processes and the biological rhythms of the womb, establishing a symbolic connection between women's bodies and natural cycles. Civilizations have repeated this notion because no society has been able to completely ignore the basic impact of women's reproductive capacities. Comparatively, the planet provides an abundance of resources and intricate biosphere systems that sustain all life forms, whereas the female body promotes life through reproduction and nutrition.

However, Puleo (2017) propounds that women frequently bear the initial adverse effects of environmental deterioration. Research from numerous NGOs and reports from UN international conferences indicate that women play a vital role in the preservation and restoration of nature. Their contributions to sustainable development, conservation, and ecological activism exemplify the overarching ecofeminist assertion that the oppression of women and environmental degradation must be addressed concurrently to attain comprehensive social and ecological justice.

Shah (2024) in his study on *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* propounds that the marginalization of Alice represents a wider societal issue. It shows the exploitation of women and the environmental deterioration of the city. He contends that the systematic oppression of women in a patriarchal society mirrors the exploitation of nature, constituting a significant ecofeminist critique. Shah et al. (2024) assert that the novel depicts how both women and the environment are perceived as passive subjects to be controlled and exploited. Alice's exploitation in the story reflects the ecological degradation in Karachi, rendering her body a symbol of both social and environmental abuse. Moreover, both women and nature are commodified and objectified. Alice, akin to the peepul tree, is diminished in her physical characteristics and nurturing function, exploited and abandoned when deemed no longer beneficial. Alice's body is similarly objectified and assaulted by men, symbolizing gender and environmental exploitation.

Asif et al. (2021) examine the devastating effects of sexual, physical, and psychological exploitation on women, which can lead to suicide. The study highlights sexism as a widespread social problem that harms several cities and argues that spatial resistance is necessary to fight oppression. Saleem and Azim (2021) study the colonialism of nature and women in South Asia. This study emphasizes how patriarchy manipulates and subjugates women and the environment, linking gender oppression with ecological degradation. Bilal et al.

(2022) use social ecofeminism to analyze Doris Lessing's 1950 novel, noting patriarchal institutions' effects on women and the environment and the need for social reform.

Chanda (2014) examines ecofeminism as articulated by Indian women authors, highlighting the progression of ecofeminist ideology in their writings. The study delineates the evolution from early ecofeminism to current urban ecofeminism. It depicts how Indian women writers address topics of environmental degradation, societal injustice, and the nexus between nature and gender. Ecofeminism emphasizes the relationship between women's bodies and natural cycles, including menstruation, lunar phases, and childbirth, associating women's experiences with ecological processes. She notably emphasizes the contributions of Arundhati Roy, noting that Roy is among the few female authors who concentrate on environmental destruction in her literature.

Sarikaya (2023) analyzes the ecofeminist viewpoint in her dissertation regarding Henrik Ibsen's play *The Lady from the Sea*. Ecofeminism, emerging from a concern for the concurrent subjugation of women and nature, gained prominence in the late 20th century. The research demonstrates a relationship between Ellida's oppression in her marriage and the profound exploitation of nature. From an ecofeminist viewpoint, the sea in the play functions as a metaphorical force that impacts people and highlights the consequences of human errors and consumerist attitudes towards the environment. The study aims to clarify the relationship between gender issues and environmental degradation as depicted in *The Lady from the Sea*.

Kaur (2012) explores the traces of ecofeminism in Indian literature through an analysis of Kamala Markandaya's novel *Nectar in a Sieve*. The work shows how ecofeminism developed initially in Western cultures and appeared in Indian literary contexts. The body of work by Markandaya addresses both environmental decay and the difficulties faced by rural Indian women. Markandaya's novel uses Rukmani's resistance to

both natural and social challenges to explain ecofeminist principles that show how the oppression of nature corresponds to the oppression of women under patriarchy. Similarly, Krishna's (2014) research reveals that environmental systems which lead to ecological destruction simultaneously support the systemic oppression of women. The argument conforms to ecofeminism's core beliefs, which focus on dismantling patriarchal and capitalist systems to achieve both gender equality and environmental sustainability.

Through an ecofeminist perspective, Wu (2019) investigates *The Colour Purple* and examines the intersection between Black women's enslavement and their connection to the natural world. Through the study, Alice Walker shows equality for all living beings while solving characters' problems with Celie's husband and argues that women should assert themselves to force males to recognize their mistakes. Likewise, Bhalla (2012) investigates Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* which focuses on environmental destruction and its harmful impacts. Bhalla analyzes ecofeminist discourse to reveal how sexism and racism together with patriarchal oppression act to subjugate women. The protagonist gains essential power and sustenance from nature, which fuels her growth. Through her work, Atwood criticizes technological development because of its environmental harm and shows how the main character finds independence by connecting with nature to defy male oppression.

Methodology

This study has adopted a qualitative method by analyzing gender and environmental issues in selected Pakistani novels through thematic analysis and textual analysis. Thematic analysis complements textual analysis by providing a framework which integrates women's subjugation with environmental degradation. The thematic analysis also assists in determining the primary socio-political eco-biography of women. The ecofeminist literary works in question portray the narrative structures, characterization, and

symbolism that these novels employ to challenge and dismantle the patriarchal capitalist order.

The analysis was conducted through six systematic phases. Firstly, the researchers became au fait with the four selected primary texts by conducting multiple close readings and noting recurring patterns related to ecofeminist concerns such as environmental degradation, female oppression, displacement, and resistance. In the first level coding, we used open coding to identify initial descriptive codes that emerged directly from the texts. These included codes such as "forced reproductive control," "extraction of land," "female silence," "verbal abuse," "industrial pollution," and "ecological resistance."

The subsequent step involved employing axial coding to identify connections among the initial codes and categorize them into broader classifications. "Land displacement" and "industrial pollution" were categorized as "environmental exploitation," whilst "forced reproductive control" and "verbal abuse" were categorized as "gendered oppression." Ultimately, we successfully integrated the categories into principal themes that aligned with the study's theoretical framework by selective coding.

Data collection was done by closely reading the primary texts, namely, *Before She Sleeps* by Bina Shah, *Trespassing* by Uzma Aslam Khan, *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* by Fatima Bhutto, and *The Wandering Falcon* by Jamil Ahmad. These novels have been selected because of their treatment of female subjugation and ethnocentric environmental degradation, and their resistance to the socio-political order. Critical secondary sources such as scholarly articles, research papers, and ecofeminist literature that provide background information and context for the study were also analyzed. Ecofeminism and South Asian literature have sophisticated critical writings from established and emerging scholars, which were used to underpin the analysis.

This study's theoretical approach is based on the works of Vandana Shiva and Greta Gaard, notable ecofeminist thinkers. Vandana Shiva, in her

influential texts *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* (2010) and *Ecofeminism* (1993, co-authored with Maria Mies), challenges the capitalist-patriarchal system for its contribution to environmental degradation and the oppression of women. Greta Gaard's *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (1993) elaborates on the intersectionality of ecofeminism, emphasizing the connection between gender oppression, ecological degradation, animal exploitation, and societal hierarchy. This study utilizes theoretical perspectives to analyze how the chosen books reflect and contest patriarchal-capitalist ideologies that commodify women and nature. This research examines the emergence of female agency, ecological awareness, and resistance within these narratives.

Analysis and Discussion

Gendered Oppression and Environmental Exploitation

The current global catastrophe is linked not to the functioning of our ecosystems, but to the operation of our ethical systems. Glazebrook (2020) quotes Simone Beauvoir, who contends that women and nature occupy an equal status under patriarchal oppression. Ecofeminists assert that sexism, racism, classism, and environmental degradation all stem from a patriarchal culture. According to Gaard (1993) "[i]n the dominant Patriarchal cultures, reality is divided according to gender, and a higher value is placed on those attributes associated with masculinity" (p. 18).

In the novel *Before She Sleeps* (2018), all of Bina Shah's female characters depict the patriarchal rule of agencies. Bina Shah presents a dystopian South West Asian future with nuclear warfare, environmental deterioration, and gender inequality that leads to strict social control. The government forces women into polygamous marriages to increase the population. Various techniques and tactics are utilized to augment the female birth rate. The female characters are bound to have four or five spouses and their rights vanish. Shah (2018) shows a patriarchal system that exploits women for reproduction, like land for

profit. Sabine, a woman who escapes this system, says, "[w]e are merely vessels, containers for the future they seek to construct" (p. 59). This shows patriarchal power over women's bodies, echoing land's oppression through forceful cultivation and industrialization. Mies (2014) claims that unethical men harm women and the environment by emphasizing self-interest or profit (p. 129). "Because women [...] are judged unable and are thus relegated to the position of passive object, their suffering and deaths are tolerable in the name of profit and progress" (Gaard, 1993, p. 67).

The novel vividly depicts the female characters' misery, anxiety, and torment. The technical landscape is clear. The Green City Handbook for Women shows that the administration doesn't pay heed to women and the environment. Joseph represents male patriarchy and some characters, like Sabine, resist agency orders. They lived in *Panah* (Sanctuary) because no one could force them to marry there. They must travel to see several clients whom they embrace platonically, not sexually. However, the Bureau uses suicides for its own gain. Sabine says, "[t]hey will even use suicide to their advantage. By showing us to see a woman's body in such a cruel way, the Bureau wants us to see what happens when human nature is not contained" (p. 12). Sheila Collins succinctly states that "racism, sexism, class exploitation, and ecological destruction are four interlocking pillars upon which the structure of patriarchy rests" (Gaard, 1993, p. 289).

Likewise, *Trespassing* (2003) depicts a modern yet similarly disconcerting reality in which women's autonomy is restricted, and the environment faces incessant degradation. The story is about Dia, a teenage artist who employs ancient techniques to dye silk, highlighting her bond with nature. The depiction of the silkworm's cocoon is an important symbol in the novel. Riffat, Dia's mother, is a silk farmer who fosters her fascination with silkworms. Dia cares about the cocoon, showing her love of nature. She controls all cocoon-related agriculture activities. Dia examines cocoon maturation, feeding, and silk production. It supports her aggressive

environmental position by showing how human demands destroy nature. "It suggests that our relationship with the natural world is inherently predicated on a repression of a desire to destroy nature rather than on a desire to enhance nature" (Gaard, 1993, p. 227).

Women are associated with nature due to their greater connectivity in the ecological domain. Women regard nature as having the same functions. This concept is evident in the story through several female characters, particularly Dia. She possesses an extensive understanding of botany. She realizes that the majority of colours can be derived from plants. Dia also learns which section of each plant must be harvested, the duration required for this process, and the resulting colour. She thinks that organic methods should be employed rather than alternative development services. She is also a highly astute observer of the silkworm's lifecycle. She meticulously examines the transformations within the cocoon and the moths on her farm. She remains still for hours to witness the metamorphosis of the cocoon.

Dia shares her mother's concern for the well-being of the silkworms. She abhors the chemical dyes detrimental to both the silkworm and the ecosystem. Shiva contends that contemporary technology "was intended to manage weeds and pests but has instead produced super weeds and super-pests" (Khan, 2003, p. 14). She additionally asserts that it constitutes a type of aggression against flora and wildlife through the utilization of technology and industrial methods for breeding and harmful applications. Dia articulates her views on cocooning as a female being. She claims that the cocoon has a trait similar to that of a female. Dia observes that the pupa secretes a crimson fluid from her abdomen that "in texture and colour resembled menstrual fluid" (Khan, 2003, p. 108). She observes the black pair of butterflies that chase each other, settling on a twig and copulating in a tail-to-tail position. The man asserts dominance over the woman by his aroma, reflecting the dynamics of their relationship. In this context, Gaard (1993) asserts that "the connection between woman and nature [is] part of the oppressive

system of beliefs that grounds the exploitation of women” (p. 77).

Since *Trespassing* (2003) highlights patriarchal brutality against women and nature through its female characters. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (2014) condemn patriarchal violence against women and nature under the framework of Ecofeminism. Maria Mies (2014) defines patriarchy as “the system that perpetuates the exploitation and oppression of women” (p. 37). Shiva (2010) notes that “[t]raditional patriarchy has shaped our worldviews and mindsets, as well as our social and cultural realms, through the domination of women and the denial of their complete humanity and right to equality” (p. 9). Both assert that our society has instituted a novel form of violence with the advent of the capitalist system. Similarly, recent advancements in technology and industry have introduced devastating violence to the diversity of nature.

Moreover, Nissrine and Dia's verbal abuse and oppression in the novel depict patriarchal brutality. Nissrine says, “[y]ou and I possess no understanding of freedom, Dia [...] Look at us. Always in buildings and cars. Beyond our location, what exists? If it is not a physical threat, it is rumour” (Khan, 2003, p. 112). Dia feels vulnerable as she enters the street and every look is on her. She tries to move fast, but “up ahead, someone obstructed her path.” He touches her groin as she passes him (Khan, 2003, p. 215). In this way, Khan (2003) describes Pakistani verbal hostility. In “Verbal Violence at the Workplace: A Reality from the Pakistani Context” (2014), Laila Akber Cassum discusses Pakistani women's verbal abuse. She claims that this form of aggression causes anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder without apparent injuries (p. 22).

Bhutto's novel, *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2013) is a tragic narrative of violence, displacement, and gender-based discrimination, set against the backdrop of the ecologically and politically devastated landscape of North Waziristan. The narrative intricately weaves

together themes of patriarchal supremacy, environmental deterioration, and feminine resistance. It presents a thorough ecofeminist analysis of the relationship between gender and ecological exploitation. In the novel, direct violence, especially against women, is widespread and appears in several forms, such as physical abuse, war-related crimes, and sexual assault. The narrative highlights the physical abuse of women and children by authorities in Pakistan, where there is “no match for the ruthlessness of the state” (Bhutto, 2013, p. 165). According to Mies (2014), there are “different forms of violence against women: from female feticide to economic exclusion and sexual assault” (p. 15). This violence appears in both latent and overt forms, from minor acts of aggression, such as pinching or squeezing, to more severe manifestations over time that significantly affect the victims' physical and emotional well-being. Female characters such as Samarra and Mina are often victims of physical abuse, violence, and sexual assault.

Samarra endures atrocious treatment at the hands of a bunch of kidnappers, including a soon-to-be-retired military officer designated as the “boss.” The “boss” physically abused Samarra by pushing her off the chair, stepping on her face and hair, and yanking her hair from the ground. Samarra's cheek was in contact with the floor, and her skin was inflamed and lacerated from his grip. He rose once again and pressed one of his oxblood boots against her face. She inadvertently bit her tongue as “[h]er jaw collided with his heel” (Bhutto, 2013, p. 166). The use of symbolism reflects societal institutions and cultural conventions that foster violence. Maria Mies (2014) argues that violence against women is not incidental but structurally linked to the patriarchal mode of production, which thrives on the control and subjugation of female bodies (p. 36).

Sold Earth, Silenced Bodies: Capitalism and Ecological Exploitation

Shiva (2010) asserts that economic systems influence culture and social values from a global capitalist viewpoint. An economy of

commodification cultivates a culture in which all things have a price, but none contain intrinsic value” (Shiva, 2010, p. 12). This agenda of economic reforms promotes a capitalist patriarchy that considerably restricts economic prospects for women. Gaard (1993) argues that the logic of domination underlying capitalism and patriarchy not only objectifies women and nature but also normalizes their exploitation through cultural narratives that justify hierarchy and control. According to Azhar Shah, in Pakistan, “[f]eudal lords not only exploit their laborers and daily-wagers but also look down upon them in a contemptuous way” (Shah, & Khattak, 2024, p. 70).

Trespassing (2003) unveils how industrialization and global capitalism destroy both ecosystems and traditional ways of life. The novel is set in Karachi, an expanding textile industry, revealing the environmental degradation due to economic greed. As the novel quotes, “[t]he river had lost its color, no longer the green of reeds, but black with the runoff from the factories” (Khan, 2003, p. 112). This shows how capitalist-driven industrial waste pollutes the environment at large. Khan (2003) implicates a working woman in her narrative who suffers from significant societal violence, encompassing verbal abuse, physical assault, and several social and cultural restrictions. As Gaard (1993) notes, “women's participation in the labor force following industrialization has not changed their secondary status in society. “[Therefore] in a male-dominated society, women, as the subordinated sex, have little control over the socio-economic structure” (p. 287).

Moreover, Khan (2003) in the narrative analyzes the previously described disclosures of capitalist patriarchy. She articulates her perspectives on women's remuneration and her role in the workplace. Riffat managed a silk plantation and received regular threats and “was tired of ringing her lawyer, who had increased his charges” (Khan, 2003, p. 409). If she becomes incensed owing to grievances and the mafia, she might be labelled as “mad” or “foolish.” Khan (2003) wittily comments on the societal perception of women in Pakistan,

characterizing them as “the product of a country where self-consciousness was basic survival: where woman's reputation was the currency that measured her worth” (p. 289). Their bodies are transformed into state-controlled assets, akin to land subjected to unregulated industrialization and environmental deterioration. Shiva (2010) critiques this systemic control, arguing that capitalist patriarchy extends its dominance by treating women's bodies and nature as territories to be conquered and exploited. She highlights how “development” policies often mirror the logic of colonialism, where both women and the environment are stripped of autonomy and reduced to economic assets.

Mies and Shiva (2014) argue that “capitalist patriarchy subjugates both women and nature, reducing them to passive resources for exploitation” (p. 42). This is particularly revealed in the novel through the character of Naghma, a working-class woman employed in a factory under exploitative conditions. Her experience reflects Shiva's assertion that globalization and industrialization have “turned women's productive labor into invisible, cheap labor” (Shiva, 2010, p. 64). Naghma's body, much like the polluted river, becomes a site of capitalist exploitation, drained of vitality for economic gain. Moreover, Dia's journey to Balochistan exposes another dimension of capitalist greed. When she travels to the Makran coast, she encounters fishermen whose livelihoods are threatened by large-scale commercial projects. “The sea was no longer theirs to fish; it belonged to those who had never cast a net but owned the licenses” (Khan, 2003, p. 174). Here, Khan (2003) critiques how capitalism severs the deep-rooted relationship between people and their land, much like Shiva's argument that “economic growth is based on a war against subsistence” (Shiva, 2013, p. 25).

Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) further depicts the destruction inflicted by capitalism, particularly on indigenous and nomadic populations. The novel traces Tor Baz, the eponymous “wandering falcon,” as he traverses tribal boundaries increasingly threatened

by state and commercial encroachments. A compelling instance of ecological devastation caused by capitalism arises when a tribe is displaced from its original territory. As the novel quotes, "[t]he elders remained powerless as the area they had inhabited for generations was obliterated for a road" (Ahmad, 2011, p. 89). It reflects Shiva's (2013) claim that capitalist development constitutes "ecological imperialism" (p. 54), displacing indigenous populations under the guise of progress. The road, emblematic of modernization, is constructed at the expense of environmental and cultural destruction, disrupting the bond between the populace and the soil that nurtured them.

Moreover, the women in *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) endure a double burden of ecological degradation and patriarchal dominance exacerbated by economic pressures. The indigenous women, already marginalized in their communities, are becoming increasingly reliant on external assistance as traditional self-sustaining traditions are eradicated. Mies (2014) asserts that "the annihilation of subsistence economies compels women into states of dependency, either through exploitative labour or heightened male dominance over resources" (p. 67). In the story, a tribal woman's sadness is starkly apparent as she laments, "[o]nce we fed our families with what we grew, but now we wait for food that comes in sacks with names we cannot read" (Ahmad, 2011, p. 121). The commodification of survival, where communities are required to buy what they previously produced, insinuates Shiva's (2010) assertion that capitalism "creates scarcity, not abundance, by appropriating nature's wealth for corporate gain" (p. 88).

Vanishing Lands: Displacement, Climate Crisis, and Resistance

Before She Sleeps (2018) depicts a dystopian future in which climate change and gender disparity culminate in a totalitarian dictatorship that controls female bodies for reproductive objectives. The Green City is an authoritarian regime that rigorously regulates women's lives.

Climate catastrophe, resulting in food scarcity, sickness, and widespread mortality, establishes a patriarchal system in which women are compelled to have several spouses for reproductive purposes. The Panah, a clandestine subterranean society of women who reject participation in this system, epitomizes resistance. Sabine reflects on the devastation wrought by environmental degradation. The novel quotes, "[t]he droughts came first. Then the wars over water. By the time the air turned so thick with poison that it made breathing an effort, it was too late to stop what was coming" (Shah, 2018, p. 23). These lines reveal how climate change instigates political domination over women's autonomy, reflecting Shiva's assertion that ecological degradation and patriarchal subjugation are profoundly interconnected.

Shiva (2010) asserts that "the destruction of nature is also the destruction of women's lives, as they have historically been the providers of food, water, and ecological knowledge" (p. 45). Nevertheless, Sabine's rejection of participation in the reproductive system constitutes not only a kind of physiological defiance but also an ecological statement. By refusing to conform, she repudiates the commodification of women and natural resources, coinciding with Shiva's (2013) assertion that "women's resistance movements are inherently environmental, as they seek to preserve life against capitalist and patriarchal destruction" (p. 76).

Fatima Bhutto's *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* (2013) places its resistance within modern global conflicts. The novel reveals how conflict displaces people, making women susceptible. The protagonist, Samarra, stands as a symbol of defiance, rejecting subjugation by warfare and patriarchal authority. However, Displacement is crucial to the narrative of Samarra. As military brutality escalates, she is compelled to abandon her home, akin to the women in *The Wandering Falcon* (2011). Her struggle sheds light on Maria Mies' (2014) claim that "war and economic displacement are two facets of the same phenomenon, compelling women into cycles of

vulnerability while depriving them of agency" (p. 54).

Bhutto (2013) elucidates the effect of war on women's autonomy through Samarra's expressions as; [o]ur actions, expressions, and decisions required authorization, supervision, and regulation" (Bhutto, 2013, p. 148). This reflects the themes in *Before She Sleeps* (2018), where monitoring and governmental authority govern women's existence. The militarization of daily life perpetuates patriarchal control, showing how ecological catastrophes and political violence bolster gender oppression.

Furthermore, war and environmental degradation have devastated ecosystems, yet capitalism persists in exploiting both nature and women. Mies (2014) contends that capitalist advancement favours the rich at the expense of the impoverished. Joseph's supremacy in the novel sheds light on this exploitative system. He has access to synthetic sustenance, affluence, and authority, which starkly contrasts with Sabine's anguish. He asserts, "[e]verything natural [...] is produced in a laboratory" (Khan, 2003, p. 69), showing capitalism's commodification of nature. In *Before She Sleeps* (2018), defiant women such as Rupa are deprived of autonomy, reflecting the subjugation of nature. The law enforcement state regulates natural laws, prioritizing global commerce over ecological and social equity. Sabine expresses, "[m]y head has too much noise in it" (Shah, 2018, p. 54). It reflects the psychological burden of displacement and environmental crises. However, these instances depict a vivid theme, stating that climate change drives displacement, but capitalist patriarchy suppresses the voices of women and marginalized communities, hence ensuring their persistent exclusion from both land and history.

CONCLUSION

The study has examined the intricate connection between gender oppression and environmental degradation in modern Pakistani literature from an ecofeminist perspective. The analysis of the

selected novels reveals how patriarchal and capitalist systems abuse women and deplete and commodify the natural environment. The thematic connections in these works depict that the oppression of women parallels the degradation of land. In this way, it supports the ecofeminist assertion that gender-based subordination and environmental devastation arise from the same hegemonic forces. However, the female protagonists and landscapes in these texts function as sites of both victimization and resistance. It shows a complex interplay where women and nature, despite their afflictions, exert agency against systematic injustices. Through survival, revolt, or resilience, these individuals embody the ongoing struggle against socio-political systems that want to dominate both the feminine and the ecological. Moreover, this research contributes to the field of ecofeminist literary studies by positioning Pakistani literature within the global dialogue on environmental justice and gender equality. It emphasizes the importance of incorporating ecofeminist viewpoints into postcolonial literary critique, highlighting how narratives from the Global South provide distinct perspectives on the interconnection of environmental and gender-related conflicts. Subsequent research may build upon this study by investigating the influence of indigenous knowledge systems and alternative ecological viewpoints on resistance narratives in Pakistani literature, or by analyzing the intersections of race, class, and religious identity.

Furthermore, this study is merely limited at four Pakistani novels from an ecofeminist point of view; it does not include poetry, short tales, or nonfiction. It also avoids looking directly at environmental laws or economic policies. In the future, researchers might look into how ecofeminist themes are used in different types of South Asian literature or use methods from different fields, like literature, environmental science, and gender studies, to look at the bigger social and political effects of gender-based and environmental oppression.

Author Contributions

Muskan Khan: Conceptualization (equal), Methodology (equal), Analysis, Writing –original draft, Writing –review & editing

Azhar Shah: Methodology (equal), Analysis, Writing –review& editing

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to research, authorship, and or publication of this article.

Funding Statement

The project was not funded

References

- Ahmad, J. (2011). *The wandering falcon*. Penguin Books.
- Asif, M., Qaisar, M., & Iftikhar, T. (2021). Analysing spatial resistance in postmodern urban space: A hetero/dystopic study of Bina Shah's *Before She Sleeps*.
- Bhalla, A. (2012). Ecofeminism in Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 2(10). <https://doi.org/1-6.10.56062/gtrs.2024.3.6.616>
- Bhutto, F. (2013). *The shadow of the crescent moon*. W.W. Norton & Company.
- Bilal, M., Khan, N. U., Rahaman, S. U., Ullah, I., & Bar, S. (2022). Ecological criticism based on gender prejudice: The elements of social ecofeminism in the novel *The Grass is Singing*. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 472-484.
- Chanda, P. (2014). Ecofeminism in Indian English fiction. *International Journal of Educational Research and Technology*, 5(1), 33-35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/24556327187783>
- Gaard, G. (1993). *Ecofeminism: Women, animals, nature*. Temple University Press.
- Kaur, G. (2012). Postcolonial ecofeminism, women, and land in Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a sieve*. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(21), 100-110.
- Khan, U. A. (2003). *Trespassing*. Ilqa Publications.
- Krishna, N. R., & Jha, P. (2014). Ecofeminism in novels of Sarah Joseph and Anita Nair. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, 2(7), 103-109.
- Mies, M., & Shiva, V. (2014). *Ecofeminism* (A. Salleh, Foreword). Zed Books.
- Ortner, S. B. (1972). Is female to male as nature is to culture? *Feminist Studies*, 1(2), 5-31. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3177638>
- Sarikaya, D. B. (2023). A study of Henrik Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea* from the perspective of ecofeminism. *Litera: Journal of Language, Literature and Culture Studies*, 33(1), 71-89. <https://doi.org/10.26650/LITERA2022-1208552>
- Shah, A., Awais, M., & Mehboob, T. (2024). Traces of postcolonial ecofeminism in Mohammed Hanif's *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti*. *International Journal of Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences*, 3(3), 3175-3184. Retrieved from <https://ijciss.org/index.php/ijciss/article/view/1514>
- Shah, A., & Khattak, M. S. K. (2024). Exploring postcolonial ramifications in Nadeem Aslam's *Season of the Rainbirds*. *International Journal of Engineering Applied Sciences and Technology*, 9(4), 68-72. <https://doi.org/10.33564/IJEAST.2024.v09i04.007>
- Shah, A., & Nawab, R. (2024). Exploring male chauvinism and gender-based violence in *Someone Like Her*: A psychoanalytic feminist critique. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 9(6), 134. <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijels.96.24>
- Shah, B. (2018). *Before she sleeps*. Delphinium Books.
- Shiva, V. (2010). *Staying alive: Women, ecology, and development*. North Atlantic Books.
- Shiva, V. (2013). *Making peace with the earth*. Fernwood Publishing.
- Spretnak, C. (1993). Critical and constructive contributions of ecofeminism. *The Bucknell Review*, 37(2), 1-12.
- Wu, L. (2019). Reading *The color purple* from the perspective of ecofeminism. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 9(8), 965-972. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpis.0908.11>