

## COUNTER-HEGEMONIC NARRATIVE OF HOLISTIC CONNECTIONS: AN ECOFEMINIST ANALYSIS OF *10 MINUTES 38 SECONDS IN THIS STRANGE WORLD*

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### Abstract

*The present study explores the construction of counter-hegemonic narrative of holistic connections through the Turkish novelist Elif Shafak's novel, 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World. It argues that hierarchical thinking and value dualism of a patriarchal society cause hegemonic narratives which dominate the subservient people and environment. It relies on the ecofeminist theory of Karen J. Warren who traces the implications of hierarchical thinking and values dualism in the conquering and controlling masculine attitude towards woman and nature. The study interprets the characters' struggle against hegemonic hierarchical thinking to defend the proposition that most of the societies are established on value dualism and hierarchical thinking where the approval of one value necessitates the rejection of its opposite as well as one value or norm dominates the other in hierarchical order. The hegemonic consciousness of such societies does not give space to the voices of dissent and marginalize them. The paper investigates how the marginalized characters challenge the hegemonic narrative and voice for the inclusive society and assert the diversity and inclusivity of their group. This qualitative study analyzes the text of 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World and textual analysis of the novel illustrates how the hegemonic narrative leads to anthropocentricity, exclusion, persecution and victimization of the dissents while the counter-hegemonic narrative for its inclusive and holistic approach gives a hope to the oppressed and embraces the nurturing role of nature.*

**Keywords:** counter-hegemonic narrative, value dualism, hierarchical thinking, ecofeminism, holistic connections, inclusive, diversity,

### Introduction

Ecofeminist theory of Karen J. Warren and Elif Shafak's novel, *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*, share a common concern of exposing the hierarchical thinking and value dualism of a patriarchal society where hegemonic narratives and attitudes dominate the subservient people and natural environment. Warren traces the implications of hierarchical thinking and values dualism in the conquering and controlling masculine attitude towards woman and nature. She challenges the logic of domination based on this thinking and voices for holistic approach of ecofeminism. The author, Elif Shafak, has also endorsed the holistic approach of this inclusive ecofeminist narrative in a brief talk on her YouTube Channel mentioning the awareness of ecofeminism about interconnected multiple forms of inequality such as racial, gender, digital and class. She claims, "Ecofeminist is someone who dares to connect the dots" (7:02-7:06).

Tequila Leila, born as Leyla Affife Kamile, is the protagonist of this novel. She suffers oppressive hierarchical structures in the world around and longs for a world of equality, inclusion, compassion and care. Leila, a victim of childhood molestation and prostitute in rebellion, is beheaded in the wake of a fanatic campaign against the prostitutes in Istanbul and her corpse is thrown into a dustbin to register a social protest against the sex workers. The novel begins when she is killed but her mind remains alive for crucial ten minutes and thirty-eight seconds. She recalls her past actualizing her sensuous expression where senses of taste and smell seem more active. A flow of sensuous memories not only imparts testimony of the voiceless prostitute but also introduces her imaginative circle of Five Friends: Nostalgia Nalan, Sabotage Saban, Jameelah, Zaynab 122, and Hollywood Humaira. Her circle of friendship has transgressed the boundaries of race, culture, nationality and gender and has embraced dissent and difference

as a living reality of human society. Probably the best memory is of Leila's and D/Ali's marriage where a caring lover marries a Trotskyite revolutionary and painter. This marriage is an indicator of counter-hegemonic urge of the protagonist and her partner. She not only challenges the norms of patriarchy and hegemony of materialism but also questions the absolute sense of revolution.

The paper investigates the interrelationship of inequality and hierarchical thinking and value dualism. It shows how Leila and her friends challenge hegemonic narrative and voice for the inclusive society. It explains the diversity of their group which is connected with Leila's urge of having a vibrant contact with nature. Textual analysis of *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* illustrates how the hegemonic narrative leads to anthropocentricity, exclusion, persecution and victimization of the dissents while the counter-hegemonic narrative for its inclusive and holistic approach gives a hope to the oppressed and embraces the nurturing role of nature.

### 1.1 Significance

The ecofeminist analysis of Shafak's novel, *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* may help to realize the significance of universal inclusive vision dissolving the barriers of gender, race, culture and religion. It shows how the mind, the body and the soul are connected in a caring human being who embraces the inclusive spirit of nature and culture. It intrigues the readers to connect multiple narratives and voice the silenced characters or communities in an enlightened and well-informed consciousness of genuine equality.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The study contends that most of the societies are established on value dualism and hierarchical thinking where the approval of one value necessitates the rejection of its opposite as well as one value or norm dominates the other in hierarchical order. The hegemonic consciousness of such societies do not give space to the voices of dissent and they marginalize the latter. The reflections of narrator and the protagonist of *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* suggest a counter-hegemonic narrative which challenges monolithic cultural norms, hierarchical truths and value dualism and embraces inclusion, dissent and holistic connections. The paper traces the interrelationship of counter-hegemonic narrative and inclusive vision of ecofeminism illustrating from text of the novel and interpreting it with ecofeminist ideas of Karen Warren.

### 1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research paper are

- To recognize hierarchical thinking and value dualism of Turkish society through the reflections of narrator and the protagonist of *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*
- To explore counter-hegemonic narrative of the protagonist of *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*
- To trace the interrelationship of counter-hegemonic narrative and inclusive vision of ecofeminism

### 1.4 Research Questions

The present study responds to the following questions:

- How do the narrator and the protagonist expose hierarchical thinking and value dualism of Turkish society in *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*?

- What factors contribute in the formation of counter-hegemonic narrative of the protagonist of *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*?
- How does the counter-hegemonic narrative embrace the holistic connections and inclusive vision of ecofeminism?

## 2. Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Research Methodology

The qualitative study analyzes the primary source which is the text of *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* to substantiate the contention of this paper. The study explores a counter-hegemonic narrative that emerges with the poignant voices of Leila and her persecuted friends. The text has been analyzed employing Karen Warren's ecofeminism. The theoretical framework contributes to form a counter-hegemonic narrative and the conventions of textual analysis help create an interface of literary text and theoretical movement. The premises of Warren's theory of ecofeminism provide intellectual basis for textual analysis. The secondary sources of this study include research articles, theses and other academic works on the topics of ecofeminism and the critical studies of *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*.

### 2.2 Theoretical Framework

Ecofeminism, the term coined in 1974 by French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne, echoes a theoretical framework as well as a movement of care for both woman and environment. This inclusive third wave of feminism incorporates ecological challenge of contemporary age and embraces differences of gender, race, class, ethnicity and religion. It challenges domination in every form. Encyclopedia Britannica in its introduction of ecofeminism lays emphasis on its "revaluing of non-patriarchal or nonlinear structures, and a view of the world that respects organic processes, holistic connections, and the merits of intuition and collaboration" (Miles, ecofeminism). Ecofeminism traces certain intrinsic relations of woman and nature, challenges the hegemonic narrative which recognizes any logic behind domination of human over nonhuman or domination of man over woman. It combines, reexamines and augments the exiting theories of feminism and ecocriticism for a more inclusive paradigm that may expose hierarchical thinking of the naturism, classism, racism, sexism and absolutism. It liberates theory from the image of essentialism and introduces it as a process of challenging the hegemonic narratives and merging the voices of equality, equity and inclusion. The critique of value-hierarchical thinking and of value dualism by Karen J. Warren seems very pertinent for the study.

Warren believes that value-hierarchical thinking, value dualism, and logic of domination naturalize hierarchy and subjugation. By 'value-hierarchical thinking' she means up-down thinking which assigns higher value or privilege to what is on top in a hierarchical structure. Value dualism means the disjunctive pairs that give more value to one comparing its counterpart such as mind, reason and male are given more value than body, emotion and female. Hierarchical thinking and value dualism not only provide structure of argumentation for domination of one but also justification for subordination of other. The hierarchical thinking which encourages man to control woman also inspires man to conquer and control nature as both of them, nature and women, are stereotyped as chaotic and irrational. Radical ecofeminists challenge hierarchies for equating women and nature for irrationality and chaos contrary to the cultural ecofeminists who identify the associations of nature and women. Warren, a radical ecofeminist, points out that "It

is the logic of domination, coupled with value-hierarchical thinking and value dualisms, which “justifies” subordination” (126). She defends ecofeminism which is “quintessentially anti-naturist”(134), “contextualist ethic” (135), “structurally pluralistic” (135), “inclusivist” (134). Ecofeminism, according to her, also “recognizes the twin dominations of women and nature as social problems” (135), rejects absolute individualism and reconceives what is human. Finally, it “makes a central place for values of care, love, friendship, trust, and appropriate reciprocity” (135).

### 3. Literature Review

#### 3.1 Gender and Power Relations in Shafak’s Novel

The critical reception of Elif Shafak’s *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* shows the novel has been interpreted dominantly in feminist paradigm and a very few researches have opted to discuss environmentalist and existentialist concerns. Breaking the silence and voice for the marginalized woman is a central concern of feminist interpreters of this novel. Among these studies, Ali Salami and Yasaman Taheri’s article explores the complexities of gendered subjectivity utilizing the theories of Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler. Irigaray’s ideas of colonizing woman by a masculine dream of transforming others and cultural role of man as subject and of woman as object contribute to explain the state of Leila whose virginity and motherhood are killed by toxic masculinity. The researchers discriminate Leila’s natural body from her socially commodified body and claim that there is a third path to break the binaries of light and dark and see Leila and her group members beyond socially objectified categories. In the same vein, Mumtaz Hussain et al explore the marginalized state of four female characters by explaining their suppression, dehumanization and marginality in a patriarchal society. The potential challengers to socio-cultural oppression, Leila, Jameelah, Zynab and Humeyra are hushed up by visible and invisible power structures. The female subalterns’ struggle for their survival expose the nexus of patriarchy and fanaticism. The trials and travels of women linked with their childhood molestation, human trafficking, dwarfism and domestic violence demonstrate their stigmatization, suppression and even murder. Nevertheless, the rebellious women survive and show a bond of sisterhood against patriarchy and social injustice.

Another feminist study that integrates with critical discourse analysis is “Gender and Power: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Elif Shafak’s *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World*”. It exposes the nexus of power and ideology using the theory of Feminism and Fairclough’s three dimensional model of critical discourse analysis. The researchers, Mariam Atta ullah et al, discuss the normalization of socially constructed gender roles. They utilize the ideas of social construction of gender beginning with the insight of Simon de Beauvoir’s feminism and evolve through Eagly’s Social Role theory. They discuss the power and ideology of patriarchy that acts against the human desires and ambitions of women and their subjugation through stereotypical roles of dependent housewives. The early marriages of girls discontinue their education as it happens to Leila, Binnaz and Humeyra. The men like the fathers of Humeyra and Leila enjoy polygamy whereas the women do not have even their proper match. The intricate workings of power and ideology in sexist discourse encourage hierarchically gendered social order. The suppression and marginalization is also linked with gender inequality as Muntazar Mehdi, Uzma Moen, and Shanza Abbasi emphasize on abjection and marginalization of sex

workers including Leila. They believe that the ruthlessness experienced by the marginalized characters is grounded in gender discrimination and cultural taboos.

### 3.2 Theory of Travelling Memory in Shafak's Novel

Sajida Lateef's article, "Application of Astrid Erll's Theory of Travelling Memory to Elif Shafak's *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*" studies the concepts of travelling memory and traumatic memory. She equates the memory of physically dead but mentally alive Leila as travelling memory and locatedness. She also claims that Leila's memories from her birth to death can be termed as traumatic memories for their power of destroying the mental peace of character and all her associates.

### 3.3 Gender, Animals and Environmentalism in Shafak's Novel

The two Indonesian researchers Rifa Fajri Adhania and Hasnul Insani Djohar relate women and animals to show domestication of animals and subjugation of women in their article. They explore the subtle connection of patriarchy and animals while illustrating the theme of oppression and resistance. This qualitative descriptive study identifies the phrases referring to animals and then analyzes them in their context as well as in relationship of multiple studies of animals and their behavior. The researchers employ the animal metaphor and Sylvia Walby's theory of the patriarchal structures. Walby identifies six patriarchy structures such as "patriarchal modes of wage labor, household production, culture, sexuality, male violence, and state" (Walby 29). The researchers claim that the five distinct animal expressions used by the novelist represent the women's suffering, dependence and powerlessness in a patriarchal society. The five animals of women's suffering are wild animal, ram and lamb, pigeon, duck, and rabbits. Similarly, six animals such as cat, deer, blue betta fish, horse, turtle, and spider are standing against the system but they also experience oppression and exploitation. On the other hand, bird and butterfly appear as symbols of freedom. Through textual evidence the researchers show that lamb and ram stand for inferior position of Leila and her mother Binnaz who are subjugated and herded. Naming the pets such as Mr. Chaplin for a kitten and Tutti-fruiti for a pair of turtles becomes parallel to the prostitutes being named by their owner. Leila also appears as a pigeon in cage and looks like a cooked duck when the stabbed helpless Leila is thrown into the dustbin. Mosquito, a parasite and a symbol of superior masculine positions, refers to Leila's uncle who like mosquito is source of multiple troubles. Leila's struggle is seen as a struggle of deer and predator and her loneliness resembles blue beta fish who gets fulfilment after her burial in the sea. Jameelah and other trafficked women are introduced as breaking horses who refuse to be ridden and confined. Nalan's sluggish turtles likely indicate the limited mobility of a social outcast or a transgender. The wolf, a typical symbol of feminist movement, expresses the feminist's opposition to patriarchy. The article concludes that almost all the characters depicted as animals in the novel are victims of patriarchy in their immediate society where they experience one or other form of patriarchal oppression.

An eco-materialist feminist study conducted by Asad ullah Javed, Sadia Qamar and Aamer Shaheen explores the feminist environmentalist philosophy that seeks connections of women and nature. The researchers claim that men strive for their own material benefit which cost is paid by women and nature. They show the impact of capitalist policies initiated by men in this regard. They study cultural diversity of Istanbul city and several issues which marginalized characters

face; the issues include helplessness and rootlessness of Binnaz, Leila and her friends, polygamy of Leila's and Humeyra's fathers, gender bias and discrimination, gender dysphoria of Nalan, the impact of capitalism on the working class women, and the misery of sex-workers.

### 3.4 Existentialist and Spiritual Studies of Shafak's Novel

Sundas Shakeel et al investigate the protagonist's choices and actions through the existentialist theories of Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Friedrich Nietzsche. They inspect the circumstances faced by Leila and explain the reason behind the absurdity, meaninglessness and loneliness in her life. They explore Leila's struggle of finding answers of her existence. She appears an existentialist who struggles hard to come out of existential crisis through her choice for betterment. She does not turn to irrationality and pointlessness and even a day before her murder, Leila inspires a gay to live for himself. The article identifies the ways Leila uses to find purpose of her existence and her atheistic beliefs. Leila's skepticism and her atheism also brings her closer to existentialist characters who lose their faith in God in their struggle of finding meaning of life. Likewise, Khadija, Muhammad Akbar Khan and Zainab Akram explore spirituality of the protagonist, Leila. They rely upon William C. Chittak's canon of spirituality and his ideas of transcendental connection with God. They identify the elements of spirituality that show the protagonist's quest of meaning and truth. They claim that the novelist weaves the threads of spirituality with existentialism but the quest for meaning is spiritual rather than atheistic. According to them, Leila strives for intellectual knowledge which she achieves at last by losing her physical body but entering the realm of eternity. Though article lacks evidence and argumentation, it suggests a different dimension of study.

### 3.5 Research Gap

The existing studies of *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* reveal that it has been mostly studied with feminist perspective and two articles explore environmental aspects. The present study is located in the paradigm of these environmentalist studies and extends their findings of associating animals with women. The study proposes to explore the inclusive approach of a counter-hegemonic narrative of the selected novel.

## 4. Discussion and Analysis

The reading of *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* makes it clear that Elif Shafak's ecofeminism embraces inclusive world view and it is reflected through the events, polemics of narrator, and the characters' counter-hegemonic narratives. The theoretical framework of Warren's ecofeminism is very apt to describe the struggle of the protagonist and her five friends; the survivors of toxic masculinity, hierarchical thinking of patriarchy, and value dualism of a rigid society. They belong to the diverse orientations of ethnicity, sexuality and religion but they share their faith in individual space for everyone and respect for struggle of every individual irrespective of their gender, race, culture and religion. The title of the novel implicitly asserts the truth of a physically dead but mentally alive person.

### 4.1 Exposition of Hierarchical Thinking and Value Dualism

Karen Warren perceives conceptual framework as a socially constructed lens that shapes the people's view for themselves and their world around. It becomes oppressive when it justifies

any domination including patriarchal domination. She marks three key traits of oppressive conceptual framework: value-hierarchical thinking, value dualism and logic of domination. Patriarchy and materialism, both in theory and the novel, work on the similar lines. Interestingly, Shafak's novel, *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*, begins with the chapter 'The End' and this opening counters the linear and chronological order and goes in favor of a cyclical order of nature. The three parts of the novel, The Mind, The Body and The Soul, serve as an organic whole of the text and the foundation for inclusive vision and holistic approach of the author who does not see life in terms of hierarchical order and binaries of truth and falsity. The protagonist's fulfillment is not attained only through unification of body, mind and soul but also with her companionship to nature. Since her early childhood, she yearns for taste and smell and receives the ideas in vivid images instead of abstraction. This personality trait marks her individuality as well as her relationship with the ecological world. She thinks for her own self, values her own feelings and compassion for the abused people and nature. When her soul transcends her body, Leila keeps on thinking and visualizes her story with her marks of individuality and resistance against conformist yielding to hierarchical structures. In these crucial moments of her existence, "her mind was working at full tilt" (2) and her sensuous memories flashback her life.

Warren introduces value-hierarchical thinking, with a hierarchy of "up-down" and up is desirable and down is condemnable. She states that value-hierarchical thinking "places higher value, status, or prestige on what is "up" rather than on what is "down" (125-26). In patriarchy the head of family is at top position while in a state or any other social structure 'head' is on top. This value-hierarchical thinking is laden with value dualisms which, according to Warren, stand for "disjunctive pairs in which the disjuncts are seen as oppositional (rather than as complementary) and exclusive (rather than as inclusive), and which place higher value (status, prestige) on one disjunct rather than the other" (126). Leyla Afife Kamile is a survivor of patriarchy which prescribes a submissive conduct for the wives and daughters and sets a preference for a male child. The ignored and tormented Leila is raised in a family where relations are not as they appear. She is taught that Susan is her mother but she is her stepmother. She is told that Binnaz is her aunt but she is her real mother. The children are expected to speak truth but they are trained to keep secrets such as the secret of her real mother, that of her uncle's sexual advances and molestation of her body. Soon she realizes the sham nature of this family where an empathetic father remains absent from her life even in her childhood as a caring husband is not available to Binnaz and Susan. Her father, Haroun, "a man of scintillating opposites" (16) chooses the docile and submissive name for his daughter. Their family lives in an ancestral house of the village of Van. This village was rewarded to Haroun's grandfather Mahmoud as reward for his services to the Ottoman government in its act of deporting the Armenians. The family has a shadow of persecuting others in the name of ethnicity, religion and nationalism. Haroun has no vision of sacrificing his possessions for others or undoing his ancestral wrongs but his sense of guilt (stitching the lady garments) leads him to embrace sheikhdom of the Islamic mystics in Turkey and he goes in seclusion following the commandments of his sheikh or spiritual mentor. This patriarchal head of the family strongly believes in cultural stereotypes and value dualism and does not suspect his own brother's role in sexual abuse of his daughter. Haroun and his sheikh advocate hierarchical thinking using religion for their social control. He believes that there are forty signs of the Day of Judgment and one of these signs is "that young people get out of control" (93).

As in value-dualism, one value is true and other is necessarily false, either an elder or a child can be true. Leila's rapist uncle gets advantage of this dualism and she remains unheard about her childhood trauma of sexual abuse. Contrary to any relief, her shrewd uncle instills a sense of guilt in her mind by making her realize that she is naughty, bad-mannered and full of filth. He saves himself for his position in family which makes no probing of the terrible incident and the girl is held responsible for having an affair with Sinan. Leila develops a sense of guilt, inexpressible rage and disbelief in God who fails to protect the innocent. The narrator mentions, "Shame and self-reproach had been Leila's constant companions for too long, twin shadows that followed her everywhere she went" (98).

Hierarchy beyond family setting also works against the weak. Leila experiences a chain of hierarchical thinking in a brothel of Istanbul where she is placed in the lowest strata of social hierarchy and her position makes her vulnerable to many physical abuses. The societal agents or puritanical minds desire to purge society from the prostitutes holding them responsible for moral degradation. One such person visits the brothel as a client and tries to burn Leila's face with sulphuric acid; she succeeds to save her face but not her back. In fact, "She tripped, lost her balance, and the liquid he had tossed at her only a second ago hit her in the back" (124). The women at brothel live in depression and misery. "Depression was common among the women on this street, tearing into their souls as fire tears into wood. No one used the word though. *Miserable*, was what they said. Not about themselves, but about everyone and everything else" (125). Nobody cares for their misery as a society of value dualism rejects them and cannot see their any goodness or feel for their pain. The people approve one to disapprove its opposite. However, it is Leila who tastes both as the duality of sweet/bitter has been part of her life.

Hierarchical thinking and value dualism not only exclude a child abuse survivor from the mainstream and turn her into a prostitute but categorize the people into good/evil, pious/wicked, man/woman, noble/dishonored and so on. Leila's friends experience discrimination because of this mindset and cultural norm. Nalan whose gentle and innocent gaze struck Leila in their first meeting is probably the worst victim of value dualism that necessitates a well-defined sexual orientation for social identity. Nostalgia Nalan, born as Usman in a farming family of Anatolia, is a transvestite sex-worker who leaves her home on the night of her wedding to save her family from a trial and live with her own challenge of getting a body compatible with her feelings. Nalan has faced bullying at school and discrimination at military training centres because the people ridicule even assault those who are different from them. Nalan works in a hammam, washes public toilets and works at a furniture shop to collect some money for his sex-change surgery. Her sex orientation does not fit in the hierarchical social structure and binary opposites. The city of Istanbul offers Usman nothing except a chance of disguising his past identity into a transgender (Nalan) and she expects no more.

Persecution gets social approval in a hierarchal setting and context of a value-dualism. Sinan, his mother and a smuggled Somalian woman Jameelah are its example. Leila's first true friend from Van, Sinan, is a son of dead army man and a single mother known as Lady Pharmacist. She is outcast in society for her secular views, progressive spirit and rational thoughts and the son has inherited this empathy and enlightenment. Leila introduces Sabotage Sinan, an expert in code breaking, as "quietly intelligent, slightly awkward, kind-hearted and painfully shy boy" (71) and he proves to be "her sheltering tree, her refuge, a witness to all that



she was, all that she inspired to and, in the end, all that she could never be” (71). The victim of loneliness and ridicule in his world for not having a ‘normal’ family and relations, Sinan, “always felt more comfortable next to people who were not perfect in any way” (75). On the other hand, Jameelah, a daughter of Somalian Muslim father and a Christian mother, could not feel comfortable in her home after the death of her mother and her bitter relation with her stepmother led her to visit a church for peace. She had to join this Church congregation at the cost of her parents and siblings and she became a companionless slum girl. In the backdrop of civil war in Somalia, Jameelah’s misery worsened and she was trafficked to Istanbul and sold by the human traffickers. In Turkish society, Jameelah was fated to be a prostitute but she “had never stopped planning her” (121). She is “a half-broken horse” who yearns for freedom but the world around her shatters her dream through duality of native vs foreign, Turkish vs African, and even Muslim vs Christian. Her fragile physical condition tells a lot about her suffering but it is her strong will to counter the oppression and retain her invisible thread of unity and friendship across cultures, religions and ethnicities.

As Jameelah transcends her socio-cultural limits and distinguishes the people for their merits and embraces them, Zaynab<sup>122</sup> remains least influenced by toxic behavior of the people around and retains her positivity, faith and contentment. Zaynab, a mountainous girl of north Lebanese village, can make prophecy “based on reading tea leaves, wine dregs, coffee grounds” (130). She is a dwarf and the world of proclaimed normality has snatched almost every worthwhile thing from her. She has been bullied at school and her own siblings have disowned her for a sense of shame and she works as a cleaner and maid in the brothel of Leila. She has lost her family even her caring father. Nobody cares of a dwarf as value-dualism expects normal height of every person and those who do not possess, are thrown into sub-human category where they can pose for a photographer or do something like this, just to entertain and amuse others. Nobody asks them about their dreams, feelings and work compatible with their physique. The narrator records her condition, “Tired of people’s intrusive gaze and with no prospects of getting married or finding a job, she had long carried her body like a curse” (130). She is also persecuted in a Shia Muslim community for her Sunni origin. She is compelled to migrate from her high mountain village to the low hills of Istanbul but this migration does not make much difference except her friendship with Leila. Zaynab’s art of tasseography is not valued much beyond a simple amusement but it attracts Leila who also appreciates Zaynab’s faith, hope and struggle.

The circle of care and individuality remains incomplete without the story of domestic violence and family abuse of a housewife, Humeyra, another survivor of hierarchical structure and conservative outlook. Humeyra is born and raised with a spirit of enchanting songs. She develops a passion for music and films but her passion is marred by her father’s decision of marrying her with an unambitious man. She fails to make her husband happy though she tries “to understand him and his needs” (158) and then during his business crisis, he decides to live with his joint family and his wife turns into a servant. Her in-laws even do not make any exchange but she overhears, “*Bride, go and bring the tea. Bride, go and cook the rice. Bride, go and wash the sheets*” (158). She feels that she is at beck and call of others. She feels that she is “being sent somewhere, never able to stay put” (158). She develops “the bizarre feeling that they wanted her both to remain within reach and to disappear completely” (158). After this experience of worthlessness, she has to bear beating as “Once her husband broke a wooden coat hanger on her back. Another time he hit her on the legs with a pair of iron tongs that left a claret-coloured mark

on the side of her left knee” (158-59). After leaving her home, she becomes a singer at a nightclub and starts living in a cheap rented room near the brothel where Leila works. Her life in Istanbul is not safe, even with her fake ID of Humeyra and “Awake or sleep, Humeyra was terrified she might become a victim of an honor killing” (159). It is not just envisioning the murder that perturbs her mind but also hovering idea of forced suicide.

The stories of these survivors of honor killing and domestic violence, dwarfism and persecution, human trafficking and forced prostitution, sexual orientation, child abuse and patriarchal structures demonstrate that hierarchal thinking and value-dualism do not listen to the victim and the killers, culprits of violence, rapists, and persecutors get concession from this tendency. The latter are hardly brought to justice because they can use value dualism to reinforce socially confirmed hierarchy for their own ends. Furthermore, the communities are also persecuted for their dissent as the boys assault an old helpless Yazidi man in one scene of the novel because of their mass hysteria that “Yazidis are evil” and “They are cursed” (100). This hysteria gives a license to the majority to persecute the minority.

The value dualism and hierarchical thinking also embrace anthropocentrism and the world of animals and plants is encroached by the projects of materialist progress. It is seen in the city of Istanbul too. Since value dualism prioritizes human material progress to considerate acts towards nature, natural scene is threatened and the excitement of birds and animals fade in this context. At one point in the novel, the narrator describes the morning scene at the Bosphorus port and hints the conflict of natural purity and pollution caused by human endeavors, “A fishing boat headed back to port, its engine coughing smoke. A heavy swell rolled languidly towards the waterfront. The area had once been graced with olive groves and fig orchards, all of which were bulldozed to make way for more buildings and car parks” (5). A similar concern is shown while describing the ritual of freeing animals and birds to facilitate the labor of a mother’s delivery. When the narrator mentions the freeing canaries, finches and the beta fish during the birth of Leila, she adds, “The last to be freed was the betta fish in the glass bowl, proud and lonely. Now it must be swimming in a creek not far away, its long, flowing fins as blue as a fine sapphire. If the little fish reached the soda lake, for which this eastern Anatolian town was famous, it would not have much chance of survival in the salty, carbonated waters” (15). The hierarchical thinking also ignores the causes of land sliding or ocean surging and link these phenomena with the signs of Day of Judgment as Haroun does in the novel.

#### 4.2 Formation of a Counter-Hegemonic Narrative

The counter-hegemonic narrative emerges as a response to hegemonic masculinity which perpetual intensity is exposed by Lydia Rose, “The omnipresence of hegemonic masculinity is reproduced by being embedded in many cultural products, tropes, and narratives that depict controlling women and nature” (324). Like other ecofeminists, she believes that counter-hegemonic discourse has a potential to counter “masculinity that emphasizes the self within the colonial, masculine hierarchy’s dominant in most societies with socio-historical practices of slavery and colonialism” (323). Karen Warren’s ecofeminist vision is reflected in Lydia Rose’s counter-hegemonic narrative which becomes a pluralistic narrative of the resilient survivors and political activists in the novel, *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*. It questions the normative ethics and standards practiced by the families of major characters. Leila’s brain resists death for ten minutes and thirty-eight seconds before it sinks and it can be taken as a

microcosmic instance of her resistance against the forces of death and oppression. Leila, a born curious and bold, remains interested in exploring truth for her own self. As she urges in her childhood to touch the wasp's nest and "to break it open and reveal its perfect architecture" (47) but she also feels that "she had no right to disturb what nature had intended to remain intact, complete" (47). Leila lives with an urge to think, feel, smell, taste and see. The values and standards that rob her individuality are hegemonic in nature and her resistance forms counter-hegemonic narrative. She questions hypocrisy of her family and the prescribed behavior of authoritative father. She tries to expose her uncle but the family turn table upon her. Leila mocks the patriarchal power and hypocrisy when she stands against it and leaves her home during the broad daylight. She lacks the means of independence and she is forced to live as a prostitute though she always desires to come out of it. She succeeds when a revolutionary painter D/Ali comes to her rescue. Her habit of naming indicates her vision to rename this world as she names Sabotage to Sinan for codebreaking, Nostalgia to Nalan for his homesickness and love for countryside, Zaynab 122 for her talent of writing her names in 122 different styles, and Hollywood Humeyra for her passion to be a stage or screen star. She names her black and stone deaf cat Mr. Chaplin "for, just like the heroes of early cinema, he lived in a silent world of his own" (1). Like her, Jameelah looks into the people's souls and imagines them in colors. She assigns a color to every person as she chooses "periwinkle" for Leila and presents her "a braided bracelet in periwinkle and heather and dark cherry-shades of purple" (117). The counter-hegemonic narrative of the survivors springs forth from their struggle and resilience. Leila's courageous escape from abusive life in Van and her yearning to leave the brothel, introvert Sinan's maverick talent of codes- breaking and facing bullying, Nalan's perseverance against his miserable living conditions "in a dank basement flat", Zaynab's contentment and acceptance of short height and low social status, Jameelah's never-breaking spirit for freedom, and Humeyra's perpetual struggle with her phobia of honor killing after escaping domestic violence, contribute in the formation of counter-hegemonic narrative.

The counter-hegemonic narrative can be seen in Ali's struggle against oppression of totalitarianism, capitalism and social hegemony. Ali alias D/Ali, impressed by the surrealist painter Dali and the democratic socialism of Leon Trotsky, imparts an egalitarian narrative of change and equality. The compassionate young revolutionary wants to "demolish the status quo, and build everything new" (141). He treats Leila as his equal to a shocking surprise to her. Their first meeting was a coincidence when D/Ali reached the brothel and Leila rescued her but then he becomes a regular visitor as her lover and friend. He finally succeeds to marry Leila ignoring the anger and rejection of his father. The narrator mentions that D/Ali "had a way of hardening in the face of aggression and his father's attitude had only strengthened his resolve" (162). D/Ali proves the idealist spirit of revolution through his daring deed of never mentioning the past of Leila. It is a true marriage of love and revolution. Leila listens his stories of revolution and imagines them adding her human touch. In response to Leila's concerns about prostitution, D/Ali holds capitalism responsible for the existence of brothel that will be turned into factory after the Socialist Revolution and tells Leila, "Prostitutes and streetwalkers will all be factory workers --- or peasants" (151). Leila expresses her consideration for Nalan and asks D/Ali about Nalan's status in a revolutionary state. D/Ali confesses honestly that he has not read anything "about transvestites who no longer wished to be peasants" but he hopes to "find the right work" (152)

for them. On the International Labor Day, 1 May 1977, he loses his life in a protest against capitalist exploitation.

The common love of Leila and Humeyra, a resilient cat Sekiz, serves the microcosmic truth of countering the hegemonic reality and mighty fate as the narrator aptly describes, “The cat, with her cracked claws and missing teeth, clung to life with might and main” (155). Both the women save a terribly injured cat which they name Sekiz that a few years later, gets pregnant and gives birth “to five kittens of highly distinct personalities” (156). One of the kittens, black and stone deaf, is named after Charlie Chaplin. The counter-hegemonic narrative of Leila’s friends is converged in their struggle of stealing Leila’s dead body from the graveyard of the companionless people and deliver her to the waves of the sea. It is further reflected in their care for animals and plants as Nalan loves countryside, farming and animals and has a pair of turtles in his flat; Leila and Zaynab love birds and Leila and Humeyra tend and raise the injured cat. In this way, the counter-hegemonic narrative not only counters hegemony of patriarchy and socio-political institutions but also of anthropocentric outlook against the nature. None of the main characters valorizes the ideals that reproduce the hegemonic and toxic masculinity and the characters like Nalan and Zaynab who have been part of the natural pastoral environment show no urge to mechanize the natural resources and exploit them for the human interests. They resist the control of nature which “can mean many things from the basics of reproduction and change to the direct control and manipulation of land, water, vegetation, and animals. This control is greatly tied to the means of production in human society, particularly exploitative capitalism” (Rose 324). Like ecofeminist activists, they long for more holistic connections with the nature and resist all discriminations against women, trans individuals and other marginalized people who suffer bullying, harassment and violence due to hegemonic patriarchy.

The counter-hegemonic narrative of *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* is well-informed with the contemporary politics of cold war. Almost all the significant events from the Turkish support to the US war in Vietnam through the civil war in Somalia to the disintegration of the USSR are mentioned by the narrator. The narrator retains the objective tone of a political analyst while linking the national and international political happenings with the lives of characters. The central event seems Labor Day protest of the Left in Taksim Square of Istanbul where many idealists and political workers like D/Ali sacrifice their lives for the cause which is forgotten later.

The counter-hegemonic narrative of the seven voices of dissent, Leila, her husband and five friends also challenge the concepts of ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ that promote unquestioned conformist attitude in society in the name of ‘common sense’ and avoid discourse and reasoning. D/Ali sums up the hollowness of ‘natural’ in his argument that pseudo normality is just an exaggerated claim. He tells Leila, “Anyone who studied nature closely would think twice before using the word ‘natural’” (143) and counts different ‘expressions’ of Mother Nature such as hermaphrodite snails and black sea bass, male seahorses’ ability of reproduction, transgender act of clownfish, and transvestite cuttlefish. Their narrative inspires the people to revisit their stances about nature, dissent and persecution and think about inclusivity, equality and diversity. Their voiced narratives echo Warren’s warning of avoiding the imposing ethics, “When a multiplicity of cross-cultural voices are centralized, narrative is able to give expression to a range of

attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors which may be overlooked or silenced by imposed ethical meaning and theory” (132).

### 4.3 Holistic Connections and Inclusive Vision of Ecofeminism

The characters and narrator of *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* share the inclusive vision of Elif Shafak and Karen Warren. Warren asserts the plurality and inclusivity of ecofeminism while Shafak believes that one who feels for environment, also shows consideration to remove inequality. To her, an ecofeminist “dares to connect the dots” and looks for holistic connections. The circle of Leila’s friends suggests inclusion of the members from a diverse strata of society and affirms Warren’s reconceived feminism that claims “ecofeminism is structurally pluralistic in that it presupposes and maintains difference among humans as well as between humans and at least some elements of nonhuman nature” (135). The two of the members are foreigners as Zaynab is Lebanese Sunni Muslim and Somalian Jameelah transcends the established religions of Christianity and Islam for her spiritual urge. The firm believer of God and His goodness, Zaynab, is supplemented with the atheistic Leila and Nalan. The robust Nalan and fragile Humeyra do not stand in opposition but the invisible thread of compassion and non-judgment joins them. The introvert and shy Sinan’s intellect and rationality, Zaynab’s spirituality and contentment, Jameelah’s free spirit, Humeyra’s anxieties and insecurities, Nalan’s ferocity against enemies, and Leila’s compassion are those dots which form this pluralistic and inclusive group. Leila’s marriage with D/Alì is a parallel of the alliance of a compassionate soul with idealist artist/activist. Their feelings and struggle affirm the stance of Lydia Rose that “Ecofeminism is a holistic approach to understanding and dismantling dominant forms of masculinity that serve to oppress, subordinate, and control women, nature, and non-dominant forms of masculinity” (325).

Inclusivity, holistic connection and compassion are seen in Leila’s approach towards others. She overcomes her feelings of envy and resentment. It is seen that Leila’s mind remains tormented after her molestation why her uncle “had chosen her” but when her brooding shows another dimension of “Why me?” (67), she realizes its implied meaning, “Why not someone else?” (67) and then she hates this selfish notion. Leila and Nalan include animals in their care for the unheard and voiceless. In a letter to Nalan, Leila recalls whatever Nalan has told her about the intelligence of animals, cows’ recognition of people, sheep’s identification of faces, goats’ quickness in being offended and forgiving others. She shares Nalan’s empathy for animals that “we never really understand them” but also adds her reflective intrigue to it, “what good does it do to them to remember when they can’t change a thing? (136). She has a strong urge to be connected with the flowers, birds, sea creatures and the whole universe. She wishes to have rose flowers at her brilliant funeral instead of lilies, tulips and daffodils and she not merely sees the natural objects but feels their tastes and smells. Her sensuous memories are made vivid with the tastes of salt, lemon and sugar, cardamom coffee, watermelon, goat stew, dry, chalky and bitter soil, chocolate bonbons, deep-fried mussels, wedding cake and malt whisky as well as the smell of a wood-burning stove and sulphuric acid. In the similar vein, she loves birds and fishes and calls them lucky because of their flight and the swimming privilege. Once she asks Zaynab, “Wouldn’t you like to end your life like that?”, the latter responds in negation but Leila asserts, “Well, I would” (148). The very notion of ‘end life like a fish’ gives a clue to her friends where she should be buried.

Warren's claim that "ecofeminism makes a central place for values of care, love, friendship, trust, and appropriate reciprocity" (136) is converged in Leila's sea burial. The law enforcing agencies after her postmortem declare Leila companionless and bury her in the cemetery of the companionless where the dead are known by their specific number instead of name. This cemetery is known for the last abode of those who have no relatives in the city of Istanbul. Leila is disowned by her family but she is blessed with friends and her burial maddens them. Nalan voices her friends' feelings "How can a person who has built wonderful friendships all her life be buried in the Cemetery of the Companionless? How can that be her address for eternity?" (243). She asks them to steal the dead body of Leila and bury her somewhere else honorably and this night adventure of taking dead body from the cemetery concludes by entrusting her corpse to the sea. The burial of Leila in the sea water imprints on the memories of her friends that Leila, a girl of sharp senses and empathetic spirit, is dissolved into the water for her universal spirit. Her urge to live in the bond of the oppressed and own a living contact with nature is fulfilled. The narrator captures the scene of Leila's descending into the sea, "As she fell down, a few folds of her shroud came undone, floating around and above her, like the pigeons her mother had raised on the roof. Except these were free. There were no cages to confine them" (302). She plummets into the water and joins the vast expanse of the ocean. The freedom journey of a free soul, Leila, turns into a greater harmony with the mysterious universe. She leaves behind the shackles of hierarchical and patriarchal structures, excluding nature of value dualism and crushing hegemony. The quest of holistic connections which transcended the limits of ethnicity, gender, race and class in her life, now transcends the limit of anthropocentrism. She attains through natural companions what she ever wishes and "She was happy to be part of this vibrant realm, this comforting harmony that she had never thought possible, and this vast blue, bright as the birth of a new flame. Free at last" (304).

## 5. Conclusion

In short, *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* exposes hierarchical thinking and value dualism of Turkish society by identifying the abuse of patriarchy, suppression of women through polygamy, indifference of husband to the emotional needs of his wife, stereotypical gender roles, child molestation and lack of trust in the children's narratives, hegemonic positions of male, the practices of toxic masculinity, fascism of the state, suppressive measures against the protesters, and the subservient position of housewives, dwarfs, prostitutes and trans individuals. The value dualism approves the majority stance and shows cold shoulder to the needs of the individuals, reinforcing hierarchical structures. The courageous counter-hegemonic narrative of the protagonist and her friends demands a heavy price in form of leaving countryside, parental home, community, family and their social esteem. Their loyalty to themselves and their freedom earn admiration. Their unyielding spirit of challenging hierarchical thinking, value dualism and pseudo normality does not end with the struggle for an egalitarian world rather they look for holistic connections and inclusive paradigm of human interaction with society and nature. They enrich their counter-hegemonic narrative through their environmental care and love for fauna and flora of Turkey.

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