



Ecofeminist Perspectives in Pakistani Women's Poetry on Facebook: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Dr. Shabbir Hussain

Assistant Professor, Oriental Learning, University of Education, Lahore

shabbir.hussain@ue.edu.pk

Umaina Sami

MPhil Scholar, University of Education, Lahore, umaimasami3604@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explores the ecofeminist perspectives in Pakistani women's poetry on Facebook, employing a critical discourse analysis approach. By examining a corpus of poetry posts on Facebook, this research reveals how Pakistani women poets utilize social media to challenge dominant narratives around gender, environment, and power. The analysis highlights the ways in which these poets draw upon ecofeminist themes, such as the interconnectedness of human and non-human worlds, the critique of patriarchal capitalism, and the celebration of embodied experiences. This study demonstrates how Pakistani women's poetry on Facebook constitutes a form of feminist activism, leveraging the affordances of social media to promote ecofeminist values, challenge patriarchal norms, and reimagine a more just and sustainable world.

Keywords: ecofeminism, Pakistani women's poetry, Facebook, critical discourse analysis, feminist activism, digital humanities, environmental humanities

Introduction

Ecofeminism is a complex and multifaceted field that draws upon a diverse range of political and theoretical projects, including environmental studies, critiques of science and modernity, development studies, and feminist critical writing and activism (Molyneux & Steinberg, 1995).



At its core, ecofeminism seeks to challenge patriarchal structures and highlight the intersections between the oppression of women and the degradation of nature.

Environment, Islam, and women: a study of eco-feminist environmental activism in Pakistan (Haq et al., 2020) explains the acceleration of the ecofeminist actions are on role. In the context of Pakistani literature, ecofeminist themes have emerged as a powerful medium for expressing resistance and advocating for environmental justice. Pakistani women's poetry, in particular, has played a significant role in challenging dominant narratives and promoting ecofeminist concerns.

The advent of social media platforms, such as Facebook, has further democratized the dissemination of poetry, enabling Pakistani women poets to transcend geographical boundaries and forge transnational feminist solidarities. With approximately 57.3 million Facebook users in Pakistan as of January 2024, accounting for 24.8% of the country's population, social media has become a critical space for feminist activism (NapoleonCat, 2024).

However, despite the growing presence of Pakistani women on social media, significant gender disparities persist. Notably, men comprise 76% of Facebook users in Pakistan, while women make up only 24%. This demographic landscape highlights the challenges faced by women in Pakistan in accessing and utilizing online spaces, which is a critical concern in feminist scholarship.

This study seeks to examine the ecofeminist perspectives in Pakistani women's poetry on Facebook, with a specific focus on the thematic concerns, poetic strategies, and discursive practices employed by these poets. By analyzing the ways in which Pakistani women poets harness the power of social media to challenge patriarchal and environmental oppressions, this research aims to contribute to the burgeoning field of ecofeminist literary studies.

Having established the ecofeminist framework and contextualized the Pakistani women's poetry on Facebook, this study now turns to a close reading of selected poems. The following analysis will delve into the poetic expressions of Pakistani women, exploring how they negotiate the intersections of gender, environment, and social justice. Through a nuanced examination of language, imagery, and themes, this study aims to uncover the ways in which Pakistani women poets give voice to ecofeminist concerns and challenge dominant narratives.

The poem "اُلٹا چکر" (Ulte Chakkar) by Hameeda Shaheen (Facebook, 2022) presents a powerful ecofeminist critique of the societal and environmental upheavals that have disrupted the natural

order of life. The opening lines, "اُنا پھر کوئی چلا ہے" (Some strange cycle has begun), set the tone for a world turned upside down, where the familiar rhythms of nature and human experience have been disrupted.

From an ecofeminist perspective, the poem highlights the interconnectedness of human and non-human worlds. The speaker laments the loss of control over the natural world, where "جہاں جو رکھا، وہاں وہ رکھا نہیں رہا" (What was placed in the world is no longer in its place). This line suggests that the natural balance has been disrupted, and the consequences are being felt in all aspects of life.

The poem also critiques the patriarchal structures that have contributed to this disruption. The speaker notes that "جو لکھنا چاہا، وہ لکھ نہ پائے" (What was meant to be written could not be written), suggesting that the dominant narratives have silenced alternative voices and perspectives. This line can be seen as a commentary on the ways in which patriarchal societies have suppressed women's voices and experiences.

Furthermore, the poem touches on the theme of environmental degradation and the loss of natural beauty. The speaker mourns the fact that "جو گیت ہم سننا چاہتے تھے کسی نے اس کو کبھی نہ گایا" (The songs we wanted to sing were never sung). This line suggests that the natural world, which was once a source of inspiration and joy, has been silenced and degraded.

The final stanzas of the poem offer a powerful commentary on the human condition in the face of environmental and societal upheaval. The speaker asks, "کسے سائیں سفر ہے کیا" (Who can we tell about the journey we are on?), highlighting the sense of disorientation and disconnection that has resulted from the disruption of the natural world.

Overall, Hameeda Shaheen's poem on digital space viz Facebook presents a powerful ecofeminist critique of the societal and environmental upheavals that have disrupted the natural order of life. The poem highlights the interconnectedness of human and non-human worlds, critiques patriarchal structures, and mourns the loss of natural beauty and inspiration.

Saima Aftab's poem, "I am Woman" (میں عورت ہوں), (Facebook, 2023) is a powerful expression of women's experiences and struggles in a patriarchal society. From an ecofeminist perspective, the poem highlights the intersectional nature of oppression, where women's bodies and lives are controlled and exploited, much like the natural world. The speaker's assertion of her identity and agency is a testament to the resilience and strength of women in the face of oppression.

The poem critiques patriarchal norms and structures that perpetuate women's oppression, noting how the speaker has been "دچار" (oppressed) at every stage of her life. This oppression is mirrored in the ways in which the natural world is exploited and degraded. The speaker's resistance and resilience in the face of oppression serve as a powerful reminder of the need for women's empowerment and agency in challenging patriarchal norms and promoting environmental justice.

The poem also touches on the theme of creation and the role of women as caregivers and nurturers. The speaker's statement, "خدا کے بعد میں تخلیق کا کردار عورت ہوں" (After God, I am the creator, a woman), highlights the importance of women's roles in sustaining life and promoting environmental stewardship. This theme is central to ecofeminist thought, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of human and non-human life.

In the context of Pakistani women's poetry on Facebook, Saima Aftab's poem "I am Woman" (میں عورت ہوں) presents a powerful ecofeminist narrative that challenges patriarchal norms and promotes environmental justice. This poem, as a form of digital discourse, exemplifies the ways in which Pakistani women are utilizing social media platforms to express their ecofeminist perspectives and resist oppressive structures.

In conclusion, Saima Aftab's poem "I am Woman" serves as a significant example of ecofeminist perspectives in Pakistani women's poetry on Facebook. This analysis demonstrates the importance of considering the digital sphere as a site for ecofeminist discourse and activism, and highlights the need for further research into the ways in which Pakistani women are utilizing social media to promote environmental justice and challenge patriarchal norms.

A critical discourse analysis of Aftab's poem reveals a nuanced exploration of ecofeminist concerns, where the intersections of patriarchal dominance, systemic oppression, and environmental degradation converge. By asserting her identity and agency, the speaker embodies the unyielding spirit of women resisting oppression, issuing a rallying cry for women to reclaim their autonomy and challenge the entrenched systems perpetuating environmental

degradation and social injustice. Furthermore, the poem's emphasis on the intricate web of relationships between human and non-human entities, coupled with its celebration of women's pivotal roles in sustaining life and fostering environmental stewardship, underscores its profound ecofeminist resonance. This analysis illuminates the ways in which Pakistani women's poetry on Facebook is emerging as a potent platform for ecofeminist activism, catalyzing social change and challenging dominant narratives.

Fatima Mehru is an emerging Woman poet well followed on Facebook in Pakistan. Here we analyze her poem in ecofeminist perspective (Fatima Mehru, 2022). The poem presents a powerful critique of anthropocentrism, challenging the dominant human-centered view that separates humans from nature. The speaker emphasizes the interconnectedness of human life and nature, highlighting the importance of recognizing and respecting this relationship. This perspective is deeply rooted in ecofeminist thought, which emphasizes the need to challenge dominant Western epistemologies that perpetuate the exploitation of nature.

The poem's personification of life as a feminine entity ("زندگی کا دوست بن کر دیکھ لو") reinforces the ecofeminist notion that nature is often feminized and marginalized. This feminization of nature perpetuates patriarchal dominance, reinforcing the notion that women and nature are inferior to men. The speaker's use of feminine imagery to describe life and nature serves as a powerful counter-narrative to this dominant discourse.

The poem also critiques patriarchal dominance over nature and life. The speaker criticizes the addressee's inability to appreciate life's beauty, suggesting that they are trapped in a patriarchal mindset that values domination and control over nature. The line "تم کتابوں میں دیئے سرے، بے وجہ تنقید پڑھتے جا رہے" highlights the ways in which patriarchal knowledge systems perpetuate the exploitation of nature.

The poem's call to action ("اپنے آپ سے باہر نکل کر زندگی کا دوست بن کر دیکھ لو") encourages the addressee to break free from patriarchal constraints and reconnect with nature. This call to action is deeply rooted in ecofeminist thought, which emphasizes the need for humans to adopt a more embodied and reciprocal relationship with nature. The speaker's emphasis on experiencing life's beauty through sensory engagement ("رنگ ہیں اور نور ہے اور کہتیں ہیں") highlights the importance of embodied experience in connecting with nature.

Furthermore, the poem challenges binary thinking, blurring the boundaries between human and non-human. The speaker's use of natural imagery to describe life and human experience serves

as a powerful counter-narrative to dominant Western epistemologies that perpetuate the exploitation of nature. This blurring of boundaries is deeply rooted in ecofeminist thought, which emphasizes the need to challenge dominant Western epistemologies that perpetuate the exploitation of nature.

In conclusion, this poem offers a powerful ecofeminist critique of patriarchal dominance over nature and encourages the reader to adopt a more embodied, interconnected, and empowering relationship with the natural world. Through its use of natural imagery, personification of life as a feminine entity, and call to action, the poem challenges dominant Western epistemologies that perpetuate the exploitation of nature.

As we continue to explore the intersections of ecofeminism and digital activism in Pakistan, it is essential to examine the ways in which Pakistani women poets are using social media platforms to share their ecofeminist perspectives. One such poet is Ambreen Salahudin, whose Ghazal offers a powerful critique of patriarchal dominance and the exploitation of nature. Through a close reading of Salahudin's poem here, we can gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which ecofeminist discourse is being shaped and shared in digital spaces (*Ambreen Salahuddin, 2022*).

The poem presents a powerful critique of patriarchal dominance and the exploitation of nature. The opening lines, "ہوتی ہے جہاں خاک سے تعمیر / ہماری بنی ہے اسی چاک پہ زنجیر ہماری" (The world is built from dust, / Our chains are forged from the same earth), highlight the interconnectedness of human and natural worlds.

The poem also explores the theme of confinement and restriction, emphasizing the ways in which women's lives are circumscribed by patriarchal norms. The lines "ہم وقت سے پہلے بھی پہنچ جائیں اگر / گھر" (We would have arrived earlier, / But our homes are delayed, revealed by the knock), suggest that women's lives are constrained by domestic expectations.

The image of the flower talisman, "اک پھول کا تعویذ بنا رکھا ہے / ہم نے ہر باغ کی خوشبو ہے خبر گیر ہماری" (We have made a flower talisman, / We are aware of every garden's fragrance), serves as a symbol of resistance and empowerment. The speaker suggests that women can find strength and solace in nature.

The final couplet, "ہم نقش سیاہ تھے کسی دیوار سیاہ میں / تجھ آنکھ سے روشن ہوئی تصویر ہماری" (We were a black sketch on a black wall, / Our picture was illuminated by your eye), highlights the theme of visibility and

recognition. The speaker suggests that women's lives and experiences are often erased or marginalized.

The poem's conclusion, "اُس شہر میں رہتے ہیں کرایے کے مکاں میں / جس شہر میں موجود ہے جاگیر ہماری" (We live in rented houses in this city, / Where our estate/inheritance exists), serves as a powerful commentary on the dispossession and displacement of women.

Overall, Ambreen Salahudin's Ghazal presents a powerful ecofeminist critique of patriarchal dominance, confinement, and the exploitation of nature. The poem highlights the interconnectedness of human and natural worlds, emphasizing the need for women's empowerment and recognition.

Zahra Nigah, a prominent Pakistani woman poet, has long been recognized for her powerful and evocative works that explore themes of social justice, feminism, and environmental degradation. Her poem, "Dastoor" (Law/Code), is a thought-provoking critique of human society's relationship with the natural world (*Saima Naureen Bukhari*, 2022).

The poem presents a stark contrast between the harmonious, symbiotic relationships within nature and the chaotic, exploitative dynamics of human society. The speaker describes the jungle as a space governed by its own "dastur" (law or code), where creatures coexist, respect each other's boundaries, and work together in times of crisis. This portrayal resonates with ecofeminist principles, which emphasize the interconnectedness of all living beings and the need to challenge anthropocentric and patriarchal dominance.

The poem also highlights the maternal, nurturing aspects of nature, embodied in the image of the myna bird protecting the crow's eggs. This motif speaks to the ecofeminist concept of "care ethics," which prioritizes empathy, compassion, and reciprocity in human relationships with the natural world.

However, the speaker's longing for the jungle's law to be applied in the city is not merely a romanticized notion of a harmonious natural world. Rather, it serves as a scathing critique of human society's moral bankruptcy. By suggesting that the jungle's law, governed by ferocious animals, is preferable to human society's current state, the speaker is underscoring the notion that humans have sunk lower than the most primal and savage creatures.

This critique resonates with ecofeminist analyses of the intersections between patriarchy, capitalism, and environmental degradation. Ecofeminist scholars argue that the same logic of domination and exploitation that underlies patriarchal societies also drives the destruction of the

natural world. The speaker's lament, therefore, can be seen as a call to recognize and challenge these intersecting systems of oppression.

Ultimately, Zahra Nigah's "Dastoor" presents a powerful ecofeminist critique of human society's relationship with the natural world. By highlighting the failures of human morality and the wisdom of the natural world, the speaker invites us to reimagine our place within the web of life and to strive for a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.

This study has explored the ecofeminist perspectives in Pakistani women's poetry on Facebook, employing a critical discourse analysis approach. The analysis of selected poems by Pakistani women poets, including Hameeda Shaheen, Saima Aftab, Ambreen Salahuddin, and Zahra Nigah, reveals a powerful ecofeminist critique of patriarchal dominance, environmental degradation, and social injustice. These poets harness the affordances of social media to challenge dominant narratives, promote ecofeminist values, and reimagine a more just and sustainable world.

The findings of this study contribute to the burgeoning field of ecofeminist literary studies, highlighting the importance of considering digital spaces as sites for ecofeminist discourse and activism. Future research directions may include exploring the intersectionalities of ecofeminism with other social justice movements, examining the impact of digital activism on environmental policy and practice, and investigating the ways in which Pakistani women's poetry on Facebook reflects and shapes cultural attitudes towards gender, environment, and social justice.

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