

No Social Justice without Ecological Justice: An Eco-feminist Study of Jamil Ahmad' the Wandering Falcon

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Abstract

This research paper anatomizes Jamil Ahmad' the Wandering Falcon (2011) from the perspective of Françoise d'Eaubonne (1974) and Greta Gaard's theory of ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is a movement that sees connection between the exploitation of the natural world and the subordination of women. The study visualizes how Ahmad depicts the ecological landscape of the tribal areas of Pakistan as the primal setting of man where every individual contains his or her essence of a "tribal gene" for war. From eco-feminist theoretical perspective, this research examines how environmental exploitation continues to marginalize the women perpetually; they are beaten and killed as the earth is destroyed during tribal conflicts and fights. The exploitation of nature has inflicted great pain and suffering on them. This qualitative research examines the maltreatment of women and nature, taking in consideration the exploitation of nature and its effect on women. The present paper projects the importance of nature in the lives of tribal women by challenging the relegation of nature and women to a lower section to be dominated and destroyed. By highlighting the destruction of nature and oppression of women depicted in The Wandering Falcon, this research advocates for a more sustainable world.

Keywords: *Ecofeminism, Indigenous feminism, Nature, Oppression, The Wandering Falcon. Jamil Ahmed.*

1. Introduction

Ecofeminism is linked to environmentalism and feminism as it emphasizes the importance of the relationship between women and the earth in both its theory and practice. The term Ecofeminism was first used by French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne in her book "Le Féminisme ou la Mort" (Feminism or Death) in 1974. (Merchant 1992; Warren, 2002). Ecofeminism, according to Françoise d'Eaubonne, establishes the connection between the oppression and dominance upon nature and all oppressed groups, including women, people of color, and children. By establishing this connection ecofeminists seek for a holistic approach to justice and sustainability.

According to eco-feminist theory, a feminist view of ecology does not place women in a prominent position of authority, but rather pushes for a democratic, cooperative society in which there is no single dominant group. In order to examine, "exploitation of nature leads to the discrimination of indigenous women" (Farooq, Murtaza & Shafiq, 2020), eco-feminist analysis looks at the relationships that exist between women and nature in culture, religion, literature, and iconography. These similarities include, but are not limited to, the view that males are the keepers of culture and women are the guards of nature, as well as

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how men dominate women and how people dominate the natural world. The importance of respecting both women and nature has been emphasized.

Warren (2002) asserts that both feminism and ecofeminism share the perception of patriarchy as their initial point of engagement. The former movement does, however, emphasize the need to eradicate racism, classicism, heterosexism, ageism, anti-semitism, and ethnocentrism because these are the burdens that prevent women from being unconventional. The later trend, however, focuses more on the analogy made between the management of women and nature. Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies (2014) assert that women and nature are oppressed by patriarchal capitalist structure and thus both are interconnected (Mies & Shiva). Man exploits both nature and woman in many forms of exploitation which are same or different for nature and women. Ecofeminism advocates ecological balance and gender equality by rejecting the logic of dominance.

Eco-feminists agree on the point that ecofeminism challenges the domination and oppression. This provides scope for an eco-feminist analysis of *The Wandering Falcon* by Jamil Ahmad as it shows women and nature are equally victims of exploitation. "Since the past thirty years, the world has been experiencing unprecedented interest in matters concerning women on one hand, and ecological issues on the other" (cited in Farooq, 2019). The present study is an attempt to investigate how nature and women are connected to each other and how these two are being exploited. Moreover, the selected text is analyzed from the perspective of the political, cultural and social viewpoints that contribute in this exploitation.

2. Literature Review

Existing literature focuses on gendered environmentalism, the role of gender in mediating interactions between people and the environment. The influence of gender roles, responsibilities, or norms in forming relationships with the environment has been the focus of the existing literature. The critics analyzed relationship between nature and women from the perspective of sustainable development by focusing on the relationship between gender and environment as well as gender differences in response to environmental hazards. Shiva (1988) in her book, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*, asserts that the best time for women was initial phase when they lived a natural life. Colonial masters brought oppression tools which created hierarchy as men started considering nature and women their absolute owning. She argues that, for the survival of nature and women the path of harmony and diversity should be adopted instead of domination and oppression.

Beena Agarwal (1992) highlights the scenario of opposing dimensions of women as victims of environmental degradation and as actors of environmental protection in rural India, which is relatable to other third-world countries. Agarwal reviews the eco-feministic debate by explaining the Indian variant of it and suggests for an alternative approach concerning, "how gender relations and relations between people and the non-human world are conceptualized and how they are concretized in terms of the distribution of property, power, and knowledge and in the formulation of development policies and programs" (p. 153). Haq. et al. (2020) in "Environment, Islam, and women: a study of eco-feminist environmental activism in Pakistan" surveyed environmental activism in Pakistan through existing literature, media reports and environmental activists campaigns by using eco-feminist approach under the Islamic teachings and behaviors towards them. They find that in Pakistan women have pro- environmental behavior.

Jabeen (2018) looks into the material realities of both the genders in post-colonial societies. By analyzing some of the post-colonial Anglophone literature she calls forth the need for post-colonial perspective to the mainstream ecofeminism. According to her the mainstream ecofeminism has assumption of a typical "women-nature relationship in which women have a caring and compassionate attitude toward their natural environment and if they fail to do so, it is because they have internalized patriarchal ideologies that sanctions the

oppression of both women and nature. Instead, this intervention underscores multiple facets of the woman–nature relationship.” (p. 4)

Bhalla (2019) sees the cooperation of nature and women in Margaret’s novel *Surfacing*. The protagonist of the novel remains unnamed; she is unable to bear the atrocities of her husband, thus goes to the world of nature and forest for relaxation. The objects of nature help her to stand up again to face her husband. Rahman (2019) in her book through eco-critical perspective focuses on material aspect of the environment and attachment of people to the places depicted in contemporary fiction by Pakistani women writers. This leads her to dig into women’s “important relation to land and food.” (p. 3) Rahman concludes that Pakistan is a “place instead—one that includes landscapes cut my manmade borders and seascapes where human and nonhumans struggle to survive.”(p. 9)

The present study serves as a rejoinder to fulfill the existing gape; it is an attempt to analyze *The Wandering Falcon* from the perspective of ecofeminist concerns of Francoise d’Eaubonne (1974) and Greta Gaard (1993). Ecofeminism accounts for the patriarchal cultures’ practices on both nature and women. The patriarchal oppressions are not only shared by nature and women but also both share many similarities and are connected to each other. *The Wandering Falcon* depicts the social position of women and nature under the harsh and severe rules and the deplorable way of life in the tribal communities of Pakistan. The indigenous people must contend with both the apathy of nature and the dominance of civilization.

3. Data Analysis

Jamil Ahmad experienced and observed the tribal areas as government official. His realistic work *The Wandering Falcon* offers captivating insight into the lives of the tribes, their norms, beliefs, traditions, political, environmental, economic systems as well as their retaliations and conflicts. *The Wandering Falcon* is a collection of connected stories which describes tribes’ miserable living conditions, including poverty, harsh weather, unbreakable customs and norms, isolation from modern societies, a lack of infrastructure and education that would enable mobility, as well as their unrivalled pride in their unique clan identities.

Through ecofeministic lens the first two stories “The Sins of the Mother” and “A Point of Honor” in *Wandering Falcon* show the Baloch people’s enormous pride and honor which they cannot compromise, even at the cost their lives.

The strictness and obstinacy of their cultural norms, particularly those that pertain to women, correspond to the harshness and intensity of the local environment. “The Sins of the Mother” the narrative dismantles that harsh natural environment prevents GulBibi’s escape when she elopes with her lover to flee the conventions that had tied her to her infertile husband. Her strengths are drained by travelling in the severe weather in the desert.

“No habitation for miles around and no vegetation except for a few wasted and barren date trees and no water other than a trickle among some salt-encrusted boulders which also dries out occasionally, manifesting a degree of hostility. Nature has not remained content merely at this. In this land, she has also created the dreaded wind of a hundred and twenty years” (Ahmad, 2011, p. 12).

This is the description of the surroundings where GulBibi reaches. The world around her was barren even when she was with her husband. The nature is presented as a character just like female characters in the story “The Sins of the Mother”. This highlights the hostility of environment and women’s agency and freedom. The oppressive culture and norms that bound GulBibi coordinate with harsh weather conditions. The crudeness of nature has nothing to offer so “some men would lose their minds after too long an exposure to such desolation and loneliness”; as GulBibi challenged the norms of sexual and marital

relationships causing men of her tribe (Siahpad) to lose their minds. 'Nature has not remained content' but GulBibi from her first appearance in the story seems content. Nature being her ally shows the rage that GulBibi herself cannot. Thus, the characters of nature and GulBibi fade the distinctive lines in different ways. For instance, she and her companion who is mentioned as 'camel rider' in the story arrive at the army camp exhausted and thirsty, the man drops water on her face and "as she sensed water, she started sucking his hand and fingers like a small animal" and then "she lunged towards the bucket, plunged her head into it and drank with long gasping sound." Plunging the head into the water would have given the clear impression of being an animal even if the simile 'like a small animal' is not used. Metaphorically it shows her connection to nature and by illustrating her animal-like behavior. During the several years, which they spend in the fort, she tries to make her home comfortable with the available resources from making mats from date leaves to quoting the mud in their living room. The camel carries out his duty to fetch the water for soldiers during all the years. At the end of the story, after many years when eventually they get caught by the people of their tribe, the camel is also killed along with her by her lover. She and the camel died for their unknown sin.

Similarly, while escaping from the pursuers of their tribes they hide themselves by piling up "scrub and thorn bush to hide them and their camel". Nature helps them by offering hidouts and cuddling but temporary shelter. Eventually, when they are found by the father and husband of GulBibi, she offers her back to be shot by her lover without hesitation, an act and plan which was being discussed many times between them. The kneeling camel is also shot by him as per his plan. As a mother, GulBibi's last words are "do not kill the boy. They might spare him. I am ready" and she is shot while still speaking. The man is also stoned to death by the men of the tribe and the boy left alone in the desolated dessert. Later, the boy, "squeezed against the dead camel as the sandstorm approached". The mother spares the boy's life but as he is left to die, the dead camel serves as the lap of the mother and the mother-nature sends sandstorm to cover him up substituting his mother. In this way, the nature and animal and GulBibi substitute and assist one another. The 'sin of mother' is left to be buried alive.

The above discussion points towards the culture and the rule of the Siahpad tribe to clean the sin with the blood of the sinner. The father of GulBibi tries to bring the child of her daughter with him but other tribal people don't allow him to do so. The father of GulBibi was also slaughtered by the tribes as he insulted his son-in-law by calling him incapable and a reason for his daughter to elopement.

In the second story, we come to know that the boy is discovered by another group of tribal people who take him along with them. Later, he comes across a subedar, (army officer) who knew the boy from the time when he served at the camp where the boy's mother stayed for several years. The boy remains a part of every story known as Tor Baz or wandering Falcon. Being asked about his identity by a commissioner, his reply is: "It is true, I am neither a Mahsud nor a Wazir. But I can tell you as little about who I am as I can about who I shall be. Think of Tor Baz as your hunting falcon. That should be enough." (Ahmad, 2011, p. 25). Nature nourishes him up in different places and with the help of different people. Throughout the stories in *The Wandering Falcon* he witnesses different scenes of crimes, robbery, kidnapping etc.

The Sale Completed and The Betrothal of Shah Zarina also depict the situation of objectification of the women. There is a place where women are bought and sold on every Thursday. The narrator shows the observation of a waiter of a hotel where people stay to sell or buy different women.

"Women, some little more than infants, some already on the threshold between middle and old age; some who laughed at their fate and others who never stopped crying? Some who appeared once and then vanished completely. Others came again and again, sold sometimes to one man and then to another. There were those who had run away from their husbands or their fathers and those who were running away from life." (Ahmad, 2011, p. 41).

The statement throws light on the subjugating experiences of women of tribal areas as represented in *The Wandering Falcon*. The passage also shows that women of every age i.e. from young girls to the old age come across oppressive circumstances. These women try to get rid of these circumstances by defiance or resigning their role in search of freedom. Their emotional reactions also range from laughing to crying which reflects their helplessness in coping with the situation.

Shah Zarina is one among such women. The portrayal of Shah Zarina's oppressiveness and eventually her encounter with Toz Baz (wandering Falcon) shows the interconnectedness between women and nature and struggle for liberation.

She is a young woman oppressed by the laws and traditions and she does not even have her father's backing. Her husband, a bear-trainer, preferred all the needs of his bear and neglects her. When she complains he tells her, "I can get another wife but not another bear" (Ahmad, 2011, p. 38). He treats her as he treats his bear, "She would live a life no more comfortable than that of the bear. If the bear ate his food, so did Shah Zarina. If it chose to go hungry, so would she. If the bear stayed awake during the night, Shah Zarina could not join her husband in the only quilt they had. In the morning, along with the bear, Shah Zarina would get her day's beating" (Ahmad, 2011, p. 38). This is her and the bear's fate that they are to be beaten every day. The only difference occurs that she manages to escape from her husband to get back to her parent's home. The bear might continue with the same routine. Her parents do not care about her feelings or mental health; their only concern was about the money they would lose if she stayed. Shah Zarina listens to her parents' conversation out of helplessness and great grief, yet she has no choice but to leave the house at night. On the way, she is kidnapped by Afzal Khan who takes her with another lady, Sherakai and sells them. Tor Baz buys her from Afzal Khan. Bewildered and distressed by her past life, Shah Zarina is in a hope to find someone. On the other hand, Tor Baz is also happy to take her as he expresses: "I could settle down with this one. Who but God knows what the future holds for me and for this land? Maybe it is time now to end my wanderings" (Ahmad, 2011, p. 42). Tor Baz or wandering Falcon thinks to settle down after wandering place to place. He has been a part of nature and land, now becomes the part of humans and worries about the future of himself and the land.

Women face environmental upheavals throughout the year. They have to travel for miles in harsh weather to fetch water and collect firewood. The narrator in *The Guide*, while on his way to the Afridi tribe, sees a few girls who walk with water pitchers on their heads to fetch water from some spring, perhaps miles away. They would make at least three trips during the day to get water for their kinsmen and yet find it within them to make another trip to refill the wayside drums which provide water for travelers. These were usually small bands of women and girls who moved exceedingly fast so they could reach and occupy the best sites before the others did. The mature women walked in front while the very young girls some of them hardly eight or nine years old skipped along in the rear. In summer, their job is comparatively less tormenting. However, the coming of winter proclaims a season of real pain for them. They have to make preparations for it much earlier by collecting enough firewood to make it sufficient for the snowy and rainy weeks. But, water is something for which they have to travel almost daily. It is considered womanly to do such jobs. Doing some paid job or economic independence of a woman and going to school are unfamiliar concepts for them. It is not unusual that even eight or nine year old girls go along with their elderly women to forests for collecting wood and water instead of going to schools for education. Covered from head to toe, while they travel in the harsh weather, they have to be careful not to show any sign of immorality which means certain death in this land of high norms and honor. The local cultural indifference to the necessity of health centers for women adds to their misery when the weather is harsh. "On the mountain, the survival of the mother and child depended entirely on nature. The timing had to be just right so that the mother did not have to carry the child on the journey during the last days of pregnancy." (Ahmad, 2011, p. 35).

There are numerous instances of women being sold as commodities by men who hold authority over them. The females have accepted it as their destiny. They are unable to live lives of independence and are instead forced to live as the property of one or more males. In "The Death of Camels", Jamil Ahmad narrates the incident of violence that is happened due to conflict between Army and the Pawindah People. The Pawindah people, a nomadic tribe, who are not rooted in any one place and instead move between Pakistan and Afghanistan according to the seasons. They follow only the law of nature and not the government by considering themselves free to move everywhere without traveling documents. They are killed by the army along with their camels while crossing the borders.

"This way of life had endured for centuries, but it would not last forever. It constituted defiance to certain concepts, which the world was beginning to associate with civilization itself. Concepts such as statehood, citizenship, undivided loyalty to one state, settled life as opposed to nomadic life, and the writ of the state as opposed to tribal discipline."(Ahmad, 2011, p. 14).

This story is full of forcefulness and is a threat to the tribal community. It illustrates the miserable situation of the Pawindah tribe as the government regulations denied their free movement. Jamil Ahmad narrated the incident of violence that is happened due to conflict between Army and the Pawindah People. "They had hardly gone fifty yards when two machine guns opened up from either side and mowed down the camels. The firing was indiscriminate. Men, women and children died." (Ahmad, 2011, p.22).

There were hundreds of camels and sheep killed along with women and children. The stench from the dead animals was so terrible that it was driving the soldiers mad. They also say that while the camel bones and skulls have been bleached white with time, the shale gorge still reeks of death." The *Wandering Falcon* shows interpersonal fierceness between the characters in the forms of beating, women subjugation, revenge, murder, and kidnapping.

The analysis of the stories from an eco-feminist point of view shows that the society being presented in these stories is male dominated. So, man in his ravenousness and through selfishness has dominated both nature and woman, resulting in destruction of the former and demoralization of the later. Both nature and woman, suffer damage and destruction at his hand. The damage done to nature is displayed through falling of trees, destruction of the landscape, hunting and killing of animals for pleasure and pride. The analysis of the text depicts that the trait of being a warrior is linked to fearlessness and physical strength, to use arms skillfully, especially for taking revenge and seeking power for maintaining ultimate dominance over the rivals and making one's own day. Here are some examples from the text that show power. It is not good to hear a Baluch even a child cries. (Ahmad, 2011, p. 24) We do not accept the power of anyone else to decide who our chief shall be or shall not be (Ahmad,2011, p. 26). Mahsuds, because they always hunt in groups, are known as the wolves of Waziristan. A Wazir hunts alone. He is known as "the leopard" to other men (Ahmad, 2011, p.86

The above mentioned characters do not bow before others and remain ready to fight for the cause of honor and revenge. The case of honor is of utmost significance in their lives and they tend to relate every utterance and every action with their honor and decide their actions of life accordingly. The comparison to a leopard represents the Wazir tribes' love of hunting and their willingness to venture out into the wild like daring and courageous leopards. Thus men are also animalized as hunters like wolves and leopards. In the context of tribal members of the Wazir community, who are portrayed as carnivores, brave, controlling and ruling the other people ruthlessly, the leopard metaphor is particularly significant. This demonstrates how their daily lives are affected by the conflict and terror. The use of wild animal metaphors further piques the readers' interest since they assume that tribal people are vicious fighters and war enthusiasts who lack compassion and other subtle feelings.

The story named *A Kidnapping*, throws light on the social, cultural, economic, and domestic patterns of two rival tribes, Mahsud and Wazir settled in Waziristan. The warrior traits of the men are apparent as the author described women involved in taking care of lands and fetching water while the men were engaged in violent acts. "Every few months, the hate and tensions explode into violence and some men die, never the women, who continue caring for the land and fetching water from the river" (Ahmad, 2011, p. 24).

"Nature has bred in both an unusual abundance of anger, enormous resilience, and a total refusal to accept their fate. If nature provides them food for only ten days in a year, they believe in their right to demand the rest of their sustenance from their fellow men who live oily, fat, and comfortable lives in the plains".(Ahmad, 2011, p. 24).

The above lines show that hunting animals and birds are part of their daily lives and it is considered that by hunting they might get food for a few days, the rest of the days are spent through robbery, kidnapping and raids. Hunting and all the ways, like robbery etc. are ways of treading and crushing the resources of the earth and nature. One of the kidnappers is in need of money to pay the bride's price.

In this book, Jamil Ahmad very (just mention title of the book and also avoid the words like 'very' as its too subjective approach) artistically demonstrates the tribal sense of dominance and theme of warrior ship by depicting the terminology of wandering tribes. It is a dominating culture which affixes the word Khan as their surname to associate themselves with the spirit of commanding and leadership. Sardar Karim Khan in the novel ranks himself as General because his people have given him this title as a symbol of bravery and fighting spirit. Similarly, Malik is not less than the tribal chief or sub-chief who possesses the authority of punishing the criminals and appreciating the well-wishers of the society. The title of Jangu Khan, a person who is always engaged in the fights, clearly reflects the honor and dignity associated with being a warrior.

The description of warfare objects in the work also approves the idea that tribal people have the habitual use of arms in their real life. The writer of *The Wandering Falcon* has employed the terms related to war weapons to show how much they love to keep the war weapons such as gun, sword, dagger etc. to fight and use against anyone who challenges their dignity and honor. The Gun is an integral part of their everyday life and a symbol of honor and courage. Jamil Ahmad has best described this tribal life as; "A Household stove may be allowed to go cold but barrel of a gun must be kept warm" (Ahmad, 2011, p.12). Moreover, the quality and sophistication of weapons signify the superiority over other tribal group. This sense of dominance is measured by the number of male members in the tribe, the quality and number of guns and number of bullets. In short, these guns and bullets destroy the earth, animals and women in acts of honor killing.

4. Conclusion

To sum up it can be said that the patriarchal culture as presented by Jamil Ahmad; "not only try to dominate nature outside but it is also the nature of women and nature as woman which must be tamed" (cited in Farooq & Awan, p. 3). *The Wandering Falcon* has systematically dehumanized women, rendered them invisible and deprived them of the consciousness of their being a full human with equal rights. The harmful weather conditions which generate migration and drought worsen their wretchedness. Though, the tribal cultures may not be taken as massive as in some women are sold like commodity and in others they are taken as family honour, what they do share among them is culturally deep-rooted dehumanization of their women. In the absence of access to and opportunities of flexibility and awareness, the women cannot make systematic agentic resistance. Each story in *The Wandering Falcon* is an account of exploitation of women and environmental degradation. Through this account of mistreatment of women and destruction of environment women and nature are connected to each other.

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