

## Exploring Ecological Unsustainability: An Ecocultural and Ecospatial study of Uzma Aslam Khan's *Thinner Than Skin*

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### Abstract

*This study examines the novel Thinner Than Skin (2012) by Uzma Aslam Khan with kaleidoscopic lens of Ecoculture and Ecospatial perspective, social division and environmental disruption caused by an unstable spatial development and spatial inequality. The study seeks to question the prevailing norms of a transformed and unsustainable society by analyzing the literary perspectives related to ecoculture, ecospatial and sustainable developmental goals. Khan's works are renowned for their thorough elucidation of environmental issues, concerns and the crises of cultural identities. The northern regions of Pakistan, despite their abundant natural resources, are being devastated by the increasing influence of consumerism, urbanization, technology, global trade, politics and capitalism. The study seeks to examine the notion of ecoculture, ecospatial and its significance in current discourse of environmentalism and promoting the current discourse of the interconnectedness between culture and the environment (Naess, 1994). It also examines concept of Production of Space by Lefebvre (1974/1991) and its relation to space and its socio-environmental implications. Urban areas and the way they are designed, not only shape the physical layout but also influence the ecological and socio-political layers of society, as well as the identities and behaviors of its inhabitants. The complex and unequal division of physical space results in the emergence of marginalized groups known as otherization of 'spatial and urban others', resultantly it leads to injustice in terms of both spatial and environmental conditions. This paper aims to illustrate the significance of ecological, ecocultural and ecospatial awareness in the face of the imminent global ecological disaster.*

**Keywords;** *Ecoculture, Ecospatial, Thinner Than Skin, Environmentalism, Uzma Aslam Khan*

### Introduction

Ecocultural theory is a multidisciplinary approach that explores interdependence of culture and ecology, with a focus on how cultural practices influence and are influenced by the environment. Culture and environment are primary factors that more or less influence the space and existence of human beings. Culture is the embodiment of a society's identity and covers fundamental elements such as, language, attire, celebrations, ideology, beliefs, values, conduct and a pursuit of our total perfection (Arnold, 1994). Raymond Williams argues that culture isn't just about art and intellectual pursuits (1965). In his view, it also encompasses everyday aspects of life, such as how things are produced (organization of production), how families are structured, and how institutions function in shaping social interactions (p. 58). Currently, ecocultural theory is undergoing continuous development and growth as researchers investigate novel viewpoints and methodologies to comprehend the intricate connections between humans, culture and the environment. Ecocultural theory in modern academia encompasses several important areas, including environmentalism ecological justice, posthumanism, indigenous culture, environmental literature, eco-poetics, climate change, ecocriticism and other transdisciplinary approaches.

The dichotomy between nature and culture has been emphasized in light of the advancements in science and technology. Naess (1994) expresses this idea by asserting that the entrance of Western technology, which is primarily non-ecological, has a significant influence on culture and the economic condition. This leads to disparity between wealthy and the impoverished. Similarly, the negative repercussions of technology over culture have led to an ecological degradation to cause merging of the distinctions between nature and culture.

In literature Ecocultural studies explore the ways literary texts depict and interact with ecological issues, as well as the cultural and social conditions which are influenced by and the relationship between literature and the environment. In addition, it examines how literature have effect on our comprehension of the natural world, environmental and cultural concerns, and human engagement with the environment. Ecocultural studies are not only confined to single genre rather it involves the examination of several literary forms, including poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and drama, in order to investigate the contemporary ecological issues. The analysis in particular focuses on the representation of landscapes, animals, plants, and ecological systems in addition, it shows how these portrayals are indicative of cultural perspectives on nature. It offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the concrete approach in which literature addresses ecocultural issues. This gives space and allows scholars to investigate the literature, culture, nature and their structural relationship. It provides a distinctive and significant perspective the way literature can enhance our inclusive understanding of the environment and its impact.

Moreover, the presence of social, cultural and political divisions in society has resulted in environmental degradation combined with an unstable spatial production in spite of the abundance of natural resources and space. Throughout history, competition for land has shaped human societies. Scholar Edward Soja (2010) argues that an "assertive spatial perspective" is the best way to understand this phenomenon (p. 2). This perspective emphasizes the social aspects of space, something also highlighted by sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991). Lefebvre argued that studying history, society, and space together using a transdisciplinary approach (combining multiple disciplines) is crucial. This social perspective on space allows us to view locations as areas where social, political, and cultural forces interact. The socio-political organization of urban space in metropolitan cities can lead to the formation of social hierarchies, where certain groups of people are marginalized and labelled as urban outcasts (Chakraborty, 2017). An ecocritical perspective on spatiality, taking into account the interdisciplinary nature of social spatiality, is crucial for addressing the current and contemporary environmental crisis that humans face today. According to Glotfelty (1996), human culture and the physical world are deeply intertwined. They constantly impact each other, with cultural practices shaping the environment and vice versa. Her work focuses on how environmental issues and the fragmentation of natural spaces are connected to cultural and spatial problems. She examines this connection through an ecocultural and ecospatial lens. This involves looking at the unequal distribution of space and its social and political ramifications, along with the marginalization of indigenous populations.

This selected novel explores the impact of culture, space politics, consumerism, global commerce, industrialization, and urban expansion in Pakistani society. These factors not only harm socially marginalized groups but also have negative effects on the environment. The novel focuses on the journey of Nadir and Farhana from America to Pakistan, specifically to Karachi

and the Northern territories, accompanied by their friends. This study, focused on Maryam and her family, offers a window into the traditional way of life of the indigenous people in Pakistan's northern regions (Khan, 2012). However, the research goes beyond simply describing their culture. Khan argues that government policies and urban development have disrupted the environmentally-friendly practices of these communities. This unequal allocation of space, driven by socio-political biases and favoring urban centers, creates cultural, spatial, and environmental inequalities. The study highlights how unfair spatial practices lead to ecological damage.

### Research Questions

1. How Uzma Aslam Khan's novel *Thinner than skin* portrays ecological degradation of urban and pastoral space through ecocultural and ecospatial perspective?
2. How do landscapes, geographies and socio-cultural environments impact cultural and spatial experiences and identities of characters?

### Literature Review

The literature review presents thoroughly the existing work that is done previously (Ahmad et al., 2023; Soomro et al., 2023; Khokhar et al., 2018; Khokhar et al., 2024; Maitlo et al., 2022; Maitlo et al., 2024; Kalhor et al., 2023). It finds a major gap in the literature on the subtle exploration of the interplay between ecocultural and ecospatial dimensions through a thorough analysis of key texts. This literature review attempts to find the gap and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate interactions between human culture and the natural world and moreover it highlights the necessity for future research to take an integrative approach that takes into account how cultural practices, beliefs, and representations intersect with spatial dynamics and ecological contexts.

### Ecoculture

Ecocultural studies in literature explore the relationship between literature and the environment, analyzing how literary texts depict and interact with ecological issues, as well as the cultural and social circumstances in which these depictions arise. Ecocultural studies involve the examination of several literary forms, including poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and drama, in order to investigate the ecological issues. The dichotomy between nature and culture has been emphasized in light of the advancements in science and technology. Naess (1994) expresses this idea by asserting that the entrance of Western technology, which is primarily non-ecological, has a significant influence on culture and the economic condition "western, predominantly non-ecological, technology has a profound on culture and the state of economy" (p. 145).

Ivakhiv (1997) emphasizes the complex interactions between cultural practices and environmental surroundings in seminal study that examines the fundamentals and directions of ecocultural critical theory and ecocultural studies. He contends that cultural narratives and practices both influence and are influenced by ecological systems, and that this must be addressed in ecocultural studies. The study profoundly examines that it is important to look at how people perceive nature in different and non-identical cultures, environmental ethics and in which way people's understanding of the environment is influenced by cultural institutions.

Zapf's (2016) argument in regards to ecological and natural force within culture reflects how people interact with the natural world. Literary texts also equally participate in the cultural processes that enhance our ecological awareness rather than only confined to act as passive reflector of unprecedented ecological issues. He illustrates how literary text and its narrative enrich our comprehension through the application of cultural ecology to literary analysis and modification of ecological interactions. By this Zapf (2016) emphasizes how literature and the environment are deeply intertwining, mutually reinforcing and coevolving, and it suggests that literary studies can be a leading mode in addressing environmental issues and advancing ecologically friendly behavior. Tošić (2006) asserts a more comprehensive approach to literary studies that takes significantly ecological surroundings into account and its significance in understanding the cultural aspects of environmental issues. This study foregrounds how literature may contribute to the current environmental discourse and how interdisciplinary research in literature is essential to understanding the complex interrelation between culture and the environment.

Giblett (2012) introduce Raymond Williams as a pioneer in this field's development, focusing on the connection between culture and the environment. He examined Williams' contribution to ecocultural studies through his analysis, mainly focusing on the aspect of nature and the need of incorporating ecological awareness into cultural research. This study presents Williams' ideas as fundamental to the current ecocritical and ecocultural discourse, promoting a comprehensive strategy that acknowledges the co-constitutive relationship between culture and the environment.

### **Ecospatial**

Wyse (2021) presents the idea of Eco spatiality in highlighting the importance of place and spatiality in the study of American literature. A thorough analysis of literary texts necessitates a comprehension of the geographical and ecological environments in which they are situated. He emphasizes how particular landscapes, environments, and spatial dynamics impact literary output and thematic development by using a place-based approach. This theoretical framework delineates the relationship between literature and location by demonstrating how people conceive space on an ecological and cultural level and it shows how stories both mirror and shape it (Wyse, 2021). His work offers a concrete framework for examining the connections between space, nature and literature and advocates for engagement with the physical and ecological components of literary texts.

Hart (2023) describes the role of relationship between humans and their environment in a specified space by analyzing the literary texts that interacts with ecological processes, natural occurrences and spatiality. Albeit, the literature functions as a vehicle for relationships between humans and their ecology. Hart relates the way writers portray a variety of ecological and spatial realities in which are they marginalized and othered, from megalopolis to wilderness locations and pastoral place, through a comprehensive analysis of literary text. By emphasizing and encouraging deeper understanding of the intricacies of ecospatial interactions and moreover, this study advances the subject of ecocriticism.

Estok et al. (2016) render into the different aspects of landscape in connection to the eco-spatial imagination. The researchers explore wide range of case studies and theoretical frameworks to identify the ways in which landscapes influence cultural identities, narratives, and environmental attitudes. A thorough examination of subjects and the thematic arrangement of their works including ecofeminism, postcolonial ecocriticism, and the portrayal of non-human agency in literature is explained. Offering a variety of viewpoints that improve our comprehension of the complex interactions between people and their natural environs, this anthology adds to the growing conversation on eco-spatial imagination.

### Theoretical Framework

The present article has adopted a descriptive-analytical methodology. First, ecoculture and ecospatial have been explained based on the concepts of Ecoculture by Naess (1994) and Production of Space by Lefebvre (1974/1991) and later its analyzed on given methodology. The paper is qualitative in nature and employs the dyad methodologies Naess' (1994) culture and environment and Lefebvre's (1974/1991) concept of the Production of Space. This research probe into the exploration of nature, ecology, culture, literature and space, examining its socio-political implications to cope with environmental crises and injustices. The analysis focuses on the novel *Thinner Than Skin* and adopts perspective of ecoculture and ecospatiality.

Ecocultural approach often derives from a deep-rooted reverence and respect for the environment, which is deeply embedded in the traditional knowledge systems and cultural identities of many countries. Traditionally, people have protected forests and plant life based on their local customs and cultural values. Philosopher Arne Naess (1994) argues that this connection between culture and ecology goes beyond just protecting nature. He believes that losing cultural diversity is an ethical issue and is fundamentally linked to the broader problem of protecting all living things. In his view, safeguarding the variety of human cultures is an essential part of safeguarding biodiversity. (p. 146).

In the past, native and indigenous communities have managed and preserved their natural ecosystems using techniques tailored to the particular ecological needs and characteristics of their regions. For instance, many indigenous cultures consider specific forest and trees to be sacred, they are shielded from cutting down and destruction. This spiritual connection to the land fosters a stewardship ethic that emphasizes conservation and sustainable use likewise, "relations between culture and the global process of increasing ecological unsustainability" (Naess, 1994, p. 143).

Furthermore Lefebvre's (1974/1991) concept of the Production of Space is rooted in its socio-political background and presents a conceptual framework for understanding the production of space. He identifies three key dimensions of space: physical, mental, and social, which together shape its meaning and significance. In simpler terms, he refers to these dimensions as a "logico-epistemological space" and the "space of social practice." His conceptual framework for understanding spatial production consists of three distinct phases: "Spatial practice" refers to the physical space that is viewed and experienced; "Representations of space" refers to the mental constructs and ideas about space; and "Representational spaces" refers to the lived experiences and social interactions within a given space (p. 33). The "dialectic relationship" (p. 39) of this triad highlights the socio-political creation of urban space with unstable connections, resulting in



the formation of social hierarchies where certain segments of society are geographically marginalized and excluded through discriminatory practices. According to the planners, space serves as a tool for both thinking and taking action, as well as a means of controlling and exerting power. explores the connection between ecocriticism and the concept of space. He argues that environmental criticism emerges in response to the extensive human alteration of planetary space, a process that has significantly intensified since the industrial revolution (p. 62). By examining the ecological concerns in the three phases of spatial production - perceived, conceived, and lived - as proposed by Lefebvre (1974/1991), we can assess the role of environmental awareness in the hierarchical structure created by unstable spatial production This new way of thinking aims to challenge the idea that humans are superior to the rest of nature. Sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991) uses his concept of the "spatial triad" to argue that the natural world, which originally served as the basis for how societies function, is rapidly disappearing (p. 30). Furthermore, he argues that various factors are actively working against its preservation, making it increasingly challenging to perceive the space in its original state prior to human intervention and destructive practices (p. 31).

An ecocritical approach to the initial stages of spatial production allows us to see how city planners consider environmental concerns. This includes issues like sustainability, responsible use of resources, and creating spaces that benefit both humans and other species. The final stage of Lefebvre's spatial triad, "spatial practices" (sometimes called "perceived space"), looks at how these plans translate from blueprints to the lived experiences of people in the city.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

Khan (2012) explores the socio-political and environmental challenges particularly faced by the Northern areas of Pakistan. These issues arise from the detrimental effects of increasing consumerism, the politics of war, heedless behavior towards environment, industry, and urbanization. She skillfully portrays the aesthetic appeal of the terrain while simultaneously addressing the socio-political and ecological conflicts that contribute to the region's socioeconomic division and environmental calamity. Khan highlights the social, ecological and ecocultural challenges faced by the Northern regions and brings attention to Pakistan's increasing climate crisis and environmental deterioration. This novel highlights the advocacy for disenfranchised, deprived and marginalized groups in society, emphasizing the interdependence of environmental, social and cultural issues that harm both humans and non-human beings.

The novel is filled with imagery that reflects environmental concerns. Right from the start, the story establishes a sense of unease about the natural world. Barbed wire fences and the destruction of trees paint a picture of a disrupted landscape. The forest inspectors further restrict the nomadic way of life, forcing them to limit their movements to an impossibly small area. This denial of access to even basic resources, like a blanket, foreshadows a harsher future for the environment. The quote, with the lake "freezing in anticipation," emphasizes the ominous mood created by these restrictions. (Khan, 2012, p. 4). The novel also mentions the excessive snowmelt that occurred that year, as well as the deceitful sale of Australian sheep by the government. The valley described in the novel is depicted as a place of anguish, where the cry of pain is heard and every living creature is suffering from the carelessness and impetuous actions of humans towards environment in capitalist search of material things and it aptly depicted "Every living creature had felt the horse impale himself just before his cry rang through the valley like a series of

barbed wires” (p.04). Right from the beginning, the novel tackles environmental issues (ecocritical preoccupations). The author explores how social and environmental challenges (socio-environmental challenges) affect both humans and the natural world (humans and non-humans) equally.

The novel primarily focuses on the social and ecological challenges faced by the people in the Northern areas of Pakistan. However, it also addresses the socio-environmental difficulties of urban spaces like Karachi, which are connected to the city's spatial development. Nadir, who hails from the United States, perceives Karachi as a city that has been adversely affected by a series of attacks, each more malicious and complex than the last. Karachi is gripped by a web of fear and unease. The city struggles under the weight of political tensions surrounding the War on Terror, religious extremism, and poor governance. A constant worry is the unexplained disappearances of young men. The quote highlights the city's decline, where a complex mix of local and international political issues is damaging not just public safety but also Karachi's social, economic, and environmental well-being (p. 26).

In the metropolitan city, there is a clear division based on social class. Nadir, while at a restaurant, notices that the person receiving the most attention and care is the one who is already well-nourished. In contrast, further it is implied that a significant majority of the Pakistani population, about three-quarters, survive on less than \$2 per day. Moreover, half of Karachi's population lacked access to clean and hygienic drinking water, while fifty percent of people had no access to sanitation and Nadir had to encounter the foul odour emanating from an open gutter on the street. “40 percent had no access to drinking water. 50 percent no sanitation. I could smell the open gutter out on the street. Where was our hospitality when it came to this?” (p. 33).

This demonstrates that simultaneously both natural resources as well as the well-being of the poor and marginalized strata of society are being negatively impacted by inadequate sanitation systems and water exploitation. Furthermore, the poor lack access to even the most essential necessities for survival. The poor are being pushed into a geographical stratum where they lack even the most essential resources due to socioeconomic issues, and their localities are suffering from environmental degradation, hence they are subject to environmental damage. The uneven allocation of natural resources is a significant means by which specific segments of society are marginalized by those in power and those who make decisions. Thus, in relation to spatial justice this assertion entails the right and equitable allocation of socially, culturally, politically and ecologically indispensable resources and the corresponding opportunity to utilize them. However, the impoverished class in Karachi is unable to access these resources and is consequently marginalized in terms of their physical location.

Lefebvre (1974/1991) emphasizes that the unjustifiable spatial production of natural resources can lead to an unequal distribution, which is marginalizing not only some social groups but also the entire ecosystem, Ecospace and including animals. Khan (2012) presents picture of the construction of social space in terms of Ecocultural and Ecospatial spaces in the Northern areas and urban space of Pakistan which often neglects the needs of vulnerable individuals and ecosystems that rely heavily on natural resources for their survival. This disregard for the Ecocultural, Ecospatial and sociopolitical interests of city planners and officials leads to a significant social and environmental imbalance in their lives. Khan's narrative advocates the ecological crisis that world is going through and it also promotes the green friendship by

employing the eco-friendly setting and characterization throughout the novel. “The trees before Maryam rose higher in the dark than during the day. She could name each shadow. Dia, bhentri, chalai” (p. 247). This ecological account is not only confined to single narrative rather it also addresses the suffering experienced by animals and birds. She presents the valley of Kaghan, a renowned hill station located in the northern region of the country, along with other adjacent locations that are currently experiencing an unprecedented ecological catastrophe. In these areas, both humans and animals are enduring hardships due to a combination of socio-political and spatial imbalances, resulting in their marginalization.

When examining a text's portrayal of the environment, ecocritical studies should not solely focus on nature. Certainly. The text by Glotfelty (1996) emphasizes that a comprehensive analysis of environmental issues should encompass more than just human factors. Other elements, such as animals, cities, specific geographical regions, rivers, and mountains, all play a role and should be considered. The depiction of disemboweled goat aptly presents the plight of animals that are ruthlessly forsaken in materialistic pursuits. Collectively, while considering any place in perspective of environment, culture and space every entity is dependent to each other, none can survive singularly. “Kiran saw her first disemboweled goat. The goat's entrails lay splattered in the green, her juices mixing with those of the wet earth. It might have been a wolf. It might have been a man.” (p. 120). Not only animals but the predicament of birds has given equal place in narrative. While in incident of riots, fires were shot over protestors and the sky soaring home of birds was intruded by humans without any involvement of birds' side, yet they face dire circumstances by humans. “Doves, nor did hawks draw somersaults in the endless hemisphere in the sky” (p. 138).

A number of species are currently in a precarious state, facing the imminent threat of extinction. For years the most vulnerable birds and animals have been mercilessly hunted by wealthy Arabs and dignitaries coming from other countries, although, with government permit in exchange of money, without giving the heed to public demand to ban the hunting of endangered species. The rare and endangered species are at the verge to go extinct yet they officials doesn't care to protect and preserve it yet the massacre of national pride is allowed “Wealthy Arabs had been invited to launch their falcons on endangered Houbara Bustards” (P.190). Government officials prioritize strengthening and maintaining political relations with Arab countries over the conservation of endangered animals. The narrative also addresses the issue of discriminating against individuals based on their caste, religion, culture and ethnicity.

Communities such as vagabond, shepherds and herders, including Mariam's family, are currently experiencing hardship due to urban spatial and exclusionary practices. The novel criticizes city planners and officials who prioritize profit over people (capitalist city planners and officials). These officials exploit the land and livestock of the indigenous population, depriving them of basic rights and resources. Their goal is to control the land and its inhabitants for their own benefit. Khan (2012) particularly criticizes the government's neglect of the local people and their livestock breeds. The quote highlights this point, with the government replacing strong, local goat breeds with more productive but resource-intensive ones, leaving the indigenous goats without enough food (p. 181).

The novel criticizes the government's policies that prioritize profit over the well-being of the indigenous people and their environment. This is evident in the replacement of hardy, local goat



breeds (Kaghani and Kilan) with more productive but resource-intensive imported breeds. This leaves the native goats starving while enriching government officials (p. 181). Similar disregard extends to other animals; the quote about "tearing down trees, poisoning dogs, and fencing off land" exemplifies this (p. 185).

The story also laments the loss of biodiversity. Mariam mourns the disappearance of numerous horse breeds once famous in the region, fearing the same fate for the remaining Kaliani breed her daughter cherishes (p. 197). Adding insult to injury, officials restrict the grazing rights of these already struggling communities, imposing fines for using nearby meadows (p. 181). Thus, animals as well native people were prohibited in their own native meadows and their native space was occupied by the outsiders and the existence of their, environment, animals, birds and culture were at the verge to be substituted and they couldn't do anything seeing their native space and culture slowly invaded.

The text delves into the concept of "spatial practice" – how people experience space in their daily lives, as opposed to the plans on paper created by city planners. This creates tension because the reality experienced by people often clashes with the planned urban reality. Government restrictions and regulations imposed by city planners can prevent both people and the environment from having equal access to resources and enjoying a stable existence.

The novel exemplifies this conflict through the plight of herders and shepherds. They are confined to specific areas by the government, unable to access traditional grazing lands due to closures or restrictions (p. 181). Breaking these rules results in hefty fines, an impossible burden for their limited means. The story even depicts the animals rebelling against these imposed limitations. Mariam's horse, Namasha, craves the mountain air and refuses to eat the low-quality food offered in the lowlands (p. 284). The quote about the filly's mother "growing mean" after her mate died from leaping a barbed wire fence further emphasizes the animals' struggle against this new reality. This situation highlights an anthropocentric mindset, where humans fail to consider the needs of non-human beings and the environment. The policies of city capitals are manipulative, marginalizing and "othering" nomadic communities. These policies deprive them of their traditional animals, grazing rights, and ultimately disrupt their way of life and the region's biodiversity.

The novel highlights how the exploitation of natural resources is a key way capitalists exert control over people and the environment (spatial injustice). Deforestation is a major issue, harming both the ecosystem and those who rely on it for survival. The story emphasizes how unstable ecological and socio-political planning leads to the environmental and social degradation of Kaghan (socio-environmental degradation). The quote "Those men who leashed the forest and then leased it" (p. 185) criticizes the way capitalists exploit natural resources for profit. The text further criticizes the illegal actions of forest officials who cut down trees and then rent out the land, as shown in the quote "the ones who tore down the old, old trees" (p. 185).

These actions resulted in the creation of long-lasting spatial systems that favored some individuals and provided them with advantages. The timber mafia in the valley is accountable for causing spatial and environmental deterioration, as well as engaging in deforestation and illicit trafficking of tree trunks. The space referred as the "bend of the Kunhar" was notorious for serving as a storage area for smuggled tree trunks. The individual who initiated legal proceedings

against the organized criminal group involved in illegal logging was subsequently killed. The perpetrators of the crime were never officially identified as murderers due to the intricate network of alliances and corruption involving the mafia and officials, all of whom were complicit in each other's activities. The quote "A friend of his was murdered after filing a case against the timber mafia. (Those who killed him were never called killers)" (p. 186) exposes the brutal reality in the region. Corrupt officials and powerful criminal organizations (capitalist mafia) abuse their power to exploit the natural resources of northern Pakistan. This greed destroys the environment and harms the lives of the local people who depend on it (deteriorate the lives and habitat). The novel argues that the arrival of industry, foreign intervention (imperial activities), rapid city growth (urbanization), and a focus on consumerism have fundamentally disrupted the traditional way of life in the valley.

Traditionally, the indigenous people of the region lived in balance with nature. They followed seasonal patterns, migrating as needed ("They lived according to the cycles of nature") (p. 203). They carried their belongings, practiced communal ownership, welcomed visitors, and strategically moved their herds to avoid overgrazing. Mariam's family exemplifies this nomadic lifestyle, constantly on the move throughout the year ("Always on the move...") (p. 76). This movement was not just practical but also a cultural aspect of their lives. However, the arrival of contractors and capitalists has taken over their land. The rapid economic, ecological, and political changes have disrupted their traditional nomadic patterns. Their movements are no longer regular or predictable but forced displacements ("The world had tipped unsteadily...") (p. 184). Now the areas where they used to allow their animals to graze freely have been converted into state-owned farms. The inhabitants were facing a predicament as their livelihood, which relied primarily on animal breeding, had become a burden. The local breeds of cattle were diminishing, and the grazing was not allowed for them in their own land.

The final stage of spatial production, called "representational space," focuses on how people experience the spaces designed for them. This experience is heavily influenced by the social and political agendas of the planners. In other words, the way city spaces are designed shapes how people perceive and interact with them, often in a way that limits their agency. The planners create a space that inhabitants are expected to passively accept. The novel depicts a scenario where the residents are constrained to navigate their lives inside the boundaries established by the governing authorities of the city. These restrictions dictate their cultural identities and behaviors, despite the unpredictable nature of the circumstances. The belief of their people was that the tranquilly could only be achieved by the presence of seasons and fresh spring grass. "They were herder and always would be. Only with tradition came pride and dignity" (p. 204). With spatial movement and changing of times while certain individuals embarked on global journeys, acquainting themselves with trade and commerce and returned with substantial wealth. "a few, even traveled the world and came home rich" (p.204).

However, individuals such as shepherds and herders, who steadfastly adhered to their traditional way of life, faced significant hardships even in meeting their fundamental necessities. The text mentions that acquiring timber and thatching grass from the forest department through a lease was necessary for the characters to rebuild their pastures and lowland areas (Khan, 2012, p. 239). This suggests some level of government involvement or regulation in obtaining these materials. Now they are only left with their resilient culture to resist uninvited cultural intrusion and to

oppose the influences that altered and ruined their ecofriendly and ecocultural existence. Lefebvre (1974/1991) discusses the potential for opposing spatial inequality in the context of "lived space," where individuals' imagination strives to transform and take ownership of their surroundings. In the novel the local residents(characters), are experiencing frustration due to the manipulation and subsequent deterioration of their environment. Furthermore, the natural world is also starting to respond to human meddling "Glacial growth and decline were equal indicators of global warming" (p. 45). This phenomenon is attributed to the anthropocentric mindset and neglect of human beings. Mariam characterizes the flood as unprecedented, explaining that the glacier released the accumulated pressure, causing widespread destruction to the crops, homes, cattle, and grain.

### Conclusion

The paper examined ecocultural perspective and manipulation of spatial production, where spaces are planned and designed based on the political agenda of capitalists and those in power, rather than considering the needs and desires of the residents. It also analyzed landscape issues of urban spaces and ecocultural issues of the northern areas of Pakistan. This analysis has concluded that an unpredictable ecospatial and ecocultural arrangement that promotes power structures generates social hierarchies and results in unfairness in urban and pastoral spaces. The narrative of this novel is equally vocal of natural calamities and demonstrates a resistance to the hierarchical social structure, aiming to achieve spatial and environmental justice and restore equilibrium. Khan (2012) sheds light on the biases and inequalities that people face in their cultural and spatial interactions with one another, animals and the entire ecosystem. The research asserts that in societies experiencing rapid urbanization, city planners should strategically plan and design the expansion and development of space based on the societal, cultural and socio-political interests of the natives of the land. Otherwise, it would lead to biased and unjust outcomes, resulting in the creation of marginalized groups, urban outcasts, social and ecological imbalances. It is imperative for the humans to reassess our ways that are exploiting physical and ecological space in pursuit of materialistic and economic endeavors and to reconsider our connection with nature. The ecocultural and ecospatial kaleidoscope enables us in comprehension of the intricate connections among humans, culture, and the environment. It acknowledges that cultural beliefs, practices, and values have an impact on how we interact with nature, and conversely, the environment also impacts culture. The text highlights the significance of preserving cultural and spatial diversity and traditional knowledge systems in the context of environmentalism. It also acknowledges the significant contributions made by indigenous cultures and local communities in keeping intact of sustainable practices and environmental conservation.

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