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**RESEARCH PAPER**

## Women Instrumentalization and Environmental Deterioration: A Study of Ecofeminism in the Uzma Aslam Khan's novel *Thinner than Skin*

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the intricate connections between women's outspoken oppression, ecofeminism, and ecological catastrophe in a society that is grappling with serious environmental problems and ongoing gender inequity in Uzma Aslam Khan's novel *Thinner than Skin*. Khan deftly analyses how the earth is used and turned into a commodity. The novel examines the connections between oppression and the pressing need for a radical strategy that incorporates ecofeminism and gender equality for environmental justice. In the novel, *Thinner than Skin*, Khan raises important issues about how women may be influencing the course of the world. By applying theoretical framework of ecofeminism by Françoise d'Eaubonned', this study utilized the perspective of ecofeminism to examine how the novel tackles the adverse effects of silencing voices, objectification of women based on cultural norms, the exploitation of the Earth's resources, and its influence on ecological crises. The writer portrays the principal effects of environmental deterioration as depicted in the novel and its correlation with the concept of resistance, specifically related to the suppressed and marginalized voices of women. This exploitation is frequently rationalized by a perceived social structure that prioritizes humans, specifically societies with male dominance, over the natural world.

**KEYWORDS** Ecofeminism, Environmental Deterioration, Exploitation, Suppression, Vocal Subjugation

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**Introduction**

The systematic suppression of women's voices is a widespread problem that is closely connected to broader gender disparities. Throughout history, women have consistently been subjected to deliberate suppression and exclusion in public discussions, a phenomenon deeply rooted in patriarchal conventions that priorities the voices and perspectives of men (Butler, 1990). The subjugation of women can be observed in multiple ways, ranging from the explicit suppression of women's voices in political and academic domains to the more subtle ways in which women's contributions are devalued or disregarded in everyday discussions. The consequences of this suppression are significant, as it not only deprives women of an opportunity to articulate their perspectives and personal encounters but also strengthens the perception that women are inferior or unworthy of having their voices acknowledged. The deliberate suppression of women's voices in this manner sustains a recurring pattern of inequality, wherein the absence of female participation in significant discussions reinforces the gender gaps in authority and access to opportunities. The novel *Thinner than Skin* depicts struggles of female characters as they navigate a society that frequently attempts to suppress their

voices. These works, along with numerous others, not only illuminate the particular obstacles women encounter in various societies but also emphasize the global endeavor for women's entitlement to be acknowledged. Literature plays a vital role in raising awareness, cultivating empathy, and ultimately advancing societal progress towards greater gender equality by giving expression to these experiences (Showalter, 1999).

The concept of interconnection and acknowledging that the exploitation of women and nature originates from a paradigm characterized by dominance and control. Within the framework of the Ecological Paradox, the unyielding endeavor for economic expansion frequently entails the utilization and deterioration of natural resources, resulting in the exhaustion of ecosystem services and the decline of biodiversity. This phenomenon of exploitation exhibits parallelism with the historical exploitation of women's bodies and labor in patriarchal societies. In addition, ecofeminism critiques the anthropocentric perspective, which positions humans as the central focus of the universe and regards nature as a mere object to be utilized for human advantage (Merchant, 1992 & Plumwood, 1993). This approach could prompt a re-evaluation of our connection with the environment, leading to a shift towards a more sustainable and peaceful coexistence with nature. Ecofeminism proposes a reevaluation of values and objectives to address the Ecological Paradox, arguing for the establishment of a fair and ecologically responsible society. It promotes the recognition of nature's intrinsic worth beyond its instrumental benefit to people. It also emphasizes the significance of conserving biodiversity and ecosystem services for the overall welfare of all organisms.

The idea of actively opposing the deterioration of the environment and suppressing women's perspectives (Gaard, 1993). The resistance manifests itself in various ways, encompassing local activism, community mobilization, and engagement in worldwide environmental campaigns. Women globally have been leading the way in opposing environmental degradation and confronting the patriarchal systems that suppress their voices. Notable instances include the Chipko movement in India, characterized by the significant involvement of women in endeavors to preserve forests (Shiva, 1989), as well as the activism of prominent figures such as Wangari Maathai, who spearheaded the Green Belt Movement in Kenya (Maathai, 2006). The ecofeminist movement prioritizes enhancing the representation of women's perspectives in discussions surrounding the environment (Plumwood, 1993).

Uzma Aslam Khan's *Thinner than Skin* offers a distinct chance to examine the theme of silencing voices in the context of ecofeminism in modern literature. Set amidst the stunning yet unforgiving terrains of Northern Pakistan and Kashmir, this novel intricately weaves together the lives of its characters with the surrounding natural environment. Nevertheless, there needs to be more exploration regarding the critical analysis of vocal subjugation, specifically about its female characters. The novel can be effectively analyzed through the lens of ecofeminism, which highlights the interconnected subjugation of women and nature.

The women are marginalized and suppressed in numerous societies, similar to the way the environment is exploited and disregarded (Merchant, 1992 & Plumwood, 1993). The novel *Thinner than Skin* can be examined to identify occurrences where female voices are marginalized or suppressed by explicit patriarchal systems or more nuanced societal conventions. By examining the characters' efforts to find their voice and establish their identity, this study helps to understand how these struggles parallel the environmental obstacles they encounter. This analysis enhances the comprehension of Khan's narrative from an ecofeminist perspective. The novel explores how women navigate their identities in a society that is dominated by men while also facing

environmental challenges. This provides an excellent opportunity for analysis using the ecofeminist framework. This approach not only emphasizes the potential of the novel to contribute to the discussion on gender and environmental issues but also emphasizes the need for more detailed analyses of subjugation vocal in modern literature.

The current study investigates the several facets of the contemporary ecofeminism movement, which includes various branches such as Ecofeminism, Ecocriticism and Ecology that use distinctive approaches and analyses. These various fields of study examine the connection between the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women, highlighting the need for equitable and fair treatment of both. The statement made by Françoise d'Eaubonne about the relationship between the exploitation of marginalized groups and the natural world, described as strengthens the theoretical foundation of the investigation (Warren, 2000).

### **Literature Review**

Ecofeminism is based on the premise that the subjugation of marginalized groups and the deterioration of the environment stem from a patriarchal society that prioritizes masculine qualities like aggression and control (Puleo, 2017). This ideology asserts that environmental issues frequently originate from prioritizing masculine traits on a global scale. Ecofeminism advocates for a profound change in this viewpoint, promoting an ethic of care that supplants the dominant culture of domination. This ethical framework is based on traditionally feminine attributes such as nurturing and benevolence. It emphasizes the significance of caring for both others and the environment.

Ecofeminism emphasizes the interdependence of various types of oppression. It acknowledges the unequal impact of environmental issues on different individuals, with women, especially those from marginalized communities, shouldering a disproportionate share of the burden (Puleo, 2017). The concept of intersectionality is a fundamental component of ecofeminism, recognizing that environmental deterioration amplifies preexisting disparities. Women, particularly those residing in impoverished regions or belonging to minority groups, frequently experience more pronounced effects of climate change as a result of their reliance on natural resources and their limited economic influence. It emphasizes the importance of inclusive leadership within the environmental movement. It underscores the significance of including a wide range of perspectives, specifically those of indigenous women and women of color, who are frequently the most impacted by environmental degradation. Furthermore, ecofeminism promotes the idea that these groups should be prioritized in the movement, as they have the most suitable skills and knowledge to recognize and execute efficient solutions.

Ecofeminism has encountered criticism, primarily regarding the notion of essentialism, which posits that specific traits are intrinsically linked to gender. Critics contend that associating women inherently with nature could potentially strengthen conventional gender norms, which feminism aims to question. Nevertheless, with the advancement of comprehension regarding gender dynamics, this critique has diminished in significance. The principles of ecofeminism are becoming more and more integrated into the essence of the contemporary climate change movement. The ideology is constantly developing, aiming to empower marginalized groups and rejuvenate our planet's well-being. Merchant Val Plumwood, Greta Gaard, and Susan Gryphon, notable figures in the ecofeminist movement, have made substantial contributions to its advancement and influence.

A marine biologist, Rachel Carson laid the foundation for subsequent ecofeminist theory through her renowned publication, *Silent Spring* (1962). The book centers on the adverse impacts of pesticides on the environment, specifically on avian species. Carson (1962) provides a thorough account of how the widespread and careless application of pesticides, particularly DDT (Dichloro-Diphenyl-Trichloroethane), not only caused the death of insects but also inflicted harm upon birds, fish, and other wildlife, decreasing their numbers.

It alludes to a forthcoming period devoid of bird's melodies, serving as a metaphor for the possible devastation of the environment caused by human activities (Carson, 1962). Carson's work confronted the methods of agricultural scientists and the government, advocating for a shift in humanity's perception of the natural world. The publication of her book significantly heightened public consciousness regarding the correlation between humans and the environment, prompting a reassessment of the utilization of chemical pesticides. This ultimately resulted in policy modifications and a transition towards more environmentally sustainable methodologies. Carson's writing was distinguished by its meticulous adherence to scientific principles and skillful use of poetic language, making the topic easily understandable and captivating for a wide range of readers. Years after Carson's opposition to chemical pesticides, additional research emerged on the correlation between women and the natural environment (Boserup, 1970).

The French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne (1974) urged women to spearhead an ecological revolution to counteract the environmental devastation that posed a threat to the existence of humanity. The inaugural national ecofeminist organization in the United States, Woman Earth, was established in Amherst, Massachusetts, in 1980 by a group of women. The conference deliberated on the interplay between feminism, militarization, and environmentalism. The 1980s witnessed the progression of ecofeminist ideas through a sequence of conferences that proposed a feminist approach to environmental ethics (Warren, 2000). The association between women and nature was not limited solely to the Western world. Across various societies, women united in solidarity to safeguard the environment from exploitation and control. In the early 1970s, a collective of Indian women in the sub-Himalayan region came together in a social and ecological movement called the Chipko movement to conserve forests. The movement, led predominantly by women, brought focus to the position of women in society, specifically regarding decision-making procedures (Jain, 1984).

The term "eco" in ecofeminism denotes the impact of ecology on the ecofeminist movement (Mellor, 1997). The green movement adhered to numerous ecological principles that were also embraced by ecofeminism. Both strictly adhered to the fundamental principle of ecology, which posits that the comprehension of all organisms necessitates considering their existence within the broader framework of their natural habitat. Ecofeminists held the viewpoint of the green movement that humanity's reliance extended beyond the physical environment. Indeed, every facet of the natural world, encompassing human beings as well, is intricately linked and reliant on one another. The term 'nature' encompasses both a metaphysical concept, known as the "mind of nature," and the physical world (Mellor, 1997, p. 8). Transpersonal ecology necessitates acknowledging the interdependence between humans and nature. Adopting this worldview starts with self-awareness and an understanding of ecology. Mellor (2000) characterizes this process as "teleological and idealist," as it aims to connect with the timeless essence of nature, often referred to as the "cosmic mind" (p. 117).

Contemporary literature frequently mirrors and scrutinizes these current manifestations. In Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), women are portrayed in a dystopian future where their roles are precisely defined and utilized by a patriarchal government, primarily for reproduction. This work provides a clear and critical analysis of the risks of reducing women to their biological roles. In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003), the protagonist's battle with her cultural identity explores the clash between traditional expectations and personal ambitions in a contemporary environment. This highlights the complex ways women maneuver their objectification within diverse cultural backgrounds. These literary examples not only reflect the realities of women's experiences in different cultures but also provide a critical perspective to analyses and question the deeply ingrained norms that result in the objectification of women. They emphasize the need for a more extensive acknowledgement of women's ability to act and make significant contributions beyond the roles assigned to them by culture.

Plumwood's (1993) analysis of value contrast provides insight into the underlying framework of dualistic thought and the exploitation of disadvantaged communities. The features above, namely backgrounding (denial), radical exclusion (hyper separation), incorporation (relational definition), instrumentalism (objectification), and homogenization or stereotyping, are identified. The characteristics above play a role in marginalizing particular identities as tools for the advantage of more powerful groups. Both studies highlight the devaluation of marginalized identities while prioritizing dominant identities as a goal, thus demonstrating the widespread prevalence of instrumentalization. Skof and Hawke (2021) reinforce Plumwood's concepts by presenting instances that underscore the lack of inherent worth assigned to the Other and their utilization to an ultimate objective. This concept is linked to trophy hunting, commodifying non-human entities, and utilizing underprivileged laborers in diverse sectors. The instances above demonstrate how bodies have been historically and socially constructed, considering the interplay of various factors such as race, gender, and class.

Sharma (2013) explores the intersection of environmental ethics and feminist theory, mainly focusing on eco-feminism. Their study explores the connection between environmental degradation and the exploitation of nature from a feminist perspective. It provides detailed explanations of the historical and philosophical foundations of this viewpoint. The study highlights the significance of women in tackling environmental problems and criticizes the conventional binary mindset in Western philosophy that divides the mind from nature and men from women. The study advocates for a comprehensive and interconnected approach to comprehending and resolving environmental crises. It examines the viewpoints of different eco-feminist scholars on nature, social constructivism, and ethical contextualism. The notion of interrelated subjugation of women and nature is examined by Sharma (2013, p. 63).

Elizabeth, Noor, and Talif (2020) examined the representation of women in Christie Watson's novel *Tiny Sunbirds Faraway* using an ecofeminist perspective. This viewpoint, based on the writings of ecofeminist intellectual Carolyn Merchant, centers on the socioeconomic circumstances of women and their connection to the environment. The primary data source is the novel itself, examined from the perspective of socialist ecofeminism. The theory proposes a correlation between the exploitation of nature and the subordination of women, highlighting the inclination of humans to exploit both in a materialistic manner. The study analyses the dominance of capitalism and patriarchy, focusing on the oppression of women and the deterioration of their natural surroundings in the novel. Furthermore, it reveals that the novel's natural environment and female characters are subjected to dominance and exploitation. This underscores the

interdependence between environmental degradation and women's difficulties, exemplifying the fundamental tenets of ecofeminism.

Branford and Froude (2015) propose utilizing an ecofeminist framework to examine the susceptibilities of women in the aftermath of natural calamities. Ecofeminism, a fusion of feminist and ecological principles, provides a distinctive perspective to analyse the intersection of different social factors, such as race, class, and gender, and how they intensify the effects of natural disasters on women. The study seeks to illustrate the significance and practicality of ecofeminism in comprehending and resolving these vulnerabilities.

The dual oppression of women and nature, highlighting the interconnectedness of social and environmental degradation. This perspective is especially pertinent in the context of natural calamities, where existing social circumstances frequently dictate the extent of the impact on particular populations. Branford and Froude (2015) examine the intricacies of this phenomenon, specifically delving into the situation faced by Sri Lankan women following the 2004 tsunami. This study demonstrates how ecofeminism can offer a comprehensive comprehension of the diverse vulnerabilities experienced by women in disaster situations. It subsequently explores an ecofeminist examination of the condition of Sri Lankan women, both prior to and following the tsunami, elucidating how the catastrophe exacerbated their pre-existing social subjugation. This discussion addresses the factors of race, class, gender, disability, and power dynamics, emphasizing the significance of an intersectional approach in disaster research.

Ecofeminism is a crucial framework for comprehending the victimization of individuals in the aftermath of natural disasters, with a particular focus on the intricate experiences of women. This viewpoint is particularly relevant when considering the 2004 tsunami and its effects on women in Sri Lanka. Ecofeminism provides a distinctive perspective for understanding the intricate relationship between environmental concerns and feminist issues, enabling a deeper understanding of the specific vulnerabilities faced by women in such situations.

### **Material and Methods**

According to Carolyn's (2005) observation, the contemporary ecofeminist movement encompasses multiple branches that adopt distinct approaches and analyses. These branches include liberal ecofeminism, spiritual/cultural ecofeminism, and social/socialist ecofeminism (or materialist ecofeminism). The field of ecofeminist analysis delves into the interrelatedness of women and nature across various domains such as culture, economy, religion, politics, literature, and iconography. It also draws attention to the similarities between the subjugation of nature and the subjugation of women. The identified parallels encompass the perception of women and nature as possessions, the attribution of men as the custodians of culture and women as the custodians of nature, and the prevalence of male dominance over women and human dominance over nature. According to Adams (2007), ecofeminism prioritizes the need for the equitable treatment of both women and nature.

Françoise d'Eaubonne' posits in her work, *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974), that ecofeminism establishes a correlation between the subjugation and mastery of all marginalized factions (namely women, minors, and impoverished individuals) and the subjugation and mastery of the natural world (inclusive of animals, terrain, water, air). The author posits in the book that the Western patriarchal society's oppression,

domination, exploitation, and colonization have resulted in irreparable environmental harm (Warren, 2000).

The perspective of materialist ecofeminism posits that the subjugation of women and nature can be traced back to institutional structures such as labor, power, and property. The values of production and reproduction establish a linkage between these disciplines. This facet of ecofeminism is alternatively known as social feminism, socialist ecofeminism, or Marxist ecofeminism. According to Carolyn (2005), "Social ecofeminism advocates the liberation of women through overturning economic and social hierarchies that turn all aspects of life into a market society that today even invades the womb" (Quoted in Zein & Setiawan 2017, p 4). Ecofeminism aims to eradicate societal structures that prioritize the creation of goods (predominantly controlled by males) over the propagation of life in terms of biology and social reproduction.

## Results and Discussion

In *Thinner than Skin* novel, chapter 5 delves into exploring themes such as silence, subjugation, and the intersection of environmental and feminist struggles, offering a profound examination. The section "Echoes of Silence: Unveiling the Consequences of Vocal Subjugation" explores how the novel depicts voices being silenced, explicitly emphasizing how suppression of expression contributes to a more profound comprehension of individual and collective identity crises. This theme is further explored in "Cultural Constructs: The Instrumentalization of Women, where the analysis reveals how women's roles and bodies are turned into commodities and subjected to control in patriarchal societies. This reflects broader cultural standards that diminish the importance of feminine perspectives and autonomy.

Exploiting Earth's Body and the Ecofeminist Response examines the Environmental motifs in the novel, highlighting the connections between the exploitation of the Earth and the women. This section focuses on the detrimental outcomes of environmental degradation while presenting the ecofeminist viewpoint that promotes a mutually beneficial connection between humans and nature, emphasizing the values of respect, care, and shared survival. Unearthing the alarming consequences of environmental decline comprehensively examines the concrete effects of environmental negligence on the Earth and its inhabitants. It emphasizes the immediate necessity for collaborative efforts and sustainable methods to address and repair the damage inflicted upon the planet.

The chapter 7 concludes with the Intersection of Environmental Struggle and Feminine Resistance, where the themes of environmental and feminist narratives in the novel are combined and integrated. This section contends that the battle against environmental degradation and the quest for women's emancipation are inherently intertwined, implying that genuine advancement can only be attained by recognizing and confronting these interrelated conflicts. The analysis of *Thinner than Skin* thoroughly explores the intricate elements of silence, subjugation, and resistance. It sheds light on the intersection of environmental and feminist concerns and how they influence the human experience and our connection with the world.

Ecofeminism asserts that in patriarchal societies, both women and the environment have been systematically silenced and marginalized throughout history. The novel effectively encapsulates the fundamental nature of this act of silencing as defined by the writer, "There was no deeper hell than a pair of eyes without a voice" (Khan, 2012, p. 128). These words highlights the connection between the subjugation of

women and nature and emphasizes the significance of empowering those who are silenced. The symbol of the "pair of eyes without a voice" (Khan, 2012, p. 128) represents the feeling of being observed but not given a voice, of being physically present but lacking the ability to exert influence or express oneself. This situation is linked to the concept of the subaltern, and the condition can be compared to a "deeper hell" (Khan, 2012, p. 128) as it signifies a state of extreme helplessness and agony.

Within the realm of women's encounters, this can be construed as a critique of the objectification of women and the suppression of their voices. She ventured. "Where do they come from? Is it a place where a child is pulled from her family for amusement?" His voice curdled. "You were always fond of drama. Kiran will be fine" (Khan, 2012, p. 129) this statement shows the perspectives, experiences, and knowledge of women have frequently been disregarded or underestimated in numerous societies, resulting in feelings of isolation and exclusion. Moreover, it aims to rectify this issue by promoting women's empowerment and acknowledging their significant contributions to human and ecological welfare. Similarly, when applied to the environment, the excerpt exemplifies the ecofeminist perspective that nature has been regarded as a voiceless, submissive entity to be utilized rather than recognized as a vibrant, evolving entity with inherent worth. The metaphor of "eyes without a voice" (Khan, 2012, p. 128) symbolizes the inherent incapacity of the natural world to convey its anguish and decline to humans. Ecofeminism promotes a compassionate and respectful connection with the environment, acknowledging the interdependence of all living beings and the importance of attentively perceiving and comprehending the non-verbal signs of nature.

Khan embodies the ecofeminist criticism of the suppression and exclusion of women and the environment. She emphasizes the significance of empowering those deprived of a voice and recognizes the deep anguish that arises from being observed but not listened to. This analysis necessitates a reassessment of our connections with women and nature, promoting a comprehensive, compassionate, and fair approach that appreciates and enhances the voices and perspectives of all entities, whether human or nonhuman. Ecofeminism provides a conceptual framework for comprehending and tackling the interconnected problems of women's oppression and the exploitation of nature. Its ultimate goal is to achieve a fairer and more sustainable world by acknowledging the parallels between these two issues. "In later years, she would ask Maryam if her skin was as thin as a goat's. And Maryam would tell her the truth. It was thinner. Which meant, of course, that if a goat could be shred that easily, so could a woman" (Khan, 2012, p. 126). Khan eloquently expresses the core of women's ability to endure and overcome vocal oppression and cultural instrumentalization. The metaphor of 'growing a second skin' (Khan, 2012, p. 126) conveys a profound message about the adaptive tactics' women employ to navigate a world that frequently marginalizes and suppresses their voices. This imagery serves as a form of poetic expression and a means of survival - a concealed defense mechanism that women cultivate to safeguard their more susceptible inner selves.

A "second skin" (Khan, 2012, p. 126) symbolizes a deep resilience and mental toughness that women such as Maryam and Kiran develop. This resilience is not apparent superficially; instead, it is an intrinsic asset, a foundation of fortitude that empowers individuals to withstand and counteract the external pressures that aim to subjugate them. The novel, employing this metaphor, acknowledges the concealed and frequently unacknowledged conflicts that women endure in silence. It demonstrates their unacknowledged resilience and the subtle resistance they embody daily. Moreover, the notion that concealing this 'second skin' (Khan, 2012, p. 126) is necessary for its efficacy serves as a critique of the societal norms and pressures imposed on women. It implies



that openly demonstrating power or opposition can be risky or ineffective in a male-dominated society. Consequently, women acquire the skill of concealing their strength subtly, resisting in ways that may not always be apparent or acknowledged. This covert opposition represents a distinct source of influence, serving as a means to undermine the established standards that aim to restrict and categorize individuals.

Khan's narrative also explores the correlation between the tangible and the symbolic. The exposed and vulnerable state of women is symbolized by the 'thin skin' (Khan, 2012, p. 126) left to the elements, representing both physical and emotional susceptibility. However, beneath this seemingly delicate exterior lies a more profound and powerful type of resilience. This duality exemplifies the intricate essence of women's encounters in a society that frequently disregards their inherent resilience and concentrates exclusively on their perceived vulnerabilities. Within the framework of ecofeminism, this metaphor expands to encompass the connection between women and the natural world. Like the earth, women possess concealed layers of fortitude and endurance beneath their exteriors as it is stated "This second skin lay beneath the frailer one, not on top. It had to be kept hidden in order to work" (Khan, 2012, p. 126). The novel establishes a connection between the exploitation of the earth and the subjugation of women, implying that both possess an intrinsic, frequently underestimated capacity to withstand and adjust.

The novel's depiction of a shattered heart as "the crudest of burdens" that "not even God would carry" (Khan, 2012, p. 128) underscores the profound despair experienced by the characters. Personal misfortunes do not solely cause the despair experienced by individuals but also stem from the shared sorrow arising from the destruction of their surroundings and traditional way of living. The novel implies that the anguish of observing the decline of one's native land is a weighty and unavoidable burden. Furthermore, the mother's suggestion to "keep the pieces warm" (Khan, 2012, p. 128) in the face of a broken heart highlights the strength needed to withstand such difficulties. The novel consistently explores the concept of resilience as the characters confront a world that presents difficulties on both physical and emotional levels. The novel delves into the concept that when confronted with immense challenges, personal or environmental, the human spirit perseveres and adapts.

Khan's narrative emphasizes the repercussions of an eco-phobic mentality, specifically the environmental deterioration resulting from deforestation and the depletion of natural habitats. The timber mafia, representing unregulated industrial avarice and exploitation, exerts a substantial influence in perpetuating this devastation. The illicit and influential factions responsible for significant deforestation inflict environmental damage and exert considerable burdens on the local populace. The passage eloquently portrays their actions: "The ones who tore down the old, old trees and poisoned the Gujjar dogs and fenced off the land and charged the moon for two stems of ginger and claimed a killer was hiding in their midst. Perhaps they were all exactly the same" (Khan, 2012, p. 195). This portrayal is a vivid reminder of the destructive consequences of human greed and anxiety on the environment. The novel presents a robust analysis of the exploitation and colonization of the natural world, which serves as a prominent theme. Khan's contempt for the mindset of exerting dominance over nature through militarization, industrialization, governmental authorities, criminal organizations, and external influences is evident. .

Khan emphasizes the troubling presence of financial gain and profit in the lives of the indigenous communities residing in the Kaghan Valley, "Look what was happening in the south, in Baluchistan, with Pakistan selling its coast to China, throwing people off

their own land. Or giving it to America. And look at the north, where China” (Khan, 2012, p. 206). Foreign entities, driven by economic motives and the desire for success, bring economic influences that supplant long-standing cultural norms towards human and nonhuman societies, such as religious beliefs and moral virtues like compassion and benevolence. This transformation exemplifies a more extensive problem - the unacknowledged reliance on nature and the detrimental outcomes that arise from this reliance.

Khan emphasizes that the individuals responsible for these unsettling transformations are primarily influential males. It provides an additional perspective from which to analyse the text that of ecofeminism. The actions of these male figures demonstrate the impact of patriarchal values, which promote dominance and the pursuit of power, “The servants were able to retrieve the children but his wife was lost in a fire hotter than hell, and they would endure the hell on earth the inspector would put them through rather than risk the one in the bedroom” (Khan, 2012, p. 218). Khan's account corresponds with the principles of ecofeminism, which propose that the domination of women, nature, and marginalized cultures is interconnected with the oppressive influences of progress and colonization. The story prompts investigation into the influence of societies on the cognitive development of their male offspring, specifically in cultivating a desire for power and control, be it over territories, nations, or women, and the resulting repercussions of this indoctrination.

Khan is resolute in her determination to avoid endangering the opportunities for future generations. She highlights the notion of “mal-development”, “We’ll lose even more glyphs to China’s development projects than to mad men crying jihad,” (Khan, 2012, p. 229) which refers to the situation where development strategies for the Third World are formulated and implemented by the First World, resulting in the enrichment of the colonizers while the colonized suffer (Shiva, 1988, p. 2). Khan's depiction of colonization and emerging forms of imperialism in the Kaghan Valley emphasizes the domination of indigenous communities, leading to economic and social inequalities between nations. This narrative delves into the geopolitical, ecological, and political tensions that arise in the contested borderlands of northern Pakistan. The intrusion of external forces disrupts the indigenous communities’ established and harmonious ways of life.

Khan's opposition to capitalism is apparent in her critique of the introduction of Australian cows and artificially bred sheep, which displace indigenous species. This critique aligns with the perspectives of ecofeminism and critical animal studies, which question the treatment of animals as commodities and their exploitation within capitalist systems. The substitution of indigenous species with alien or genetically altered ones can be regarded as a manifestation of ecological imperialism, causing disturbance to local ecosystems and traditional lifestyles. Khan elucidates a perspective questioning the value of raising animals for their wool and meat if their lifespan is significantly shorter than that of the sheep themselves (Khan, 2012, p. 190). Khan's eco-centrism perspective, contrasting with an anthropocentric one, is emphasized in her critical assessment of these practices.

Eco-centrism prioritizes the equal value of all elements within the ecosystem, in contrast to anthropocentrism, which prioritizes humans as the central focus of concern. Khan's conviction that animals should be nurtured with affection, irrespective of genetic alteration, exemplifies an eco-centrism philosophy that upholds the inherent worth of all living organisms.

## Conclusion

*Thinner Than Skin*, a novel by Uzma Aslam Khan skillfully combines stories about individual identity, cultural heritage, and environmental awareness. This study utilized the perspective of ecofeminism to examine how the novel tackles the adverse effects of silencing voices, the objectification of women based on cultural norms, the exploitation of the Earth's resources, and its influence on ecological crises. The primary objectives of this analysis were twofold: firstly, to comprehend how *Thinner Than Skin* portrays the outcomes of vocal oppression and the objectification of women, as well as the exploitation of the Earth's resources from an ecofeminist perspective; and secondly, to scrutinize the principal effects of environmental deterioration as depicted in the novel and its correlation with the concept of resistance, specifically about the suppressed voices of women.

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