

AN ECOFEMINIST STUDY OF FAHMIDA RIAZ'S SELECTED POEMS TRANSLATED BY TAHIRA NAQVI

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ABSTRACT

This research examines eco-feminist themes in the poetry of Fahmida Riaz, using a qualitative research method. This study explores the intersection of ecofeminist concerns with Riaz's poetry through a detailed analysis of selected poems. The study focuses on how Riaz's work embodies ecofeminist principles by examining themes such as women's oppression, exploitation of the land and the search for liberation. Riaz's work reveals recurring themes and symbols in her poetry, such as natural themes and gender imagery, and places them in the larger context of her time. Using an ecofeminist theoretical framework, the thematic analysis approach demonstrates how Riaz's poetry challenges patriarchal structures and presents a perspective of resistance and renewal. The findings show that Riaz's poetry not only expresses its cultural content but also supports ecofeminist discourse by demonstrating the interaction between genders, human and environmental justice. The study uncovers how Riaz uses poetic expression to challenge both cultural and environmental injustices, giving voice to the marginalized both women and nature. Her poetry emerges as a site of resistance, critique, and transformation, offering alternative ways of understanding the relationship between women, nature, and power structures. It contributes to the understanding of ecofeminism in South Asian literature and provides insight into how literature engages with and challenges key concepts such as power and control. This study highlights the importance of Riaz's poetry in promoting ecofeminist critique and argues for recognition of her contribution to literature and feminism.

Keywords: Eco-feminism, Environmental degradation, Resistance, Women Exploitation, Women and Nature.

INTRODUCTION

Ecofeminism has emerged as a critical literary and philosophical stance in recent decades, reshaping the debate on gender and the environment. Poetry, in particular, has shown to be a potent tool for expressing, opposing, and reimagining these themes. Fahmida Riaz, a daring and progressive voice in Urdu writing, is renowned for her forthright critique of patriarchal norms, support for women's rights, and profound sensitivity to the natural environment. Her poetry frequently demonstrates a keen awareness of environmental issues, which are contextualized within a larger struggle against oppression and inequality. In her book "Badan Darida" (The Torn Body and Other Poems, 2020), she explores the trauma of violence against women, which can also be interpreted as a metaphor for the earth's suffering under exploitation. This study explores some of the poems of Fahmida Riaz that are related to the perspective of ecofeminism including "Kab Tak" (Until When?), "Naya Faisla" (New Decision), "Kya Tum Poora Chand Na Dekhoge?" (Will You Not See the Full Moon?), and "Mein Mitti ki Aurat Hoon" (I am a Woman of Clay). The use of women and nature in Riaz's poetry is not a series of parallel phenomena, but part of a deep-rooted system of domination. She uses beautiful imagery and metaphors from nature to critique the way patriarchy controls the environment and women. Her poetry often portrays women as subject to the same kinds of violence and exploitation as women under patriarchy. This connection between the treatment of women and the environment reflects a central theme of ecofeminism, which argues that women's liberation is linked to the protection and preservation of the natural world. The poems explore themes of selfhood, solidarity, and gender, class, national unity and interconnectedness of women and nature. The title of the book "Body Torn" can be seen as a metaphor for the emotional and physical fragmentation that many of the poems in the collection grapples with. Gender inequality and discrimination, as conflict perspective, have a long history together in human

societies. Fahmida Riaz, through poetry, has exposed various topics related to the gender inequality and the rights of woman that were exploited by patriarchy. The study reveals that during the period of Fahmida Riaz, Urdu Poetry was served as the best feminist voice in Pakistan, expressing both radical protest and delicate feelings of domestic women. It reveals the backdrop of betray, violence, discrimination and power dynamics. Riaz's poem recounts the backdrop of General Zia's long military rule, which created the worst of times for women in Pakistan, especially those who could make a mark on society through work and development in the country. Politicians introduced so-called "Islamic law" that reduced women to second-class status in the state. Zia's government curtailed women's freedoms and autonomy in both public and private domains by reinforcing conventional patriarchal beliefs. Under the presence of upholding Islamic principles and family honour, many women were compelled to return to more constrictive gender roles, and their involvement in the political and economic spheres was discouraged. The mullahs, who aid and abet the military in the country, seem to emphasize the importance of women's bodies. The slogan "Chaadar Aur Chaar deewari" (Mantle and Border Wall) is a call for modesty that is still a mainstay of Pakistan's right-wing clerics who insist on respect and freedom. Riaz's poem, with slogan "Chaadar Aur Chaar Deewari" as its title, was written during that time but remains relevant and echoes even today in all public discourses that inform women's movements in Pakistan.

Statement of the Problem

The existing literature lacks a comprehensive assessment of Fahmida Riaz's poetry from an ecofeminist perspective. This study investigates the reoccurring metaphors, themes, and symbols in her poems that represent eco-feminist concerns, such as the commodification of women's bodies and natural resources, the violence perpetrated against both, and their common resistance against oppression. This study covers a gap that how Pakistan's leading poet, Fahmida Riaz, advocates for women's rights and frequently uses environmental issues in her work and portrays the interconnectedness between these two struggles. This is particularly important because of her global emphasis on environmental justice and the role of women in the patriarchal society

Research Objectives

- To highlight the female voice in Riaz's selected poems challenging gender inequality
- To explore the parallels drawn by Riaz between the exploitation of nature and the marginalization of women
- To analyze the use of natural imagery and the interconnectedness of women and nature

Research Questions

1. In what ways does Fahmida Riaz employ the female voice in her poetry to resist and critique gender-based oppression?
2. How has Riaz linked the exploitation of an environment to the marginalization of women?
3. How is the relationship between women and nature portrayed through the use of natural imagery in Fahmida Riaz's poetry?

Significance of the Study

This study highlights Riaz's relationship between women's enslavement and environmental damage, demonstrating profoundly ingrained dominance structures that affect both social and ecological systems. By focusing on these themes, the study not only expands our comprehension of Riaz's literary contribution, but also stresses the importance of poetry as a form of sociopolitical resistance and awareness. This research invites readers and researchers to engage with literature not only as art, but also as a meaningful dialogue with the world - a dialogue that advocates for equity, sustainability, and revolutionary action.

Literature Review

An interdisciplinary critical theory called ecofeminism contends that because women and nature are objectified in a male-dominated society, environmental and women's issues are intimately intertwined. This theory holds that the system produces dualities and a male-centered hierarchy, which leads to social injustice and male dominance. Conversely, non-male individuals are marginalized and under pressure through the hierarchy and dualities. Therefore, dualities like male/female, culture/nature, human/nature, white/black, unconscious/unconscious, logic/emotion, and soul/body exist under a hierarchical system that is ruled by men, with the former predominating the latter. Man is above woman, culture is above nature, and reason is above emotion in this hierarchy (Ozturk, 2020). The case of Françoise d'Eaubonne demonstrates that neither the state of the environment nor the position of women can be examined apart from an analysis of injustice in its broadest sense (Derzelle, 2021).

The nature-culture dichotomy applied to gender, based on studies from various branches such as anatomy and physiology, sociology, anthropology, and psychology, creates a view of individuals as integrated units with their own struggles between nature and culture, particularly between feminine and masculine traits. Jules Michelet, a notable French historian, produced volumes on women in the mid-nineteenth century, based on the nature/culture dichotomy, which assigned nature to women and culture to men (Jordanova, 2018, p. 63).

At one point, culture is a creative, active force that creates form and structure from a passive, predetermined state. At another level, culture is the end result of a process that has been tamed and developed, and it relies on external resources for energy. Culture is both the creative subject and the final result, whereas nature is both a resource and a limitation, adaptable and subject to its own laws (Strathern, 1980, p. 178).

The speaker in Anne Brontë's "The Captive Dove" utilizes the dove as a metaphor for their own sense of imprisonment and desire for escape. The speaker's inner state is reflected in the dove's singing, which represents the concepts of imprisonment and the desire for freedom. The poem's emotional and narrative depth is highlighted by the bird's function as an omen, which emphasizes the connection between the natural world and human experience (Andrews & Thakur).

In "The Solitary Reaper" by William Wordsworth, Nature plays a vital role in his poem, and he focuses on regular people. Thus, his works primarily focus on common people, such as beggars, children, or maidens, nature, and rural or lonely locations remote from metropolitan centers. He felt that under rural situations, men's basic feelings find better soil than in urban life and may be better cultivated and strengthened by frequent contact with nature. So he called for people to get near to nature, cherish natural life, and live in peace with it (Niu, G., & Guo, X., 2015).

Nature in Oliver's poetry is shown as a relaxing resort for the uncomfortable contemporary mind on the grounds that urban life has alienated people from reality, she calls on us to recognize the already familiarized natural global so that, via noticing our connection to the flora and the animals, we might imitate the herbal order. This is the handiest way for us, as reiterated in Oliver's 14 poetry, to revel in and apprehend our life. It may also enable us to cast off the absurd facet of contemporary lifestyles and to return the misplaced or threatened splendor again to nature. In "The Summer Day," from "House of Light" (1992), the speaker offers alignment with the natural world because the simplest purpose of existence, and finds it absurd to ask theological and philosophical questions about the meaning of life (Varghaiyan & Nayeypour).

Riaz's poetry "A Revolutionary Woman" (2018) bravely addresses the limits imposed on women by patriarchal culture. She questions gender roles and society norms, promoting

women's independence and individuality. She expresses her feminist message through bold and emotive graphics. This poem delves into women's struggles and empowerment, relating them to the greater 15 struggle against patriarchal control. The gorgeous imagery of "Aurat" is utilized to highlight women's strength and beauty in contrast to the constraints that they face. The poem concludes with an inspiring message, encouraging women to regain their identity and authority (Riaz, 2018, p.167).

Pakistani society proposed a patriarchal system in which females were assigned specific roles that lacked professional involvement. If females strove to meet their needs and earn a living, the ignorant male-dominated society tried to drag them down and toy with them as sex objects. Their workplace did not provide them with a comfortable and secure environment. Rather, they are harassed and forced to engage in sex with the elites. Hanif (2011) wrote in the book "Our Lady of Alice Bhatti", "I still need to give them Lithium Sulphate" (p. 23). Despite her desire and determination to fulfill her role, she was not permitted to do so. The relatives of the sufferers, like Teddy, seized her into his arms without consent, and she was unable to release herself (Yousaf, Sunbul Shahzadi, Jamil & Shehzadi, 2024).

Beauvoir (1953) examined the same topic, discovering that becoming a woman is a social construct that varies by society. Gender is sometimes used against women to control their lives and distinguish them from men. Similar themes can be explored in the novel, where Alice has become a victim of gender prejudice. Alice was marginalized and controlled due of her gender and lower position. Alice asserted that as a woman, she experienced shame and difficulties, as evidenced by her discourse, such as the "ritual of humiliation" and "little happiness asks for a down payment" (Hanif, 2010, p.47). She proved to be a source of joy and comfort for the aristocracy. Her poor status and gender identity transformed her into a symbol of sex satisfaction (Yousaf, Sunbul Shahzadi, Jamil & Shehzadi, 2024).

Mumtaz, the female lead in Mohsin Hamid's "The Moth Smoke" (Hamid, 2000), a work set in an urban environment, battles alongside her husband's indifference and neglect but triumphs over it. Furthermore, the woman in Muhammad Hanif's *Our Woman* of Alice Bhatti (Hanif, 2011) 17 challenges the non-secular majority and patriarchy that are prevalent in Pakistani society. Hanif depicts the many hardships and critiques of both male and female characters in society using magical realism, paying particular attention to the difficulties a Christian girl encounters. This work offers a nuanced perspective on the experiences of women in a male-dominated society and emphasizes the persistence of gender roles in contemporary literature. The gender roles that are allocated to characters in literature are expected to remain stable, with male characters being depicted as belonging to a patriarchal society and female characters often depicted as subjugated. This important topic has appeared in a variety of modern fiction works, with numerous authors using their books to challenge and critique patriarchal standards (Mujahid, 2023).

According to Judith Butler's perspective on performativity, gender is performative in two ways: as an "act" that expresses a contingent identity, and as a matrix that establishes and sustains the subject. In Woolf's 'Orlando' (1928), Orlando's body is subjected to social restrictions based on his age. Later in life, he understands that she is of her age and does not need to resist or acquiesce to them. (Parajuli, 2007).

Naheed's poem "I am not That Woman" (1991) critiques the monetization of the feminine body. She has a passionately individualistic voice that bravely captures the buried stories of torture and abuse. She critiques the fake and marketed image of women that is frequently portrayed in commercials. Her poetry challenges gender-based conceptions of femininity. Farrukhi (2001, p.34). In her poem "I Am Not That Woman," she expresses her disinterest in selling socks and shoes. She wishes to be remembered as someone whose "voice cannot be smothered by stones".

In Maya Angelou's poem 'One More Round' (2014), the persona uses a self-narrative to express their identity while also resisting the class-constructed subjectivity imposed by power dynamics. "I was born to work up to my grave/ But I was not born / To be a slave" (p.155). The persona's self-narration highlights their marginalized identity and resistance to oppression. Maya focuses on marginalized groups facing oppression based on class, gender, and ethnicity (KABERIA, 2022).

Zia's military rule (1977-1988) has propagated the stereotype of a good and bad woman, and Naheed's selected feminist poetry appear to call into question the state-supported image of a good woman, although her women also enjoy being labeled as wicked. Naheed's poems are contextualized within the socio-political context of the Zia regime, which saw the rise of misogyny in the form of anti-women laws and a clash between regressive religious policies and progressive feminist ideas promoted by Pakistani society's feminist segment (Qasim, K., 2023).

The girl characters in "Ice Candy Man" (1988) are far greater and powerful than their male opposite characters. Even when the masculine characters imitate, they are minor and weak. The experience given by means of those girl characters is actually fresh and deep rooted with the problems of women that they are facing for many years. The novel's woman protagonists are robust, independent, and even after a lot of problems, they are most powerful characters in the novel. All 4 important characters — Lenny, her Ayah Shanta, her mom, and her godmother— show independent women and the capacity to tackle new responsibilities. In this work, Bapsi Sidhwa highlights the patriarchal attitudes that form contemporary perspectives. In Partition literature, the paradigm of 'female as victim' has been used as an important device in the depiction of violence. In *Ice Candy Man*, it is largely described that women are facing violence and also shows women's shared experiences of victimization in the communal riots is complemented by way of a presentation in their oppression. Girls are presented as sufferers. The unconventional foregrounds the women's awareness as they are suffering from political battles. It also highlights their character traits and experiences. Sidhwa has recreated a universe wherein women seem as organic beings. Every woman represents a way of life (Dar, 2013).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research is qualitative in nature, emphasizing interpretive and thematic analysis of selected poems by Fahmida Riaz. A qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the rich symbolic and thematic content in her poetry, particularly in relation to ecofeminist concerns. This approach enables the researcher to uncover nuanced relationships between gender and environmental oppression as depicted in her work. Thematic analysis is the primary method for analyzing the poems. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns or themes within qualitative data. In this study, it is used to explore how themes related to ecofeminism emerge across Riaz's poetry. This involves reading the poems multiple times to become immersed in the text and begin to identify initial themes. As the poems are read, passages and lines that relate to eco-feminist themes (e.g., references to nature, oppression, female identity, etc.) are highlighted and decoded. The identified themes are revisited to ensure they accurately represent the data and are coherent with the ecofeminist framework.

The primary data for this study is drawn from a close reading and analysis of selected poems of Fahmida Riaz translated by Tahira Naqvi from a book "The Body Torn and Other Poems". There are five chapters of poems in this book and for this study, only four poems are selected. The poems are chosen based on their relevance to eco-feminist themes, focusing on those that reflect the relationship between the female body, nature, and environmental exploitation. These poems examine for recurring symbols, metaphors, and themes that align with ecofeminist theory. The primary data is collected by reading and re-reading the poems to identify key themes and by selecting passages that highlight eco-feminist concerns such as environmental

destruction, patriarchy, and the connection between women and nature. Nuanced analysis of poems are done with descriptive, analytic and thematic approach of study from the book.

Secondary data is drawn from scholarly articles, books, and critical essays related to Fahmida Riaz, eco-feminism, and gender studies. The secondary data informs the theoretical framework and provides context for the analysis of the poems. Sources include critical essays on ecofeminism, particularly those that address literature and poetry. Secondary data helps situate Riaz's work within the broader discussions of ecofeminism, gender oppression, and environmental degradation. The whole research revolves around the Eco Feminist aspects that examine the themes of Fahmida Riaz's poems.

The study uses ecofeminism as its theoretical foundation. Ecofeminism is a feminist and ecological approach to examine the relationship between gender, environmental challenges, and social justice. This theory contends that women's oppression and environmental degradation are inextricably linked, with both arising from patriarchal and capitalist institutions that exploit nature and oppressed populations, particularly women.

Thematic Analysis

This section presents a detailed analysis and discussion of four selected poems by Fahmida Riaz: "Until When," "New Decision," "Will You not See the Full Moon?" and "I am a Woman of Clay". These works have been chosen for their strong thematic engagement with gender, identity, resistance, and the natural world, and are analyzed through an ecofeminist lens.

Women as More than Bodies

In her poem "Until When" (Kab Tak), Riaz highlights the transient and conditional nature of love that women often experience due to the societal ideals of physical beauty. It appears that the lines that Fahmida Riaz has mentioned in this poem examine the concept of conditional love based on outward appearances and conventional standards of attractiveness, particularly for women. According to feminist theory, these statements criticize the way women are frequently admired more for their physical characteristics - youthful skin, a trim or taut body rather than for their abilities, intelligence, and character. This is a common aspect in the society on which a woman is judged. Their abilities have no importance to them but their beauty that will be faded with time and their characters and abilities are being brutally ignored by patriarchal society - abilities that can make a mark in the society. She brushes off the lover's empty vows that are only dependent on woman's youth and beauty. This love goes on decreasing with time, with the unappealing beauty of a woman. By questioning man's love, Riaz challenges patriarchal norms that only appreciate a woman in her prime.

She questions this transitory love on which she should "rest understanding" essentially because of her youth and attractive looks. She challenges love as conditional and declares herself outside these bounds. She questions the love of a man by saying:

Until when will you love me?

Until when?

Until my complexion is fresh

Until my body is taut (2020, p.49)

These lines imply that the speaker's value or the longevity of their relationship depends on upholding a particular beauty standard of a woman, which is frequently established and enforced by patriarchal culture. This could be interpreted as a critique of the way that males are not held to the same standards of beauty as women, who are under pressure to maintain unattainable beauty standards in order to maintain respect, prestige, or devotion. The repetition of the question "until when?" makes the speaker feel dissatisfied with the decline of love with age or physical changes. She questions the contradictions inherent in a love in which beauty is placed before humanity. By asking these questions, the speaker rejects complicity in her objectification. She exposes the inequality in love that aims for eternal youth while ignoring

the diversity of women. This action is in line with feminist values such as self-affirmation, opposition to further oppression, and the desire for relationships based on mutual respect, equality, and truth. She further says

I too am a traveler journeying thus
I have a great love for the unknown
But you will not be with me then (2020, p.49)

This line "I too am a traveler journeying thus" asserts equality. The phrase "I too" emphasizes that women, like men, have desires, ambitions, and the right to venture beyond assigned roles. In a society where women are expected to follow set paths of obedience and submission, claiming the identity of a traveler becomes an act of rebellion. She further says, "I have a great love for the unknown." The "unknown" symbolizes freedom, risk, knowledge, and perhaps a life not dictated by societal norms. It reflects a desire to break free from the familiar constraints of gender roles. Loving the unknown indicates a refusal to remain imprisoned by the known boundaries which, in the case of oppressed women, include marriage, cultural silence, and subservience.

The closing line of this poem "But you will not be with me then" is powerful and sorrowful. "You" here symbolizes a man, society, or any oppressive force that claims to love or protect the woman but ultimately binds her. Her journey towards freedom, growth, or selfhood requires separation from patriarchal control. She acknowledges that liberation may cost companionship, but it is a cost she is willing to bear.

Voices of Change

Riaz's poem "The New Decision" (Naya Faisla) is dedicated to the women's movement. It is categorized in ten precised sections. In the last section "The Girl Screams", the lines hold a strong feminist message that shows resistance, defiance and personal empowerment against the patriarchal oppression. The speaker resists patriarchal oppression by using powerful symbols strength and self-determination. Riaz uplifts all the women to reject imposed constrains, challenge systematic injustice, and create their own narratives, claiming their innate worth, value and autonomy. This poem is a celebration of resilience, reminding all the women that liberty starts with the power of speaking. A woman should stand by her rights and she should have a courage to speak, and create a new narrative. In this poem, Fahmida Riaz narrates a voice of a woman whose speech can be read as a statement of defiance and personal strength spoken in opposition to the social forces that aim to make the women silence and oppress them. It is an appeal for unity, action, and a time when women's voices are heard and not silenced.

I can walk with my legs, there's strength in my arms
These poisonous snakes and scorpions can't get me
You have swallowed too much silence but not today
I will not live as bad news, I will create my own chronicles (2020, p.175)

Riaz narrates, "I can walk with these legs, there is a strength in my arms" (p.175) represents physical and metaphorical power. The legs characterize ladies' capacity to go ahead without being constrained by cultural norms that restrict their norms and values. The strength in her arms show her power and autonomy that she can fight against all the social constructed values that are against the women and that resist their abilities, emphasizing on self-reliance and rejection of dependency.

Further Riaz narrates, "These poisonous snakes and scorpions can't get me" (p.175). Here 'Poisonous snakes and scorpions' represents the negative power of patriarchy, oppression and societal expectations. It shows men's negative energy and threats, including harassment, misogyny and structural violence. She raises her voice and shows her resilience against these threats. She is not afraid anymore and is willing to raise the voice of every woman in order to break all the structural norms that are opposing their innate ability and power.

Riaz also tries to dismantle the enforced silence that has been implemented on women centuries ago. She narrates, “You have swallowed too much silence but not today” (p.175). ‘Silence’ right here represents the suppression of ladies' voices, goals, and rights. It displays a prolonged history of systemic silencing, wherein ladies have been denied structures to talk, express, or face up to. ‘Not today’ shows the alignment with the feminist act of reclaiming voice. It is a declaration of a women to ensure all the men and the systems that she will not be silent anymore and she is not afraid of anyone now. Silence has been implemented on her since so long and now she has finally learnt to raise a voice for herself. She declares to break the norms that were structured and were restricting women to show their real power and autonomy.

At the end of this stanza, Riaz also shows the real place of a woman and her power in the society. She narrates, “I will not live as bad news, I will create my own chronicles” (p.175). The term "Bad news" represents the burden of stereotypes and narratives that present ladies as problems or reasons of sorrow. Traditionally, women were labeled as "bad news" for defying societal requirements, whether through independence, ambition, or rebellion. The speaker rejects this stigmatizing approach and refuses to conform to cultural standards. She deconstructs the narrative of ladies as burdens or gadgets of pity. With the aid of proclaiming her dedication to jot down her own chronicles, the speaker rejects extraneous definitions of her identification and worth.

Exploitation of Women and the Earth

In Riaz’s poem “Will you not See the First Moon” (Kya Tum Poora Chand na Dekhogy? (1980), there are seven sections and in the last section named “The Last Song” (Aakhri Geet, p.119), she reflects and ecofeminist perspective which connects the earth’s sufferings with the enduring resilience of life-giving forces, symbolized by mother. The lines reaffirm that mothers are representations of resiliency, optimism, and regeneration, much like the soil. They emphasize the nurturing, life-giving function in their families and the larger ecology, rejecting the idea that pain is synonymous with hopelessness. According to ecofeminism, this is a potent reminder that women's and the environment's challenges are intertwined and that a better, more sustainable future may be achieved through love, care, and active opposition.

My earth is in pain, but without hope??

No, no! What does the mother have to do with hopelessness

The warmth of her lap creates tomorrow from today (2020, p.119)

She narrates, “My earth is in pain, but without hope??” (p.120) The Earth is personified as a maternal figure, ecofeminist metaphor that connects the planet's nurturing and existence-giving attributes with maternity. The "pain" represents the struggling due to ecological harm, which incorporates deforestation, pollutants, and climate alternate. The subject of hopelessness reveals a crucial tension: the damage is irreparable. This line depicts the Earth's marginalization below patriarchal regimes, which abuse the environment for profit and control.

Riaz further narrates, “No, no! What does the mother have to do with hopelessness”. The speaker vehemently disputes that the Earth (or mother) is synonymous with despondency, instead of emphasizing her innate strength and resilience. The "mother" here represents both the Earth and women, who have traditionally been viewed as caregivers despite their own problems. The emphasis on “No, no!” is the rejection of hopelessness that demonstrates their intrinsic tenacity and regeneration ability.

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On your fertile earth

This fierce monster/ Has been howling for so long
Trampling your fields/ Destroying the greenery
Then how can you sleep?! (2020, p.121)

This reflects ecofeminist concerns about the exploitation and destruction of the Earth, drawing parallels to the marginalization of women under patriarchal systems. The "fertile earth" represents the planet's caring, life-giving elements, which are sometimes feminized as mother figures in ecofeminism. The "fierce monster" reflects patriarchal systems driven by industrialization, capitalism, and colonialism. With an ecofeminist eye, it is to be noted that the Earth and the women are being exploited by the men and she considers most of them "the monsters". It is because of the exploitation of their rights. They are marginalizing the rights of both the Earth and the women. They destruct the fertility of the Earth and they do not care about the warmth of the laps of the Earth and women. They fulfill their desires and wishes that are dependent on them but in return they harm them.

Poetic Representations of Eco-feminism

In the second chapter of "Will you not See the First Moon?" (Kya Tum Poora Chand na Dekhogy?, 1980), Fahmida Riaz portrays the connection of women and nature in a very intricate way. She uses natural imagery to highlight their relation. These evocative sentences include significant symbolism that can be interpreted through an ecofeminist lens, which tries to investigate the interconnected oppression of women and nature while recognizing their mutual resilience and transformative power. She narrates,

I may have drowned in
The bog of despair...

It was mud that grabbed my hand
"I'm mud." She said lovingly (2020, p.103)

The lines reflect the hardships of both of them. In the given lines. The speaker reflects her inner state that she seems to be drowned and then nature helps her and supports her because both are treated brutally by the patriarchal institutions. Here, "The bog of despair" represents a bog that is soggy, often portrays an uninhabitable place that represents sadness, captivity, or emotional weight. From an ecofeminist viewpoint, this could depict patriarchal structures that trap women and nature in cycles of exploitation, neglect, and marginalization. Women's miseries are related to systemic imbalances, and the suffering of nature echoes under industrialization, deforestation, and other destructive activities. The bog could also symbolize a space where women and nature are both pushed to the margins.

Riaz portrays the interconnectedness of women and nature that how mud helps the speaker when she was in trouble. She says that the mud grabs her hands. Mud is frequently connected with earth, fertility, and life-giving traits. Mud gripping the speaker's hand could represent nature's persistent power to re-connect people to something fundamental and vital. The connection between women and nature, the act of grabbing hand with mud, implies a sense of power within nature. It shows a mutual recognition between the speaker (representing women) and the ground. Nature gives women a space to break out cutting-edge demands and reconnect with their internal selves. Forests, coastlines, mountains, and different natural regions offer tranquility and emotional regeneration. Many cultures accomplice nature with femininity, viewing the Earth as "Mother Earth" — a loving, life-giving force that displays women's power to generate and sustain life.

In her poem "I Am a Woman of Clay" (Mein Mitti ki Aurat Hoon), the speaker of the poem refers to herself as a "woman of clay". The speaker represents the innate connection between the ground and the female body, which is both life-giving and continuously being degraded by outside influences. The poem laments this breakup while also implying resiliency - the

relationship between women and nature points to an ongoing, although brittle, cycle of resistance and rebirth. She narrates:

I'm a statue of clay
What does it matter if
Flowing through this statue
Is a river of blood (2020, p.65)

A deep existential and philosophical reflection on human frailty, pain, and resiliency is conveyed by these lines. The poet examines the meaning of an outward existence that hides an internal conflict by contrasting vitality and lifelessness through potent imagery and symbolism. These lines also speak to eco-feminist concerns, as the metaphor of clay and blood can be interpreted as an examination of the relationship between oppressed populations, nature, and women's oppression. The lines are thoroughly examined in this analysis, taking into account their imagery, symbolic value, and applicability to ecofeminism.

The line, "I'm a statue of clay," instantly conjures up the idea of something delicate and carved. A natural element, clay symbolizes both human death and the bond with the ground. Clay is utilized as a metaphor for creation in many cultures and religious traditions, especially when it comes to the creation of humans (e.g. Adam in Abrahamic faiths was created from clay). The clay assumes a stationary, immobile shape when it is a statue, signifying inflexibility, oppression, and immobility. From an eco-feminist point of view, a clay represents women's historical connection to nature that is shaped by outside influences, given a passive role, and frequently written off as weak or inferior. The statement "flowing through this statue is a river of blood" juxtaposes the dynamic, strong presence of blood with the lifeless clay. Blood is a symbol of sacrifice, violence, pain, and life. The river of blood can represent the continuous battle of oppressed groups, especially women and the oppressed, who strive against social expectations while also going through internal conflict and resistance.

Discussion

This study has explored Fahmida Riaz's poetry through the lens of ecofeminism, revealing the deep interconnections she constructs between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature. Through her bold imagery, subversive metaphors, and fusion of the feminine with natural elements, Riaz challenges patriarchal structures that devalue both the female body and the environment. Her poetic voice not only reclaims agency for women but also reimagines nature as a site of resistance, healing, and renewal. By applying ecofeminist theory to her selected works, this research has highlighted how Riaz's poetry contributes to a larger discourse of ecological and gender justice within South Asian literature. One of the central themes in Riaz's poetry is the symbolic connection between women and nature. In "The Body Torn and Other Poems", nature is often portrayed as both a metaphor for the female body and a reflection of women's social and political struggles. Riaz uses vivid imagery of landscapes, bodies, and environmental destruction to emphasize how the exploitation of women and the earth are deeply intertwined. This representation challenges the patriarchal tendency to view nature and women as resources to be exploited, and instead frames them as subjects deserving of care, respect, and autonomy.

Unlike traditional portrayals of nature as passive or nurturing only, Riaz reclaims nature as fierce, rebellious, and wise, much like the women in her poems. She rewrites the narrative of femininity - not as fragile, but as a force of life, change, and resistance. This aligns with the eco-feminist goal of challenging dualisms like man/woman, culture/nature, strong/weak. Another significant finding is the theme of resistance. Riaz's poetry emphasizes the agency of women in confronting both environmental destruction and patriarchal oppression. The female protagonists in her poems often assert their autonomy, challenging the dominant systems that seek to silence their voices. This resistance is not only personal but also political, as Riaz's

characters engage in acts of defiance against both environmental and gendered violence. The poems suggest that ecofeminist activism requires both a collective and individual response to the challenges posed by patriarchal and ecological exploitation.

Conclusion

While Fahmida Riaz is widely recognized as a bold feminist voice in South Asian literature, limited academic scholarship exists that deeply examines her poetry through the lens of ecofeminism. Most previous studies have centered around her defiance of societal norms, political resistance, and the representation of the female body and identity in her work. However, a focused and systematic exploration of the intersection between gender, nature, and resistance - which lies at the heart of ecofeminism - has been largely overlooked. This thesis seeks to fill that gap by offering a fresh critical framework that positions Riaz's poetry within ecofeminist discourse. By analyzing selected poems such as "Until When," "New Decision," "Will You not See the Full Moon?" and "I am a Woman of Clay," this research provides an innovative perspective on how Riaz uses imagery of nature not just aesthetically, but as a tool of feminist resistance. Her use of metaphors - earth, ocean, breeze, soil - reveals how the female experience is both oppressed and empowered through its relationship with the natural world

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