



ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND SOCIOPOLITICAL LOSS: EXPLORING CLIMATE JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN AGHA SHAHID ALI'S POETRY

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Abstract

This study examined the intersection of climate justice, human rights, and environmental representation in the poetry of Agha Shahid Ali, with particular focus on *The Half-Inch Himalayas*. While existing research has largely explored Ali's work through themes of exile, memory, and political conflict, limited attention has been given to its ecocritical and justice-oriented dimensions. This article argued that Ali's poetic landscapes function as sites where environmental degradation, cultural displacement, and sociopolitical violence converge, offering an early literary articulation of climate justice. Drawing on ecocritical theory and climate justice frameworks, the study analysed how natural imagery of mountains, rivers, and seasons embodies both ecological vulnerability and human suffering. The research demonstrated that environmental loss in Ali's poetry is inseparable from the erosion of identity, memory, and human dignity, particularly within the politically contested space of Kashmir. By foregrounding the disproportionate impact of environmental and political instability on marginalised communities, the study positioned Ali's poetry as a form of ethical testimony. Ultimately, this paper contributed to interdisciplinary debates by illustrating how literary texts can deepen understanding of climate justice as a human rights issue, expanding ecocriticism beyond representation toward questions of equity, responsibility, and global environmental ethics.

Keywords: *Agha Shahid Ali, Climate Justice, Eco-critical Study, Environmental Ethics, Kashmir, Natural Imagery.*

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1. Introduction

Climate change is no longer understood solely as an environmental or scientific concern; it has increasingly been recognised as a profound ethical and political crisis. Central to this shift is the concept of climate justice, which foregrounds the uneven distribution of environmental harm and highlights how marginalised communities disproportionately bear the consequences of ecological degradation. (Rob Nixon, 2011; Henry Shue, 2014). These communities, often contributing least to global environmental damage, experience intensified vulnerability in the form of resource scarcity, displacement, and the erosion of cultural and social structures. In this context, climate change intersects directly with fundamental human rights, including the rights to life, health, livelihood, and cultural identity.

While climate justice has been widely discussed in policy and scientific discourse, its representation in literature offers a critical yet underexplored dimension. Literary texts, particularly poetry, possess a unique capacity to render environmental crisis as a lived, emotional, and ethical experience rather than an abstract phenomenon. Through imagery, metaphor, and narrative voice, poetry can articulate the human consequences of ecological loss in ways that transcend statistical or policy-based accounts. (Cheryll Glotfelty 1996) This makes literature an important site for examining the intersection of environmental degradation and human suffering. (Lawrence Buell, 2005)

The poetry of Agha Shahid Ali provides a compelling framework for such an inquiry. Widely recognised for his exploration of exile, memory, and political conflict, Ali's work is deeply rooted in the landscape of Kashmir—a region marked by both ecological richness and sociopolitical instability. His collection **The Half-Inch Himalayas** presents landscapes not merely as physical settings but as dynamic sites of memory, identity, and loss. Mountains, rivers, snow, and seasons are imbued with emotional and historical significance, reflecting the intimate connection between environment and human experience.

Despite the richness of these ecological representations, existing scholarship on Ali has largely prioritised themes of exile, nostalgia, and political resistance, often overlooking the environmental dimensions of his work. This critical gap becomes particularly significant when considering the broader discourse of climate justice, which emphasises the interconnectedness of environmental degradation, sociopolitical inequality, and human rights violations. Ali's poetry, though not explicitly framed as environmental activism, anticipates these concerns by portraying landscapes as vulnerable entities intertwined with human histories of displacement and violence.

This study addresses this gap by examining Ali's poetry through an ecocritical lens informed by climate justice and human rights frameworks. It argues that Ali's poetic landscapes function as sites of convergence where ecological and sociopolitical crises are

inseparable. Environmental degradation in his work is not depicted as an isolated phenomenon but as part of a broader system of loss that includes cultural erasure, political marginalisation, and the fragmentation of identity. In this sense, his poetry challenges the notion of environmental crisis as universal, instead revealing its uneven and deeply political nature.

The concept of ecopoetics is particularly useful in this analysis, as it highlights how poetic form and language engage with ecological concerns. In Ali's work, the compression of vast landscapes into fragile images such as postcards or memory fragments suggests the precariousness of both environment and identity. This aesthetic strategy reflects a broader ecological anxiety: the transformation of lived environments into distant, consumable representations, which in turn facilitates their neglect and destruction. Such representations resonate strongly with climate justice discourse, where the invisibility of marginalised communities often contributes to their continued vulnerability.

Furthermore, this study situates Ali's poetry within the context of postcolonial ecocriticism, which examines how histories of colonialism, militarisation, and geopolitical conflict shape environmental experiences. Kashmir, as depicted in Ali's work, emerges as a space where ecological fragility and political violence intersect, reinforcing the idea that environmental and human rights crises are deeply interconnected. By highlighting this relationship, the study underscores the importance of recognising environmental degradation as not only an ecological issue but also a matter of justice and ethical responsibility.

The significance of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach, which bridges literary studies, environmental humanities, and human rights discourse. By analysing Ali's poetry through the framework of climate justice, the study expands the scope of ecocriticism beyond descriptive analysis to engage with questions of inequality, responsibility, and moral accountability. It demonstrates that literature can serve as a powerful medium for understanding the human dimensions of environmental crisis, offering insights that are often absent from scientific and policy-oriented discussions.

In doing so, this paper contributes to ongoing debates about the role of the humanities in addressing global challenges such as climate change. It argues that poetry, far from being merely aesthetic, functions as a form of ethical engagement that can illuminate the lived realities of environmental injustice. Through its exploration of loss, memory, and displacement, Ali's work invites readers to reconsider the relationship between environment and humanity, emphasising the urgent need for a more just and inclusive approach to environmental discourse.

1.1. Research Objectives

1. To identify and analyse how themes of climate justice and human rights intersect in Agha Shahid Ali's poetry

1. To examine how Agha Shahid Ali's work portrays the relationship between environmental degradation and sociopolitical forms of loss

1.2. Research Questions

2. How do Agha Shahid Ali's poems intertwine the themes of climate justice and human rights, and what are the implications of their intersection?
3. In what ways does Agha Shahid Ali's work depict the connection between environmental degradation and sociopolitical forms of loss, and how does this affect the human experience in his poetry?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Ecocriticism: From Nature Representation to Political Ecology

Ecocriticism has evolved significantly from its early focus on the representation of nature in literature to a more complex and politically engaged field. Early or "first-wave" ecocriticism primarily celebrated wilderness, pastoral aesthetics, and nature writing, often treating the environment as a separate and idealised entity (Buell, 1995; Garrard, 2012). However, contemporary ecocritical scholarship has shifted towards examining the entanglement of environmental issues with sociopolitical structures such as capitalism, colonialism, and global inequality. This shift marks the transition toward political ecology, where environmental degradation is understood as inseparable from systems of power (Heise, 2008).

A key development in this regard is the recognition that environmental harm is unevenly distributed and often shaped by historical and structural inequalities. Scholars have emphasised that issues such as deforestation, pollution, and climate change cannot be analysed without considering the roles of race, class, and geopolitics (Ghosh, 2016). The concept of "slow violence," introduced by Rob Nixon (2011), is particularly relevant here, as it describes environmental damage that occurs gradually and invisibly, disproportionately affecting marginalised communities. This framework is especially useful in literary analysis, where poetry often captures the subtle, long-term impacts of ecological degradation that escape immediate visibility.

In this expanded framework, literature is no longer viewed merely as a reflection of nature but as an active participant in environmental discourse. Ecocriticism thus becomes a critical tool for examining how texts reveal, critique, and reimagine the relationship between humans and the natural world within broader systems of inequality (Garrard, 2012).

2.2. Ecopoetics: Language, Form, and Ecological Consciousness

Ecopoetics, a subfield of ecocriticism, focuses specifically on the relationship between poetic form, language, and ecological awareness (Skinner, 2001; Knickerbocker, 2012). Unlike traditional literary approaches that prioritise thematic content, ecopoetics emphasises how formal elements such as fragmentation, imagery, rhythm, and silence—

shape environmental meaning. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of contemporary ecological crises, where conventional narrative forms often fail to capture the scale and complexity of environmental change (Gosh, 2016).

Recent research highlights several defining features of ecopoetic practice. One of the most significant is the decentring of anthropocentrism, where poetry shifts attention away from human dominance and recognises the agency of non-human entities. This perspective aligns with broader theoretical movements such as posthumanism and new materialism, which challenge the hierarchical distinction between human and non-human life (Bristow, 2015).

Another key feature is formal innovation. Poets frequently employ fragmented structures, disjointed imagery, and linguistic experimentation to reflect ecological instability and disruption. Such techniques mirror the fractured state of contemporary ecosystems and create a sense of disorientation that parallels environmental crisis (Knickerbocker, 2012). Additionally, ecopoetics is deeply invested in affect, seeking to evoke emotional and ethical responses that extend beyond scientific data or policy discourse. By fostering empathy, poetry becomes a powerful medium for engaging readers with environmental issues on a personal level (Bristow, 2015).

Scholarly analyses of ecopoetry across diverse traditions demonstrate its versatility. Studies of poets such as Mahmoud Darwish and Naomi Shihab Nye reveal how ecological imagery can function as a form of political resistance, linking land, identity, and occupation (Benvenuto, 2015). Similarly, research on Seamus Heaney illustrates how poetry can serve as both a reflection of and an intervention in environmental concerns, particularly through its engagement with local landscapes and conservation efforts (O'Brien, 2010). These studies collectively underscore the capacity of ecopoetry to bridge the gap between aesthetic expression and ethical responsibility.

2.3. Climate Justice: Expanding the Scope of Environmental Discourse

The emergence of climate justice as a critical framework represents a significant shift in environmental thought. Unlike traditional environmentalism, which often focuses on conservation and sustainability in abstract terms, climate justice foregrounds issues of equity, accountability, and human rights (Schloberg, 2007). It recognises that climate change is not experienced uniformly but disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, particularly those in the Global South (Nixon, 2011).

Scholars in this field identify several key dimensions of climate justice. Distributive justice concerns the unequal allocation of environmental harms and benefits, highlighting how marginalised communities bear the brunt of pollution, resource scarcity, and climate-related disasters. Procedural justice emphasises the importance of inclusive decision-making processes, ensuring that affected communities have a voice in environmental governance. Recognition justice focuses on the acknowledgement of

diverse cultural perspectives and knowledge systems, particularly those of Indigenous communities. Finally, reparative justice addresses historical responsibilities, including the legacies of colonialism and industrial exploitation that have contributed to current environmental crises (Schlosberg, 2007).

These dimensions are increasingly reflected in interdisciplinary scholarship that connects environmental studies with sociology, political theory, and human rights law. However, despite this growing body of work, the application of climate justice frameworks to literary analysis remains limited. While many studies acknowledge themes of displacement, inequality, and ecological loss in literature, few explicitly engage with the structured dimensions of climate justice as analytical tools.

This gap highlights the need for a more systematic integration of climate justice into ecocritical studies. By doing so, literary analysis can move beyond descriptive accounts of environmental themes to engage more directly with questions of power, responsibility, and ethical accountability.

2.4. Environmental and Sociopolitical Loss in Literature

One of the central concerns of contemporary ecocritical scholarship is the relationship between environmental degradation and sociopolitical loss. Environmental loss extends beyond the physical destruction of ecosystems to include the erosion of cultural practices, livelihoods, and collective identities (Heise, 2008). This broader understanding is particularly relevant in contexts where communities maintain deep connections to specific landscapes, making environmental change a profoundly disruptive force.

Literary texts, especially poetry, play a crucial role in articulating these complex forms of loss. Through imagery and metaphor, poets are able to convey the emotional and cultural dimensions of environmental change in ways that complement and challenge scientific narratives. Ecopoetry, in particular, often represents landscapes as repositories of memory and identity, emphasising the inseparability of human and ecological systems (Knickerbocker, 2012).

Recent studies across global contexts demonstrate how poetry can document and critique environmental injustice. African ecopoetry, for instance, frequently addresses the impacts of oil extraction, highlighting the interconnectedness of ecological destruction, economic exploitation, and political corruption (Nixon, 2011). Indigenous poetry in North America emphasises the loss of ancestral lands and traditional ecological knowledge, framing environmental degradation as both a cultural and existential crisis. Similarly, urban ecopoetry explores the ecological dimensions of city life, challenging the dichotomy between nature and urban environments.

Despite these diverse approaches, a common theme emerges: environmental harm is rarely isolated from broader sociopolitical processes. Instead, it is embedded within

systems of power that shape access to resources, exposure to risk, and the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. Literature thus becomes a vital medium for exposing these interconnected forms of injustice and for imagining alternative relationships between humans and the environment.

2.5. Human Rights and the Environmental Crisis

The integration of human rights into environmental discourse represents another significant development in contemporary scholarship. Increasingly, climate change is recognised as a human rights issue, with far-reaching implications for fundamental rights such as life, health, food, water, and housing (United Nation, 1948; UNHRC, 2021). This perspective shifts the focus from environmental protection alone to the protection of human dignity and well-being in the face of ecological crisis.

Legal and policy frameworks now acknowledge that environmental degradation can constitute a violation of human rights, particularly when states fail to protect vulnerable populations. This recognition has led to the development of new legal instruments and advocacy strategies aimed at addressing the human dimensions of climate change (UNHRC, 2021). Importantly, the human rights approach also emphasises intergenerational justice, recognising the rights of future generations to a stable and healthy environment.

In literary studies, this intersection between environmental and human rights discourse is increasingly explored through the concept of testimony. Poetry, in particular, functions as a form of witnessing, documenting experiences of displacement, marginalisation, and ecological loss (Nixon, 2011). By giving voice to those affected by environmental injustice, literary texts can challenge dominant narratives and contribute to broader movements for social and environmental justice.

However, despite the growing recognition of these connections, there remains a lack of sustained engagement between literary analysis and formal human rights frameworks. Many studies highlight themes of injustice and suffering without explicitly linking them to specific rights or legal concepts. This gap limits the potential of ecocritical scholarship to contribute to interdisciplinary debates on climate justice and human rights.

2.6. Agha Shahid Ali and Ecocritical Research

The poetry of Agha Shahid Ali has been widely studied within the contexts of exile, memory, identity, and political conflict. Scholars have emphasised his engagement with the Kashmir conflict, his innovative use of the ghazal form, and his exploration of diasporic identity (Benvenuto, 2015). His collection *The Half-Inch Himalayas* (1987) is often read as an early articulation of these themes, foregrounding the emotional and cultural dimensions of displacement.

Critical analyses frequently highlight the interplay between personal and political narratives in Ali's work, noting how his poetry bridges individual experience and

collective history. His use of imagery, particularly landscapes, has been interpreted as a means of reconstructing memory and negotiating identity in the context of exile. Scholars have also examined the spiritual and philosophical dimensions of his poetry, exploring themes of loss, longing, and transcendence.

However, the ecological dimensions of Ali's work have received comparatively little attention. While some studies acknowledge the presence of natural imagery, they often treat it as a backdrop rather than as a central element of meaning. This oversight is significant, given the extent to which landscapes in Ali's poetry are intertwined with themes of displacement, violence, and cultural loss.

By reading Ali's poetry through an ecocritical and climate justice lens, it becomes possible to uncover new dimensions of his work. His representations of Kashmir as a fragile and threatened landscape resonate strongly with contemporary concerns about environmental vulnerability and injustice. Moreover, his focus on marginalised experiences aligns with the principles of climate justice, which emphasise the disproportionate impact of environmental harm on vulnerable populations.

2.7. Research Gap and Contribution

Despite the richness of existing scholarship, several critical gaps remain. First, there is a lack of integrated frameworks that combine ecocriticism, climate justice, and human rights in literary analysis. While each of these fields has developed independently, their intersection remains underexplored, particularly in relation to poetry.

Second, existing studies often focus on identifying themes of environmental and sociopolitical loss without systematically analysing them through established justice frameworks (Schlosberg, 2007). This limits the ability of literary criticism to engage with broader interdisciplinary debates and to contribute to discussions on policy and ethics.

Third, the ecological dimensions of Agha Shahid Ali's poetry remain insufficiently examined, despite their potential to offer valuable insights into the relationship between environment, identity, and political conflict (Ali, 1987).

This study addresses these gaps by developing an integrated analytical framework that brings together ecocriticism, climate justice, and human rights. By applying this framework to *The Half-Inch Himalayas*, the research demonstrates how literary texts can contribute to a deeper understanding of environmental injustice as both an ecological and a human rights issue.

In doing so, the study not only expands the scope of Eco critical analysis but also highlights the importance of literature as a site of ethical reflection and social critique in the context of the global environmental crisis.

3. Methodology / Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research methodology grounded in ecocritical literary analysis. It employs close textual reading to examine how

environmental imagery, poetic form, and thematic structures in the work of Agha Shahid Ali articulate the interconnectedness of ecological degradation, human suffering, and sociopolitical injustice. Rather than treating poetry as a passive reflection of environmental reality, this approach understands literary texts as active sites of ethical engagement and critical discourse (Garrard, 2012).

The primary corpus for analysis is *The Half-Inch Himalayas* (Ali, 1987) selected for its early yet foundational exploration of themes such as exile, memory, and landscape. The collection is particularly suitable for this study because it foregrounds Kashmir as both a physical and symbolic environment, allowing for an examination of how ecological imagery intersects with cultural and political meanings. Selected poems from the collection are analysed based on their representation of natural elements, mountains, rivers, seasons, and their relation to experiences of displacement, loss, and identity fragmentation.

The theoretical framework integrates three key perspectives: **ecocriticism, climate justice, and human rights discourse**. Ecocriticism provides the foundational lens, enabling an analysis of how literature represents the relationship between humans and the natural environment (Buell, 1995). However, this study moves beyond traditional ecocritical approaches by situating environmental representation within broader systems of power and inequality. In doing so, it draws on contemporary developments in ecocriticism that emphasise political ecology and the concept of environmental vulnerability as socially produced rather than naturally determined (Heise, 2008).

To deepen this analysis, the study incorporates the framework of climate justice, which foregrounds the uneven distribution of environmental harm and its disproportionate impact on marginalised communities (Nixon, 2011; Schlosberg, 2007). The four dimensions of climate justice—distributive, procedural, recognitional, and reparative—serve as guiding analytical categories. These dimensions are not applied rigidly but function as interpretive tools to examine how Ali's poetry implicitly engages with issues of inequality, exclusion, and historical responsibility. For instance, the depiction of Kashmir as a fragile and contested landscape is read in terms of distributive injustice, where environmental and political vulnerabilities are unevenly experienced.

In addition, the study draws on human rights discourse to contextualise environmental degradation as an ethical and legal concern. This perspective allows for an exploration of how ecological loss in the poems corresponds to violations of fundamental rights, including the right to life, cultural identity, and a sustainable environment (United Nations, 1948; UNHRC, 2021). By integrating human rights theory, the analysis highlights the moral implications of environmental representation and underscores the need to view ecological crises as inseparable from issues of justice and dignity.

A key methodological concept employed in this study is poetic convergence, which refers to the fusion of ecological and sociopolitical meanings within poetic language and structure. This concept is particularly useful for analysing how Ali's poetry collapses the distinction between environmental and human crises, presenting them as interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Through imagery, metaphor, and narrative voice, the poems create a space where landscapes become carriers of historical trauma and cultural memory, thereby linking environmental degradation to broader processes of displacement and marginalisation (Benvenuto, 2015).

The analytical process involves close reading of selected poems, with attention to recurring motifs, symbolic patterns, and linguistic strategies. Particular emphasis is placed on how natural imagery functions not merely as descriptive detail but as an active agent in shaping meaning (Knickerbocker, 2012). For example, the compression of vast landscapes into small, fragile images—such as postcards or memory fragments—is interpreted as a reflection of ecological and cultural vulnerability. Similarly, the use of sensory detail and lyrical tone is analysed in terms of its capacity to evoke emotional and ethical responses, aligning with ecopoetic principles of affect and empathy (Bristow, 2015).

This methodology is inherently interpretive and does not seek to produce universal or generalisable conclusions. Instead, it aims to offer a nuanced reading of Ali's poetry that situates it within contemporary debates on climate justice and human rights. By combining textual analysis with interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks, the study demonstrates how literary works can contribute to a deeper understanding of environmental crisis as both a material and ethical phenomenon (Ghosh, 2016).

4. Results and Discussion

The Eco critical analysis of the poetry of Agha Shahid Ali, particularly in *The Half-Inch Himalayas* (Ali, 1987), reveals a complex convergence of environmental imagery, human suffering, and sociopolitical instability. The findings demonstrate that Ali's poetic landscapes are not passive backdrops but active sites where ecological vulnerability and human rights concerns intersect (Garrard, 2012).

4.1. Landscape as a Site of Memory and Loss

One of the most significant findings is the role of landscape as a repository of memory and identity. Natural elements such as mountains, rivers, and snow are consistently presented as emotionally charged spaces, deeply intertwined with personal and collective histories. Rather than depicting nature as stable or timeless, Ali portrays it as fragile and subject to erosion—mirroring the instability of human identity in conditions of exile and displacement (Benvenuto, 2015).

This representation aligns with Eco critical perspectives that view landscape as culturally constructed and politically contested (Heise, 2008). In Ali's poetry, Kashmir emerges not only as a geographical location but as a symbolic space where environmental

and cultural loss are inseparable. The shrinking of vast landscapes into images such as postcards or fragments of memory reflects a process of compression that signals both physical and emotional dislocation. This aesthetic strategy reinforces the idea that environmental degradation is experienced not only materially but also psychologically and culturally.

4.2. Environmental Imagery and Ecological Vulnerability

The analysis further reveals that environmental imagery in Ali's poetry embodies a sense of ecological vulnerability. Descriptions of nature often carry an underlying tension, suggesting fragility, impermanence, and impending loss. Seasonal changes, silence, and the stillness of landscapes evoke a subtle awareness of environmental instability, even in the absence of explicit references to climate change (Ghosh, 2016).

From a climate justice perspective, this vulnerability can be interpreted as reflective of broader patterns of environmental inequality. The landscapes depicted in the poems are not isolated from sociopolitical contexts; rather, they are shaped by histories of conflict, displacement, and marginalisation (Nixon, 2011). Kashmir, as represented in the poetry, becomes a space where environmental and political vulnerabilities reinforce one another. This aligns with the principle of distributive justice, which highlights the uneven exposure of certain regions and communities to environmental harm (Schlosberg, 2007).

4.3. Poetic Convergence of Environmental and Sociopolitical Crisis

A central finding of this study is the presence of poetic convergence, where ecological and sociopolitical meanings are fused within the same symbolic framework. In Ali's work, environmental loss is rarely presented in isolation; it is consistently linked to themes of exile, violence, and cultural erasure. Landscapes bear the weight of historical trauma, functioning as silent witnesses to human suffering (Benvenuto, 2015).

This convergence is evident in the way natural imagery is used to articulate political realities. Mountains and rivers do not merely signify physical space; they also reflect the fragmentation of homeland and identity. The environment becomes a medium through which the experience of displacement is expressed, collapsing the distinction between natural and human crises. This reinforces the argument that environmental degradation cannot be understood independently of social and political processes (Heise, 2008).

4.4. Climate Justice and Uneven Vulnerability

Applying the framework of climate justice, the analysis highlights how Ali's poetry implicitly engages with issues of inequality and marginalisation. Although the poems do not explicitly address climate policy or environmental activism, they foreground the disproportionate vulnerability of specific regions and communities. Kashmir is depicted as a fragile and contested space, where environmental and political instability intersect to produce layered forms of loss (Nixon, 2011).

This representation resonates with the concept of recognitional justice, which emphasises the importance of acknowledging diverse experiences and perspectives in environmental discourse (Schlosberg, 2007). Ali's poetry gives voice to a marginalised landscape, challenging dominant narratives that treat environmental crisis as universal and homogeneous. By foregrounding localised experiences of loss, the poems underscore the need for a more nuanced understanding of climate justice that accounts for historical and cultural contexts.

4.5. Environmental Loss as Human Rights Concern

Another key finding is the alignment between environmental degradation and human rights violations. In the poems, the loss of landscape is closely tied to the erosion of identity, belonging, and dignity. Displacement, whether physical or emotional, emerges as a central consequence of environmental and sociopolitical disruption. This reflects the broader human rights implications of ecological crisis, where the destruction of the environment undermines fundamental aspects of human existence (United Nations, 1948; UNHRC, 2021).

Through this lens, Ali's poetry can be read as a form of testimony, documenting the lived experience of environmental and cultural loss (Nixon, 2011). The emotional intensity of the poems—expressed through longing, nostalgia, and grief serves to humanise the abstract concept of environmental crisis. This aligns with ecopoetic theories that emphasise the role of affect in fostering ethical awareness and empathy (Bristow, 2015).

4.6. Language, Form, and Ecological Ethics

Finally, the analysis demonstrates that Ali's poetic form itself contributes to the articulation of ecological and ethical concerns. The use of lyrical language, rich imagery, and symbolic compression reflects the complexity of environmental and human experiences. Fragmentation and ambiguity in the poems mirror the instability of both landscape and identity, reinforcing the interconnectedness of ecological and sociopolitical loss (Knickerbocker, 2012).

This formal dimension supports the argument that ecopoetry operates not only through thematic content but also through aesthetic strategies. By disrupting conventional representations of space and time, Ali's poetry challenges readers to reconsider their relationship with the environment and to recognise the ethical implications of ecological degradation (Bristow, 2015).

5. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the intersection of ecocriticism, climate justice, and human rights in the poetry of Agha Shahid Ali, with particular focus on *The Half-Inch Himalayas* (Ali, 1987). Through a close textual analysis informed by interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks, the research demonstrates that Ali's poetry offers a nuanced and

compelling representation of environmental and sociopolitical loss as deeply interconnected phenomena.

The findings reveal that the landscape in Ali's work functions as more than a physical setting; it is a dynamic site of memory, identity, and ethical engagement (Heise, 2008). Natural imagery serves to articulate experiences of displacement, cultural erosion, and emotional fragmentation, highlighting the inseparability of environmental and human concerns. By presenting Kashmir as a fragile and contested space, the poetry foregrounds the uneven distribution of vulnerability, aligning with key principles of climate justice (Schlosberg, 2007; Nixon, 2011).

Importantly, this study shows that Ali's poetry anticipates contemporary debates on environmental inequality and human rights, even though it does not explicitly engage with these frameworks. Through the concept of poetic convergence, the analysis demonstrates how ecological and sociopolitical crises are fused within the poetic space, challenging the notion that environmental issues can be understood in isolation. Instead, the poems suggest that environmental degradation is inherently tied to histories of conflict, marginalisation, and cultural loss.

The integration of climate justice and human rights perspectives allows for a deeper understanding of the ethical dimensions of Ali's work. Environmental loss is revealed not merely as ecological damage but as a violation of human dignity and belonging (United Nation, 1948; UNHRC, 2021). In this sense, the poetry functions as a form of testimony, giving voice to experiences that are often overlooked in dominant environmental discourse (Nixon, 2011). By humanising the effects of ecological crisis, Ali's work underscores the importance of empathy and moral responsibility in addressing global environmental challenges (Bristow, 2015).

This research contributes to the field of ecocriticism by expanding its analytical scope to include justice-oriented frameworks (Garrard, 2012). It demonstrates that literary texts, particularly poetry, can play a significant role in shaping environmental consciousness and in highlighting the human dimensions of climate crisis. By bridging the gap between literary studies and interdisciplinary debates on climate justice and human

rights, the study positions literature as a vital tool for understanding and responding to contemporary environmental issues (Ghosh, 2016).

However, the study also acknowledges certain limitations. The analysis is focused on a single poetic collection, and future research could extend this approach to other works by Ali or to comparative studies across different literary traditions. Additionally, further exploration of how literary texts engage with specific legal and policy frameworks of human rights could deepen the interdisciplinary potential of ecocritical scholarship.

In conclusion, the poetry of Agha Shahid Ali offers a powerful lens through which to examine the intersection of environment, justice, and human experience. By revealing

the intimate connections between ecological degradation and sociopolitical loss, his work invites a rethinking of environmental crisis as not only a scientific or policy issue but fundamentally a question of justice, ethics, and human rights.

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