



## LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF ECOFEMINISM: *A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS*

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### Abstract

Critical Discourse Analysis is the critical field of discourse analysis which provides an analytical framework for analyzing discourse. Fairclough's three dimensional model of textual analysis, interpretation and explanation offers a deep rooted and complex approach to uncover the hidden ideologies of the text. These ideologies construct and maintain the suitable narratives in the discourse thus, the analysis questions the authorities about the co-relating damages of both women and nature through patriarchy and narratives of women's sufferings, environmental destruction and their untouched representations in the discourse. In this regard the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by an afghan writer puts forward the deep-rooted ideologies of patriarchy and its impact on not only women but also the nature linguistically using Fairclough's three dimensional model of CDA. It highlights the ways in which both the nature and women are impacted by the same ruling power of patriarchy and its claims of justified oppression using the imageries incorporated by Hosseini in the novel. Thus, CDA unveils these hidden truths of the destruction of women and nature with patriarchy as the cause and women oppression and environmental degradation as the effects.

**Keywords:** *Afghan Literature, CDA, Ecofeminism, Fairclough, Oppression, Three-Dimensional Model*

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## 1. Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis explains language as a tool to reveal the power, dominance and biasness in society. Critical discourse analysts like Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Teun Van Dijk argued that language is never neutral, it shows authority and the order in the society. Language is not just about words but it carries ideas, emotions and beliefs. Calling women weak and men strong shows the social belief. CDA plays an important role in understanding the very concept of ecofeminism in literature, because Ecofeminism is all about the exploitation of nature and women through the same structures of patriarchy. Norman Fairclough presents a three-dimensional model which states that description (Textual analysis), interpretation (Discourse Practice), and explanation (Socio-Cultural Practice) are the three levels in CDA that are useful for studying and understanding a language. Fairclough's 3D model in the context of ecofeminism shows that description is all about the ability of language to build a connection between nature and women, through the use of metaphors or symbols. Interpretation involves readers understanding of this connection between women's subjugation and the destruction of environment. Explanation shows the male-dominated society as the cause of nature and women's oppression.

Ecofeminism is a combination of two words: ecology and feminism. Ecology is the study of the connection between nature and human beings while Feminism is the movement that favors women's rights and their equality to men. Ecofeminism is a movement started in 1970s concerned with ecological and gender issues. This term was coined by French writer Francoise d'Eaubonne in her book 'Le Feminisme ou la Mort' (Feminism or Death) published in 1974. It combines both ecology and feminism and shows that nature and women both are exploited through the similar patriarchal structures where men hold all the power and are authoritative. They are just restricted to household chores, childcare which is unpaid labor and is also undervalued. This male dominated society also snatches women's rights, freedom, education and economic opportunities. In the same way, patriarchy sees nature as a tool to use, control and dominate.

Ecofeminism favors women, nature and all the oppressed groups. This movement became popular in late 1970s and 1980s. Ecofeminist theorists such as Vandana Shiva, Greta Gaard, Maria Mies and Karen Warren explains that nature and women are connected through the oppression of the patriarchal and capitalist groups and they argue that all forms of domineering power must be criticized to ensure full justice to both nature and women. It was influenced by the Chipko (meaning 'to hug' in Hindi) movement in 1973 in the Himalayan region of Uttarakhand. As a result of ecofeminism, women and nature were given importance. Women started participating actively in environmental protection like the Chipko and Green Belt Movements in India. It emphasizes that protecting nature means protecting women and by empowering women nature can be conserved easily.

Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* carefully draws these ideas of Ecofeminism through its vivid portrayal of imagery by co-relating the images of war-torn Afghanistan with the oppressed and suppressed women of Afghanistan. He shows that women and nature suffer the same violence and injustice under patriarchy and war by using similar language for destroyed land and marginalized women. Words like dust, dryness and destruction show both the Afghanistan's devastated landscape and also the psychological pain of Mariam and Laila.

### 1.1. Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are following:

1. To examine how the language in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* represents Ecofeminist themes of women's marginalization and nature's degradation.
2. To explore the stylistic features that shows the relationship between women and nature.
3. To understand how the literary text creates power dynamics, gender hierarchies and environmental imbalance by using Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA.
4. To interpret the ability of literature in shaping, confronting or promoting ecofeminist viewpoints through language use.

### 1.2. Research Questions

Following are the research questions of this study:

1. How Language in the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* represents Ecofeminist themes of women's oppression and nature's destruction.
2. How stylistic features (imagery) shows the connection between women and nature.
3. How a literary text constructs power dynamics, gender hierarchies and environmental inequality using Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA (Description, Interpretation and Explanation).
4. How literature challenges or reinforces the ecofeminist perspectives through the use of language.

This study explicitly explains the oppression and marginalization of women and nature through the forceful and harmful activities of which patriarchy is the core reason. Also, the study dwells deep into the linguistic choices of the author and the impact they create on the overall narrative of Ecofeminism.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theme one

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a detailed analysis of a discourse. The three dimensions given by Fairclough further deepens the analysis. While applying this on the text, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini, it provides a deep analytical study of the text by unveiling the underlying ideologies such as Ecofeminism.

Critical discourse analysis is a critical branch of discourse analysis. It unveils the processes through which power relations in society are constructed, maintained and challenged through discourse using language. This is an interdisciplinary approach which connects linguistics to literature, education, anthropology, environmental sciences, social sciences and psychology. It explores how language choices affect and construct or challenge the power relations in the society thus the formation of discourse. It has its roots in 1970's and 80's. The key figures who elevated this concept to a three dimensional full fledged subfield of linguistics are Norman Fairclough, Van Dijk and Ruth Wodak. Their ideas further categorized the critical discourse analysis into three sub-types. Fairclough's three dimensional model, Dijk's Social Cognitive Analysis and Wodak's Discourse Historical Analysis are three different concepts under Critical Discourse Analysis. Fairclough is most celebrated among the linguists and his three dimensional model works with the help of the theory of systemic functional linguistics, which further involves chapter, discourse practice and social-cultural practice (Xing 1). According to Xing, discourse practice acts as a mediator and connects chapter and social-cultural practice. To Fairclough, language is an integral part of each society and thus the work of CDA is to explore the dialectical relationship between language and social practices.(Xing 2).

Fairclough's model has three phases: an early phase targeting power and ideology, mature phase targeting discourse and social change and a third phase targeting globalization. This paper concerns only the early stage of targeting power and ideology in a discourse using the micro-level of CDA. There are two levels of CDA, micro level and macro level. Micro level is the investigation at the grass-root level, textual level, including tone, grammar, symbolism, imagery etc., whereas macro level involves bigger ideological structures of patriarchy, racism etc. CDA acts to bridge this gap between micro and macro levels. Such as, when a person speaks, his tone, style and frequency not only represents his personality but a larger ideological structure of the society. This is the core technique of this research paper.

Fairclough's three dimensional model systematically relates the text and the context of that text keeping in view the ideological structures involved. This three dimensional framework is illustrated in the form of a box, each box representing distinctive dimension of the analysis, as proposed by Fairclough (1995). See figure 1:

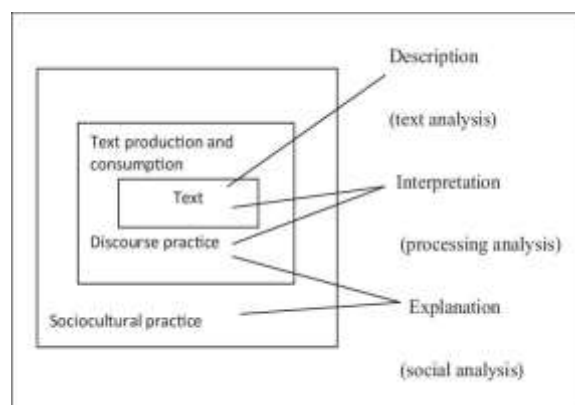


Figure 1: Fairclough's model of CDA

According to Fairclough, there are three phases of analysis of a text. As evident from the figure, text resides at the center of the model. It deals with the description of the text, that is, textual analysis (micro level). The second phase deals with processing analysis which is discourse practices and the last one is social analysis (macro level). Discourse practice brings together socio-cultural practice and text. It explores the power structures through socio-cultural practices.

A great amount of scholarship has been published where scholars have used CDA for gender studies, colonial texts, racism and on ecological discourses. It exposes the linguistic patterns of dominant ideologies in power as of patriarchy, hierarchy and subjugation. It has been widely used for discourse analysis of poems, novels and dramas.

While CDA unveils linguistic choices of the text, it does not directly talk about these hidden ideologies. These ideologies link women to land and nature, thus correlating or putting together the causes and the effects of harmful human activities on both women and nature. The theory of Ecofeminism directly deals with these causes and effects.

## 2.2. Theme Two

Ecofeminism was first used by a French feminist and environmental activist Françoise d'Eaubonne in her book *Feminism or Death* in 1974. For the first time, she brought the exploitation of nature and women on the same page in front of the world. According to her, patriarchy is the root cause of both types of exploitation. She also took part in campaigns against developmental projects which harmed the nature in one way or another and raised the slogan: "Nuclear family, nuclear society=same fight" (d'Eaubonne 11). Initially, her ideas were heavily criticized for linking two divergent ideas. Later, Maria Miers and Vandana Shiva put forward her ideas with a novel touch of feminism and environment in their joint work, *Ecofeminism*. They both were originally from different backgrounds and they experienced and shared their type of oppression which women face in their areas and found many similarities, this point became the basis of their new work which is fast growing in the present times.

Ecofeminism has its roots in wide variety of feminisms (liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist and radical feminism and Third-wave feminism). But what makes ecofeminism distinctive from all its types is the idea that “nonhuman nature and naturism are feminist issues” (Warren 1997, p.4).

Shiva and Miers’ concept of Ecofeminism was influenced by the Chipko (in Hindi means “to embrace” or “hug”) movement in Uttarakhand, Northern India between 197-1980. Chipko movement was a forest conservation movement when the women they glued themselves to the trees. Their idea was that the destruction of trees is connected to the destruction of humans and in this way they first supported nature and stood up against natural exploitation in a meaningful way. It was only led for the protection of trees, and the usage of trees is more related to women in household as fuel, food and fodder, especially in third world countries. Thus, the shortage of trees is directly proportional to shortage of women’s (life necessities). So, the First World developments in India replaced a huge amount of multicultural species of trees with monocultural species i.e. eucalyptus. Warren discusses the three reasons of women’s protests against trees cutting of which the utility of trees as food, fuel and fodder is the primary reason. Second comes the exploitation of women which is connected with natural degradation as estimated that an average woman in Delhi walks ten kilometers every three to four days, making it seven hours each time. Last one is the societal constraints faced by women as an instance given by Warren of Ibo (Nigerian) culture, where men inherit timber trees but women cannot inherit economic trees. These assumptions by Warren explicitly portrays the shared concerns of women and nature, setting basis of Ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism involves two types of oppression, one of the ecosystem and he environment which is caused by humans, and the other is the oppression of women whose main perpetrator is patriarchy. In ecofeminism we talk about these types of oppression and their common grounds. This idea of ecofeminism greatly looks like the one given by Graham in her article of Reviewing Maria Miers and Vandana Shiva’s Ecofeminism. She says, “Ecofeminism is a collection of papers and articles in which the two women of different cultural and academic backgrounds, and geographical origins, creatively transcend their differences to make available "shared common concerns that emerge from an invisible global politics in which women worldwide are enmeshed in their everyday life; and a convergence of thinking arising from [their] participation in the efforts of women to keep alive the processes that sustain us."(Graham 44).

The relationship between nature and women is far more deeply connected then we thought. Shiva in her book Ecofeminism gives practical examples when these relationships are explicitly project and the events when women stood up to support nature and hinder its further exploitation. In her book, she explains the exploitation of nature in the name of development as an excerpt from her book is as, “Wherever development projects are

introduced, they tear apart the soil and sever the bonds between people and the soil”(shiva 151). From people she means women especially. As she quotes an event in the Indian land when an old forest was to cut down by Bharat Aluminium Company BALCO to mine for bauxite. People were already aware of their previous development projects in which they destroyed the sanctity of another old mountain. Thus, an old women stood up against its cutting. As Shiva quotes, “even when 'Mati Devata, Dharam Devata' — the soil is our Goddess; it is our religion.' These are the words of adivasi women of the 'Save Gandmardhan'2 movement, as they embraced the earth while being dragged away by the police from the blockade sites in the Gandmardhan hills in Orissa. Dhanmati, a 70-year-old woman of the movement had said, 'We will sacrifice our lives, but not Gandmardhan. We want to save this hill which gives us all we need” (shiva 151). Thus, the status of sacred land is merely reduced to a site and “When that site is identified for a development project, it is destroyed as a spiritual and ecological home” (Shiva 154). Similarly, Werner in her review article explains Susan Griffin’s, an ecofeminist writer and poet, idea of “nature”. According to Werner, Griffin in her book *Women and Nature* talks about the changing status of children, savaged (colonized people), animals and nature into feminine to subjugate their lower feminine status in European andro-centric discourse. She also talks about the category “nature” and argues that nature includes children, savages, women, land, plants, irrationality and emotionality. Thus calling it a “subhuman” category (Werner 15). Karen warren in her Introduction of ecofeminism talks about the addition of Griffin’s idea in Ecofeminism that, in the emergence of Ecofeminism, not only the addition of ecology to feminism is essential but also the introduction of various approaches, view-points, starting points, and perspectives which affect the meaning, language and significance of ecofeminist discourse ( Warren 16).

The author of *The Death of the Earth*, Carolyn Merchant, views “Mother Earth” as the symbol female body, a symbol of life, nurturing and carrying life in her womb (Werner 13). Thus, earth symbolizes female body as the matrices in which seeds are sown and ultimately it gives birth to life. In turn, as argued by Francis Bacon, a 16<sup>th</sup> century scientist and philosopher, the destruction of earth and the processes of digging minerals out of it are similar as to the rape of a woman. This brutal imagery was first given by Bacon which forms the strong foundation in understanding ecofeminist perspectives. In relation to this, Miers states, in 1989, when German protests shouted, 'Deutschland, einig Vaterland!' (Germany, united Fatherland!), where it was pre conceived that the unification of erstwhile German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) would lead to the status of men as the “dominant” ones in the society and they would live as the “privileged” Germans. This raised questions that what good would this “fatherland” would be to German women. Does the German women come under this fatherland or not? Thus, the idea of dominant mother-nature is transformed into modern dominant fatherlands

through scientists who adopted harmful strategies of penetrating, extracting and raping the earth. Thus, patriarchy is taking control over earth and women.

Greta Gaard in her book *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*, talks about the dominant and submissive “Other” presence of women and animals in the patriarchal society. Both are dominated as well as submissive. Women are dominated in household, childbirth and provide emotional labor, whereas animals are dominated to provide food, labor, materials (leather, fur, milk, wool) while both do not have any rights to claim. Both are submissive under patriarchal systems of society and are being exploited. Both are reduced to mere “subjects” without any agency and authority with only purpose to serve the function allotted to them by patriarchal structures, thus reducing them to “subhuman” others. Gaard argues that in Western discourses, everything related to women, animals, nature and emotion is devalued while simultaneously elevating ideas related to men, masculinity, reason and mind. She says the agenda of feminists is to unveil these binaries and deconstruct the existing hierarchies of patriarchy and oppression. In this way, “feminizing nature and naturalizing and animalizing women provides a justification for the domination of women, earth and animals” (Gaard 5).

While Ecofeminism offers theoretical gendered ecological oppression, Critical discourse analysis linguistically offers a methodological bridge to examine how this oppression is constructed through discourse.

In this paper, CDA explores how patriarchal and ecological ideologies are embedded in discourse encoded through linguistic structures, making it a suitable framework for Eco-feministic study of the discourse. The text is of Khaled Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. CDA helps uncover the hidden ideological biases through linguistic structures in the text and put forward the embedded ideologies of patriarchal oppression of women and nature.

### 2.3. Theme Three

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini is a work rich with gender and patriarchal themes its imagery, words and symbolism, elements of war, memory and trauma and feminism. A lot of work has been done on this novel’s feminism. The characters of Mariam and Laila reflect active individuality. As Rebecca Stuhr writes in her article, *A Thousand Splendid Suns: Sanctuary and Resistance*, “Hosseini’s women, much like the country of Afghanistan itself, appear to be propelled by the whims of outside forces, familial and societal, with little chance of influencing their own lives and futures. Yet Laila and Mariam are neither passive nor helpless as they make choices and accept consequences to affect desired ends, both hopeful and tragic” (Rebecca 2). This process of them becoming active individuals from being passive subjects comprises of a prolonged journey of challenges. The uneven political and social conditions of Afghanistan affected primarily women and children. As argued by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Women have

never been secure within (or without) the nation state-they are always disproportionately affected by war, forced migration, famine, and other forms of social, political, and economic turmoil” (Mohanty p.514). Basharat Shameem in his article, *Women in A Thousand Splendid Suns*, points out that along with the war brutalities on women, another factor of sexual predation on Afghan women is also dominant. They are married off to anyone without their consent as in the novel when Mariam is married off to Rashid without her will or consent. Thus, they are not considered authoritative and the will of men is imposed on them and they are expected to bow down without being resilient or showing resistance. In this way, they are facing double oppression, one by their husbands and the other by the Taliban regime.

Further debates come under the Postcolonial Feminism of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, where the notion of Feminism deviates from the one given by western Feminism. As Mohanty argues that Western writings about Third-World Feminism

discursively colonize[s] the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world, thereby producing/ representing a composite, singular "third world woman" [,] an image which appears arbitrarily constructed, but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of Western humanist discourse (Mohanty 2003, p.03).

Thus, Ensieh Shabanirad and Elham Seifi argues Mohanty criticizes the Western picture of Third World Feminism which ‘colonizes’ the heterogeneous experiences of Third-World women and advocates for the “deconstruction of the stereotypical images of the third world woman as the victims of a male-oriented tradition and culture” (Mohanty 2003, p.03). While, Wali M. Rahimi the author of *Status of Women: Afghanistan*, argues:

The position of women in Afghanistan has traditionally been inferior to that of men. This position has varied according to age, socio-cultural norms, and ethnicity. In fact, Afghan women, even until the beginning of 20th century were the slaves of their father, husband, father-in-law, and elder brother. Her most valued characteristic was silence and obedience (Rahimi 1991, p.06)

Thus, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* represent the heterogeneous characters of Mariam and Laila who has different yet similar experiences of patriarchy and state control. They cannot be put together in a stereotyped Western Feminism which may lead to what Mohanty terms “discursive colonization” but projects specific Afghan women’s Feminism, the idea given by Rahimi.

Apart from the themes of religion, feminism and post-colonial feminism, an ecofeminist perspective of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a part of a major scholarly works in literature. As ecofeminists argue that the oppression and injustice carried out on both women and nature has root causes in patriarchy. Women share a close and intimate

relationship with nature as opposed to men. Various cultural and social examples from India and U.S has been quoted above showing their close relationship. Sherry B. Ortner in his essay, *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?* , gave us the three basis on which women and nature are considered closely related. First, he argues that “women’s physiology seen as closer to nature” (Ortner p.74). He later provides an explanation to it by supporting his claim with the De Beauvoir’s arguments about women’s physiology arguing that women’s bodies perform more biologically natural functions than men, who perform more cultural functions. As De Beauvoir states their bodies are “a prey of the species” (Ortner 1974, p.74). Secondly, he argues “woman’s social role seen as closer to nature” (Ortner 1974, p.76). He further argues that women’s social roles like motherhood, childcare and domestic work make her closely related to domestic life which is more “natural” than cultural. He argues women do contribute in cultural work but it is devalued as they teach children language, morals and manners but it is considered more “natural” and “normal”. Lastly, he argues “women’s psyche seen closer than nature” (Ortner 1974, p.81). In this regard, he argues drawing on Chodorow’s argument, that since girls are more related to mothers than fathers, “[because] mother is immediate and present when the daughter is learning role identity, learning to be a woman involves the continuity and development of a girl’s relationship to her mother” (Ortner 1974, p.82).

The resemblances between women and nature made by Ortner makes it clear to identify the resembling forms of oppression and injustices held by not only anthropocentric activities but also patriarchal systems. The present world’s landscape and its deterioration by these systems resemble the current devastated conditions of women of the post-modern women. Using the same argument, Hosseini has drawn a clear and clean comparison of the destruction of Afghan land and Afghan women in this work, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

#### **2.4. Research Gap**

As already quoted some of the relevant works in the discourse of Ecofeminism in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the research gap for this research paper is the absence of any other work incorporating Fairclough’s three dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Type**

This research is qualitative in nature as it analyzes that language is used to show ecofeminism in literature which involves critical and descriptive approaches.

#### **3.2. Data collection**

This research contains a literary data and gathers the information directly from the author’s text /novel. The reason for this method is that this research examines author’s style, characters and central ideas. Participants are the characters in the novel. Their

actions, dialogues and experiences give clues about ecofeminism in the novel. The reason for choosing this topic is that it deals with the social, cultural, gender and ecological problems. I chose this author (Khaled Hosseini) because his works shows themes of patriarchy, women sufferings, environmental justice and stability which help me to interpret my topic easily.

#### **4. Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this research is Ecofeminism and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) using Fairclough's three-dimensional model. The major emphasis of this research is in the connection between women's subordinate status and the environmental degradation which is the central idea of ecofeminism. Fairclough's CDA gives a structured framework to explain how language creates and reveals these power relations. Together, they enable the readers to understand how language is used to show ecofeminist ideas in literature, including themes of violence, marginalization, resistance and domination. In a patriarchy, men control women and nature according to their needs. They use nature (land, rivers, and forests) as per their desire. In the same way they treat women according to their choice. They think of women as just the objects for amusement and embellishment and they are confined to domestic tasks only. The primary source of this research is Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. In this literary text, participants are the characters, specifically Mariam and Laila as they are the bearers of women's adversity in war-torn Afghanistan. By combining Ecofeminist theory with Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA, the relationship between women's oppression and environmental degradation can be explored, allowing a deeper understanding of the interplay between language, gender and environment in literature.

#### **5. Analysis**

The analysis comprises of the three dimensions of Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis. The analysis examines how Khaled Hosseini employs imagery to show the oppression being carried on nature as well as women and simultaneously its impacts on both nature and women. For this purpose, the three dimensional model of textual analysis, interpretation and explanation is employed to uncover the hidden ideology of oppression. The study unveils the images of nature-mountains, suns, seasons and war-torn landscapes to reflect on the lived experiences of Mariam and Laila. The devastating landscapes and altering seasons parallels the fading feminine agency, identity and rationality in the work, thus exploring the ecofeminist perspectives of the discourse. The first two parts of the novel are rich with such sensory images, and thus the course of this paper.

Imagery is a powerful linguistic feature which helps readers create the scenes in their minds, leaving long-lasting impacts. It helps in evoking emotions, feelings and attitudes towards the characters and places. As far as Khaled Hosseini's use of imagery is

concerned, in the novel it provides a primary sense of belonging and relatedness to the incidents and places in the novel.

This use of imagery provides cues on the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* as an Ecofeminist text. These stylistic patterns provide a ground for the application of Critical Discourse Analysis thus unveiling the underlying ideology i.e. ecofeminism.

### 5.1. Part 01

Part 01 of the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini deals with the childhood to adulthood journey of Mariam. This part is rich with natural images of mountains, streams, hills and her fulfilled childhood where she is free, liberated and without any restriction and control enjoys her life. But as the story, progresses, this liberty and freedom is controlled by her father, Jalil, and then her husband, Rashid. Thus, the landscape of Herat, where she lives, changes with the changing circumstances of her life transforming her individuality into unlabeled subjectivity.

The analysis of the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the novel is as follows:

#### 5.1.1. Textual Analysis

Textual analysis involves the use of words, lexical choices, imagery, syntax and sentence structure, modality and pronouns. It involves the strategies which help reinforce the ideology of ecofeminism by digging deep into the lives of Mariam and Laila to connect their sufferings and devastated lives to the destruction and deterioration of nature, land and environment due to domestic patriarchal structures and political unrest in Afghanistan during Russian invasion. Thus, the text becomes a discursive site of inextricably connected gendered violence and environmental degradation.

In the starting chapters of the novel, when Mariam is a child, ignorant of the unparalleled journey awaiting her in her adulthood, her life is clean and calm and so is the landscape of Afghanistan. In the chapter 02 in Gul Daman where Jalil's legitimate child Muhsin builds a house, the track is represented as "flanked on either side with knee high grass" and had "speckles of white and bright yellow flowers" where "poplars and cottonwoods soared and wild bushes grew in clusters" (Hosseini 2007, p.08). Furthermore, Hosseini while portraying the scenery of a portion of land, states that "the path ended perpendicular to a wide, trout-filled stream which rolled down from a Safid-koh mountains" (Hosseini 2007, p.08). He further says, "two hundred yards upstream...there was a circular grove of weeping yellow trees" (Hosseini 2007, p.08). In the novel, when Jalil and his sons built *kolba* for Mariam and Nana to live the first fifteen years of her life, there was a "chicken coop with a fence around it" (Hosseini 2007, p.09), where they had chicken and sheep. In the chapter 3, "a wheelbarrow comes once a month filled with rice, floor, tea, sugar, cooking oil, soap and toothpaste" (Hosseini 2007, p.11),

In chapter 10, in contrast to this, he states, "she crawled back into the bed" (Hosseini 2007, p.42). This chapter further dwells into the complex individuality of

Mariam. To illustrate this, Hosseini uses seasons connecting Mariam to nature saying, “She thought longingly for all the summer nights, the nights so hot their shirts would cling to their chests” and “she missed the winter’s afternoons of reading in the kolba, the clink of icicles falling from her roof, the crows cawing outside from snow burdened branches” (Hosseini 2007, p.42). Moreover, under Rashid’s surveillance, her sense of reaction was hyperactive. When, Fariba (a neighbor) came to Mariam while in tandoor lane, “she was hyperventilating” (Hosseini 2007, p.45). Hosseini states it as, “her ears buzzed, her pulse fluttered, her eyes darted” (Hosseini 2007, p.45). Thus, Mariam developed animalistic traits of reacting impulsively as argued by Warren that women’s individuality is reduced to animals with no will, no wish and no rationality and individuality.

Hosseini in chapter 11 portrays, the first step of ripping Mariam off of her agency and individuality through forcing her to wear “burqah”. Mariam feels it “tight” “pressing, heavy” and “blocking [her] peripheral view”, thus limiting her sight and mobility while on the other hand, Rashid in the same scene is showing her around “with authority” (Hosseini 2007, p.8). Thus, in this scene Rashid is portrayed as a free and liberated individual and Mariam represents a controlled, surveilled and confined subjects on whose every move, a proper check is maintained. Furthermore, in the same chapter, Hosseini portrays sexual oppression on women in the form of marital rape of Mariam. While Rashid commits this crime, Mariam’s feelings are represented by Hosseini as “she croaked while looking at his moonlit profile” (Hosseini 2007, p.50). Hosseini further uses natural images of “frozen stars in the sky” and “cloud that draped the face of the moon”. Throughout the scene, Mariam “stared, wide-eyed at the ceiling” (Hosseini 2007, p.51), remained motionless and numb. This shows Mariam’s total submission to the system of oppression (Rashid), silently suffering and being forced to submit to the system as a duty as said by Rashid, “it’s what the Prophet himself and his wives did” (Hosseini 2007, p.51). Also, the expressions “under the blanket”, “on top of her” and “lying back to back” (Hosseini 2007, p.50) refers to the spatial confinement of Mariam under male dominant environments. The images of “blanket”, “room” and “ceiling” itself shows the closed and confined spaces of the house where Mariam is hypothetically considered “free”.

In chapter 15, Hosseini relates the cyclical structures of nature to the cycles of menstruation which women endure and Mariam’s cycles of six miscarriages. Hosseini writes, “Six more cycles of hopes raised and dashed” with “each trip to the doctor more crushing for Mariam” (Hosseini 2007, p.64). Mariam’s hopes raised during pregnancies are “crushed” by the miscarriages like the hope of fruits during spring are crushed by the falling of leaves in the autumn. As every year, these cycles are repeated from spring to fall, similarly the cycles of Mariam’s pregnancies are repeated six times. These natural phenomena of miscarriages are made core reason of Rashid’s “remoteness” from Mariam. Thus, Mariam is blamed for the growing distance between husband and wife, not

questioning husband's role in the whole situation. His remoteness is considered as a natural reaction and is not questionable.

#### 5.1.2. Interpretation

The natural images of "grass", "white and bright yellow flowers", "poplars" and "bushes" represent Mariam's free, liberated and potentially overflowing childhood. It represents nature's life and growth which aligns with Mariam's life and growth. Her carefree and excited nature comes in stark contrast with her later self which is unbothered, subservient and obedient (to her husband). The "wheelbarrow" represents the fulfilled nature of Mariam's childhood. Soon after Nana's death, the landscape is shattered and tattered in a miserable way. The political unrest following the Russian invasion and civil wars in Afghan land deteriorates the landscape as well as the path of Mariam's adulthood, where the calm, closeness and completeness of childhood is preyed by adulthood's mature and political transformations.

This crash of her agency is first portrayed in the chapter of the novel when she now at Rashid's home and now she "crawl[ed] into the bed". The excited emotion of "leaping" has transformed into "crawling" representing the diminishing agency and character of Mariam as a free and liberated self. As Rahimi claimed in his article, women are reduced to "servant" of their fathers or husbands. Similarly, the character of Mariam is reduced to mere servant of her husband, taking care of his house, his belonging and everything related to him, placing her individuality as a secondary thing.

In chapter 10 when she's married off to Rashid after her mother's death, Hosseini illustrates her unrest and growing sense of confinement when she misses her old days with her mother as "longing for all the summer nights" and "the winter's afternoons of reading". Summer provides her solace while winter represents the cold and harsh character which is in process of becoming totally neglected. This seasonal shift is the shift of a carefree individual to a conformed subjectivity of Mariam. Next, Hosseini reflects on her emotional conditions when "she was hyperventilating, buzzed ears, pulse fluttering and eyes darted". These emotional upheaval reveals the heightened sense of fear when she is living with her husband and is not allowed to meet anyone outside. She fears her husband and tries not to do anything which might offend him in one way or another.

Chapter 11 marks the first event at Rashid's house which leads to the ultimate crash of Mariam's agency is when Rashid buys her a burqah and expects her to wear it every time she goes outside the house. The burqah feels "tight" and "heavy" in opposition to her free and loose garments of her childhood, and is now allowed only to walk in the "hem" where she kept "stumbling". This comes in a stark contrast with her free and liberated childhood where she wore loose clothes showing her free life. As the novel progresses, her loose clothes turns into limited spaces of burqah and chaddar which also reflects on her life which becomes controlled and confined with the progression of the story. Now, she's

kept in a domesticated limited space where she can't take a step outside the "hem" resulting in loosing balancing and consequently falling down whereas this mobility is supervised and controlled by Rashid who is showing her around with "authority". Furthermore, Mariam's staring at the "moonlit profile" of Rashid gives an idea of a distant and cold object at which she is looking. Though he is closer to her now than ever but this time, he appears stranger and distant to her. Moreover, Hosseini's use of other natural expressions such as, "frozen stars", "the sky" and "cloud that draped the face of the moon", collectively reflects a metaphorical distance between Rashid and Mariam which would later become explicit and practical.

Later in chapter 15, when Mariam goes to doctor after each "cycle" her resentment increases with increasing "remoteness" from Rashid. The "cycle" such as menstrual cycle of women relates with the rhythmic cycles of the nature which are seasonal cycles. The way women shed endometrium, trees shed leaves and with the reformation of the uterus, the rebirth of leaves take place on trees, thus the cyclical processes of shedding and rebirthing comes parallel with what Hosseini quotes "hopes raised than dashed". The hopes of life and fruits are raised with the reformation of uterus and rebirth of leaves respectively but later the cycle initiates and it the hopes are "dashed".

#### 5.1.3. Explanation

Hosseini's lexical choices shifting from natural imagery-sun, winds, tracks, mountains, grass, streams, rivers and Mariam and Laila's physical and emotional endurance and their forced silence. This deteriorating conditions of women aligns with the environmental degradation, both of which are the consequences of the patriarchal and political choices of Afghan men. The repetitive expressions of seclusion and isolation-walls, doors, locked-up, burqah, parallels with the nature's imageries of splendid suns, blossoms, wind, snow, fields, representing both women and nature icons of resilience and resistance against oppressing structures thus indicating their inseparable relationship with the environment.

Drawing on the reasons provided by Ortner in his essay about the natural relationship of women and nature, Mariam's childhood perfectly co-aligns with the calm, fresh and generative landscape of Afghanistan. The nature as well as Mariam both are free of the restrictions and surveillance which, supporting Warren's claim that women flourish more in supportive and non-exploitative environments, represents itself with greater freedom and freewill. The excited emotions portrayed by Hosseini reflects the youthful and carefree nature of women under open and allowing environment in the absence of patriarchy. Her flourishing feminine agency parallels the flourishing ecological health of Afghanistan. As the narrative progresses, the agency along with the ecological health of Afghanistan fades, leaving unbridgeable gap between the patriarchal structures and the "subjects" of it which include both women and nature. As, in the last lines, Mariam's

“leaping” is stated as “crawling” showcasing the diminishing individuality of women under patriarchal (Rashid’s) control.

The seasonal imagery in chapter 10, consoles her broken self by reimagining and rearranging her past life experiences into vivid thoughts of their bodies drenched in sweat as “wet leaves” and “the icicles” and “snow burdened branches”. Ironically, the summer’s sweat would ultimately dry and the burdened branches would be stretched after winter is over, but the weight of the gendered oppression and ripped agency once being robbed off of Mariam would never revive to her in her life ever due to the dominant patriarchal structures. Thus, this transitional shift from summer to winter shows the freezing, controlling and suppressing factors of patriarchy. Conforming to Gaard’s idea that falling/fading seasons refers to the deteriorating feminine agency of women under same patriarchal rule. These seasonal cycle are the representations of the cyclical processes of domination, control, surveillance and subject formation. Furthermore, the “buzzing of ears, fluttering of pulse and darting eyes” show the animalistic conversion of Mariam. She is thus reduced to animal level as argued by Gaard in her book. This means the complete and utter loss of her individuality to animal like with no rights, no freedom and no sense of will and purpose, while ironically being the source of life in the society. Putting it into Gaard’s critique, this also shows the heightened sense of fear of punishment from the authority through naturalizing gendered oppression, a core factor of creating and maintaining hegemony.

Ecofeminists Mies and Shiva argues the formation of women’s bodies as sources and sites of state and patriarchal control. This narrative is explicitly illustrated in chapter 11 of the novel. It marks the process of the naturalization of oppression and control through Rashid’s choice of her clothes first, leading to the ultimate level of Gaard’s argument of Mariam’s animalistic conversion. This naturalization is done through making Mariam wear burqah, though she isn’t ready for it. This limiting is the first step towards ripping her off of her agency and individuality. It confines and limits women’s mobility only to a certain extend. From an ecofeminist perspective, this “tightness” of environment for women is the cause of which “stumbling” is the consequence. It is delimiting women only to the sphere of their burqah’s while on the other hand, Rashid in the same scene is showing her around “with authority”. This implies the construction and maintenance of the gendered hierarchies which the ideological structures such as power and patriarchy produce and maintain through naturalized gendered differentiation where men is free and liberated while women is confined and controlled. Keeping the critique of Shiva and Mies about using the bodies of women to maintain state and patriarchal control, Rashid’s committing marital rape on Mariam and then expecting her to bow down to this conformist activity without any judgment or opposition is the reflection of their argument. ”. Moreover, natural images of “blanket, room, and ceiling” individually and collectively

create sense of distance, segregation and fragmentation of familial relationships particularly of husband and wife which further leads to the fragmentation of selves particularly women.

Based on Ortnier's claim that women's social role closer to nature, both nature and women are expected to produce and reproduce. This is the only way to prove their productivity and usability in the society. If they fail to meet the set criteria, they are blamed for being futile, infertile and sterile. Same happens to Mariam in chapter 15, that after six miscarriages, she doesn't hold the authority over her body and her body becomes a site of patriarchal control just like natural cycles are distorted from their natural timings due to anthropocentric activities. The blame is thrown on nature for being infertile and women for being sterile which is manipulated as to be the cause of men distancing their wives, as stated by Hosseini, "Rashid had grown more remote and resentful", allowing them extra marital affairs. The cycles which are associated with rebirth and growth are limited only to the cycles of continued suffering and endurance.

From this point onwards, the three-dimensional analysis of the 2nd part of the novel starts.

## **5.2. Part 02**

Part 02 of the novel starts with the story of Laila and her life as a nine years old in Kabul, Afghanistan. This part links Laila's life childhood carefree and liberated life and the growing, flourishing landscape of Kabul. As the story progresses, Hosseini replaces the images of naturally rich, calm and peaceful landscape of Kabul with war-torn devastated, broken and surveillance Kabul, co-relating it with the then controlled, surveillance and confined life of Laila at Rashid's home as his wife. The turning event which caused this transition was the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in 1979, which turned Afghanistan cultural and political history upside down and brought religious fascism of Taliban to an extreme. Before that, Mariam suffered only at the hands of Rashid but after the invasion, Mariam's and Laila's lives were under the control and surveillance of patriarchy and Taliban as well. This invasion affected environment at a drastic level, becoming the culprit of both women and nature.

Here is the three-dimensional analysis as given by Fairclough of some of the images portrayed in part 02 of the novel.

### **5.2.1. Textual Analysis**

The serene landscape of Kabul to war zone is clearly depicted in chapter 21 of the novel, where Hosseini states, "through Laila's windows, the landscape shifted from snowcapped peaks to deserts to canons and sun scorched outcroppings of rocks" with the ongoing imagery of "dusty fields", "carcasses of burned out Soviet tanks and wrecked helicopters" (Hosseini 2007, p.93). As the story progresses, these images become more and more intense with increasing harshness and diminishing comfort. Hosseini's linguistic

choices of changing natural “snowcapped peaks”, “rocks” and “dusty fields” represent the drastically altered state of Laila’s life which was peaceful at her home with her Mammy.

Chapter 26 provides a stark contrast between the calm, “bright” and “warm” rays of sun falling on Mammy’s face, evoking emotions of comfort, belonging and settlement which at the end of the chapter turns into the images of darkness and numbness as the bomb hits Laila’s house, ultimately crushing the course of her life. Hosseini portrays it as “thick black syrup, spilling out of the women’s mouth” and “her arms and legs hurt” along with the images of “fields of barley”, “a big burning chunk of wood whipped by, along with the thousands of shards of glass” and “Laila crashed to the ground” (Hosseini 2007, p.123). Thus, Hosseini is connecting the dreadful scene of blasting and its direct impact on women. As the bomb cripples the nature, patriarchy cripples the women. Before the blast, Laila in her daydreams reminisces over her past where she is remembering “the oceans, the winds, the dunes and the singing sands...the waves with foam and no roar” (Hosseini 2007, p.122). These musical elements of the nature are turned into chaotic ones where “ground starts lurching, singing sands...screaming now, a whistling...gulls opening and closing their beaks noiselessly” (Hosseini 2007, p.122).

Years after her marriage when Laila comes back in chapter 32, the landscape of Kabul has now changed as Hosseini portrays it “the winds, cold and raw, ripping through the city”. He further says “they [the winds] tore off last of the clinging leaves” trees looking “ghostly”, “the roads froze...the snow gathered in heaps” (Hosseini 2007, p.140). He further states the dead conditions of Kabul as “...in western Kabul fires raged and black palls of smoked mushroomed over snow clad buildings...schools collapsed...wounded were bleeding” (Hosseini 2007, p.140). Thus everything came to halt, death and silence prevailed everywhere as Hosseini states, “...everywhere Laila turned, walls blocked her way” and she nostalgically reminisces over her past when she ‘went shopping...walking in the streets...talking to boys...sitting with Tariq in a bed of a clover on the banks of a stream somewhere, trading riddles and candies” (Hosseini 2007, p.140).

### 5.2.2. Interpretation

The turning of “snowcapped peaks to rocks” and the warmth of sun to “scorched sun” reflects the turning of the environmental as well as the state of Laila’s life. The images of “burned out Soviet tanks and wrecked helicopters” are the reflections of burned out and wrecked surroundings as well as the lives of Afghan people including Laila, Mammy and Mariam. While this devastating imagery of Afghanistan is being represented, Mariam is already married to Rashid and his brutal behavior towards Mariam has already started. This suffering of the people of Kabul, where in winters they couldn’t get enough fuel to warm the houses or to cook food and everything became cold and dead, aligns with the coldness and barrenness of the Afghan land. The harsh images of “stones”, “rocks”, “scorching” and “wreckage” reflects the destruction caused to the nature by wars. The

warmth of sun is now “scorching”, the “snowy peaks” are now transformed into the “wreckages” of “Soviet tanks and wrecked helicopters”.

In chapter 26, Hosseini vividly portrays bomb blasting and its dreadful impacts on women and nature as well. The gulls are a symbol of peace and their soulful voice provides a soothing impact. As the blast happens, gulls become voiceless. Mammy’s face which was first “bright and warm” with “mascara” on is now “spilling thick black liquid” and the calming songs of “singing sands are turned into “whistling”, a sound which disturbs the ears and “no roar”. Thus the nature and women are simultaneously suffering in this scene, their deafening silence where both are voiceless, numb, oppressed and destroyed. Hosseini connects the “broken arms and legs of women’ with “lurching and cracking of ground”.

In chapter 32, the images of “clinging leaves, frozen roads, raged fires, and snow clad buildings and walls blocking her way” together create a sense of death, decomposition and dry emotions of Laila’s individuality. Her past life experiences contrast with her present life’s restrictions and expectations under which has suppressed her to a level that she’s reduced to only a “snow clad building” herself. Her surrounding environment is itself the portrayal of her personality. She remembers her childhood’s open streets, her freedom of talking to the boys and sitting with Tariq on the banks of stream all contrasts her present life’s restrictions of purdah, domesticated liberation, and struck life like the frozen trees and snow clad buildings. Likewise, a cover of silence has been turned on her personal agency turning her individuality into a “ghostly presence”.

### 5.2.3. Explanation

According to Ecofeminist view point on chapter 21, these distortions in the natural rhythms align with the distortions caused in women’s lives under forced rule. Thus, nature itself becomes a victim here like women suffering and enduring in silence and. The ground is the natural basis of strength, birth and growth. As Shiva argues, “wood” provides fuel as a natural resource and links women and nature directly. Here, it is destroyed which ultimately impacts women directly. These productive elements of nature are now victims of the oppression caused by patriarchal systems, nature’s beauty (rainbow) is dusted by the destructive forces. Along with this violence done on nature and its shattering into “thousands of shards of glass”, feminine agency of Laila is also “cracked” and “shower of dirt and pebbles and glass” lands on her arms. Here, due to war and blasts, nature and women both are suffering correlating the consequences of patriarchal activities. The dirt erupted due to blast from nature dusts the vision and rationality of Laila. The image of “fields of barley” shows growth, reproduction to both nature and women. It provides hope while in a devastated landscape.

Gaard’s argument about women’s regression into animals supports the claim that both are reduced to mere subjects of dominant power structures where as in the novel, the war impacts both the nature and women drastically. In chapter 26, the natural images of

“gulls, wood, sands and ground” all in one way or another have become images of the ruins like the turning of wood and ground from being main sources of life and growth to the victims of patriarchy. Thus, here women are reduced from the animalistic level to sub-animalistic level, where even animals are not safe then no question arises about the safety of women. As Laila hits the wall and crashes into the ground, thus Laila transforming into the remnants and becoming one with the rubble. Hence, the total identity loss and dislocation of Laila is being portrayed here.

Drawing on Shiva’s idea about controlling the mobility of women, as in chapter 32, the whole of western Kabul is halted and represented as metaphorically dead by Hosseini. Just as Kabul’s movements are surveillance by Taliban on national level, Laila’s movements are controlled by Rashid at domestic level. Thus, Kabul’s immobilization parallels Laila’s immobilization. Thus, nature and women both are controlled and confined into “surveillance zones”, ripping them of their agency and reducing them into subjects of power and control, thus compiling with Warren’s idea of domination of patriarchy.

Hosseini’s lexical choices shifting from natural imagery-sun, winds, tracks, mountains, grass, streams, rivers and Mariam and Laila’s physical and emotional endurance and their forced silence. This deteriorating conditions of women aligns with the environmental degradation, both of which are the consequences of the patriarchal and political choices of Afghan men. The repetitive expressions of seclusion and isolation-walls, doors, locked-up, burqah, parallels with the nature’s imageries of splendid suns, blossoms, wind, snow, fields, representing both women and nature icons of resilience and resistance against oppressing structures thus indicating their inseparable relationship with the environment. Hosseini’s use of war images of destruction-shriveled, cracked, broken, and rebirth-reborn, light, suffering represent the women in the novel aligning with the idea that women and nature suffer in the same way. The impact on both of them co-relates thus creating cohesive patterns between female agency and cyclic patterns of nature.

## **6. Findings and discussion**

Based on Ortner’s claim that women and nature are intrinsically related through their physiology, social roles and psyche, the first two claims are relevant to our study. Women’s physiology plays roles of birthing, nurturing and caring whereas nature also plays these roles as in the part 01 of the novel, chapter 15, the “cycles” of Mariam’s pregnancy are related to the seasonal cycle of fall and birth of leaves. The blame of the loss of pregnancies are put on the shoulders of women and is made basis of the unethical and rude behavior of men towards women. In the same way, nature is considered the mother and is expected to conform to its assigned duties. Due to anthropocentric activities and patriarchy, when it is disturbed from its natural cycles as in the novel, due to wars, its rhythmic cycle gets disturbed which is again blamed on the nature itself.

The images of “streams, fields, mountains, splendid suns and wooden barrel” represent the fulfilled and calm life of Mariam in her childhood. Whereas in Laila’s case, the “snowcapped peaks and fields of barley are transformed into the “snow clad buildings” in western Kabul where life is no more mobilized, struck and dead. These images co-relate the impacts of patriarchy and war on women and the changes they make while in power.

The analysis of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* carefully portrays the hidden objectives of power, patriarchy and environmental inequality through Fairclough’s three dimensional model of descriptive, interpretive and explanatory analysis. At descriptive level, the linguistic choices of using imagery in the text portrays the status of women in an Afghan society as inferior and animalistic and nature as subordinate and vulnerable. At interpretive level, it explains the processes of upgraded male dominance in the Afghan society and restricted feminine agency relating deterioration of nature. At explanatory level, the textual features which highlight the underlying ideologies like patriarchy and Taliban government place both women and nature at lower level with men controlling them and deciding their will and mobility. Additionally, Hosseini exposes the root cause of women oppression and environmental degradation, that is patriarchy.

Literature as *A Thousand splendid Suns* both reinforces and challenges ecofeminist perspectives through the use of language. The reinforcement is done through the portrayal of women as streams, cycles and seasons. While the text challenges these perspectives by representing Mariam and Laila as the ones who stand up to this system of patriarchy and oppose these systems through their action of killing Rashid. Rashid’s killing is the reflection of the killing and dismantling of broader social structures of power, such as patriarchy in this case. Thus, through these sensory images, powerful narratives and emotions, Hosseini not only uses language to unveil the dominant features of society but also the regenerative capacity of both women and nature.

## **7. Conclusion and Recommendations**

To conclude the above discussion, both women and nature are represented as vulnerable, weak and dependent on men while this idea is challenged in the context of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Mariam and Laila’s lives are depicted along with the nature as changing, from flourishing childhood of Mariam and refreshing nature of Herat to devastating adulthood of both Mariam and Laila and deteriorated and war torn nature of Kabul. Through the comparison of images of both the women’s lives with the images of nature, Hosseini draws the idea that both women and nature are the victims of same ruling power, patriarchy.

The recommendations of this study are that Laila’s feminism can be studied as a separate subfield in this discourse. Along with this, the intersection of war discourse and ecofeminism in South Asian Literature also stands out.

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