



“WOMAN TO WOMAN, FIGHTER TO FIGHTER”: AN ECO-FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF BINA SHAH’S *THE MONSOON WAR*

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Abstract

This article critically examines eco-feminist issues highlighted in Bina Shah’s novel *The Monsoon War* (2023) by employing the theoretical concepts postulated by Ynestra King. The current study presents the ecological crisis in the context of socio-political agendas purported by a hegemonic patriarchal system set against women as well as natural resources. Futuristic climate disasters reveal how male-dominance and state power operate through a hierarchical model to regulate both Punjab’s rivers and women’s capacity to reproduce. Under the lens of eco-feminism, the research demonstrates that Shah critiques the patriarchal viewpoint which perceives both natural environments and female bodies as commodities for control, engineering, and demographic use. This research draws on Ynestra King’s eco-feminist concerns presented in her essay entitled *The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology* (1989). This essay is marked by King’s revolutionary eco-feminist ideas that challenge the militarism and male-dominance strategies adopted to subjugate women and take control of natural resources. In *The Monsoon War* (2023), Shah envisions alternative modes of resistance in Diya’s commitment to safeguarding seeds, passing down oral narratives, and sustaining a direct relationship with rain, which mirror King’s ethics of ecological renewal. The novel’s epilogue, where the collapse of dams coincides with women recovering their voices, emphasizes that healing the land and liberating women are interlinked processes. In this way, Shah transforms the war narrative into a story centered on nurturing, remembrance, and ecological equilibrium.

Keywords: *Eco-Feminism, Ynestra King, Ecological Crisis, Hegemonic Patriarchy, Feminist Anti- Militarism, Eco-Militarism, Social Ecology*

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1. Introduction

Literary texts have traditionally reflected the realities of human life, societal structures, and the challenges faced by communities in different periods. In recent years, issues related to the environment such as global warming, damage to natural systems, and increasing disasters have become major subjects in literary analysis. Simultaneously, academic attention has shifted towards understanding how environmental problems are tied to gender roles, power, and unequal social relations. This shift has given birth to eco-feminism, a critical approach that connects the exploitation of the Earth with the suppression of women. Eco-feminists maintain that the patriarchal ideology that justifies male dominance also supports the control of nature. For this reason, the perspective stresses gender parity, environmental accountability, and a cooperative bond between people and their surroundings. The emergence of eco-feminism dates back to the 1970s when ecological activism and feminist discourse began to intersect. Françoise d'Eaubonne (1974) first used the term in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (Feminism or Death). She argued that the destruction of environment and violence against women, both originate from patriarchal frameworks based on dominance and misuse of power. According to her, modern industrial and consumer-focused societies place extreme pressure on natural resources while curbing women's participation and rights. Her work became the starting point for eco-feminist criticism and inspired scholars to study the relationship among women, nature, and social organization. Ynestra King (1989) later extended this theory by linking environmental conservation with feminist ideals, justice, and peace. King (1989) claimed that patriarchal cultures establish hierarchical systems that permit the domination of women, nature, and other marginalized groups. She suggested that both ecological crisis and social inequality arise from the belief in male superiority and social control. This research focuses on Bina Shah's novel *The Monsoon War* (2023), which presents a vivid picture of climate catastrophes, political instability, and human suffering. The novel shows a society overwhelmed by floods and ecological imbalance, and explores how such environmental breakdowns affect relationships, institutions, and individual lives. It also brings forward the struggle of communities trying to survive under constant environmental and social stress. Shah (2023) demonstrates that ecological crises impact different social groups in unequal ways and critiques structures founded on domination. The narrative encourages readers to rethink the connection between humans and nature to recognize the value of environmental responsibility. Although scholars have analyzed the novel from

feminist and eco-critical perspectives, an eco-feminist reading remains limited. Earlier studies discuss ecological problems and gender concerns separately, without exploring their interconnection. As a result, the way environmental destruction shapes women's experiences has not been fully examined in relation to this novel.

1.1. Research Objectives

- To highlight the connection of women with nature
- To explore the emerging ecological concerns in the era of techno-culture and artificial intelligence
- To establish a connection between eco-feminism and eco-militarism under the paradigm of eco-feminism

1.2. Research Questions

1. In what ways, women appear as both anti-militarist and eco-militarist forces in Bina Shah's *The Monsoon War*?
2. What are the impacts of emerging ecological crises like war, climate change, and techno-culture on the lives of novel's characters in the context of ecofeminism?
3. What resistive strategies are employed by the women characters to fight against eco-feminist issues prevailing in *The Monsoon War*?

1.3. Significance of the Study

Eco-feminism emerged as a response to growing concerns about ecological crises and social injustice, emphasizing that the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature are closely linked. It seeks to establish a more balanced, ethical, and sustainable relationship between human societies and the natural environment. Capitalism and patriarchy treat natural resources and human beings as objects to be used for economic and political gains. Eco-feminism has become an influential approach in literary studies because it enables scholars to investigate the relationship between environmental issues and gender dynamics within literary works. Eco-feminist criticism examines how texts represent nature, ecological crises, women's experiences, and social power structures. It also explores the ways in which authors challenge systems of domination and promote ecological awareness.

2. Literature Review

Eco-feminism is a prominent theoretical approach in contemporary literary studies that examines the deep connection between gender-based oppression and environmental destruction. This framework is built on the idea that the exploitation of women and the exploitation of nature are produced through the same patriarchal systems that rely on domination and control. Because of this shared origin, eco-feminist scholars study literary texts to understand how environmental crisis and gender inequality appear as interconnected realities rather than separate issues. This perspective provides a useful

analytical foundation for reading Bina Shah's *The Monsoon War*. Shah argued that environmental damage, sexism, and broader social injustices are linked through hierarchical structures that privilege power and control.

Recently, a study was conducted on Shah's *The Monsoon War* under the title *Interconnected Oppression: A Study of Ecofeminism in Shah's "The Monsoon War"* (2026). The researchers analyze Shah's novel under the theoretical framework of ecofeminism by employing the theories of Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies. This study highlights the interconnectedness of women and nature. Technological tools are used to subjugate women in a capitalist patriarchal society like Green City (Gul et al., 2026).

In recent academic research entitled *Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism in Contemporary Literary Studies: A Comparative Theoretical and Analytical Framework Introduction and Ecocritical Theoretical Foundations* (2026) provide a comparative analysis of eco-criticism and eco-feminism. The study explains that eco-criticism focuses on how literature represents nature and environmental issues, while eco-feminism examines the relationship between ecological destruction and the oppression of women. It concludes that both approaches critique systems of domination and help deepen the understanding of environmental and social problems in literary works (Almaarroof, 2026).

According to Wali and Kifayat Ullah (2026), Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) is widely discussed in literary criticism for its representation of social inequality and power dynamics. Scholars have explored how the novel exposes systems of caste, gender, and class that marginalize individuals. Novel's environmental surroundings allow it to be interpreted through an eco-feminist lens that highlights interconnected systems of domination and resistance (Wali and Kifayat Ullah, 2026).

Similarly, the study *Gendered Oppression and Environmental Exploitation: An Eco-feminist Study of Selected Pakistani Novels* (2025) investigates how Pakistani fiction portrays the simultaneous oppression of women and nature. The researchers argue that patriarchal systems often function through parallel forms of control that affect both the environment and women's lives. Their findings show that environmental degradation and gender inequality frequently occur together and reinforce each other within literary narratives. The study highlights eco-feminism as a useful framework for analyzing such interconnected patterns of oppression (Khan & Shah, 2025).

According to Batool and Hayat (2025), Bina Shah's *Before She Sleeps* (2018) has received a considerable critical attention for its eco-feminism portrayal of gender oppression. The novel presents a future society marked by strict control over women, reproductive restrictions, and surveillance mechanisms. Critics argue that Shah highlights the consequences of extreme patriarchal systems that deny women autonomy and freedom. These concerns provide an important foundation for understanding the thematic development in her later work (Batool and Hayat, 2025).

The ecological dimensions of the novel are further examined in another study *Analysis of Ecolinguistic Discourse in Bina Shah's The Monsoon War* by Sadiq et al. (2024), which employs an eco-linguistic approach to analyze the text. Focusing on the role of language in shaping environmental awareness, the researchers demonstrate how the novel encourages readers to reflect on the consequences of irresponsible human actions toward nature. Their analysis suggests that environmental decline in the narrative is portrayed as the outcome of human-centered attitudes and destructive social practices. As a result, the study highlights the novel's potential to promote ecological consciousness and encourage a more balanced relationship between humanity and the natural world (Sadiq et al., 2024).

Environmental themes are also present in Uzma Aslam Khan's novel *Trespassing* (2003), which have been analyzed for its depiction of ecological awareness and human interaction with the natural environment. The novel draws attention to environmental vulnerability and shows how ecological conditions influence human life and relationships. This makes it significant for eco-feminist discussions that emphasize the connection between humans and nature (Khan, 2003). Similarly, Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon* (2011) portrays the experiences of communities living in extreme environmental conditions. The narrative explores themes of survival, displacement, and adaptation, highlighting how geography and ecology shape human existence. The novel reflects ecological fragility and the challenges faced by marginalized populations in harsh environments (Ahmad, 2011).

2.1. Research Gap

An evaluation of contemporary academic scholarship reveals that *The Monsoon War* (2023) has been cross-examined through diverse theoretical dimensions, encompassing conventional eco-criticism, postcolonial frameworks, feminist perspectives, and dystopian literary criticism. Existing analyses have successfully mapped themes such as anthropogenic climate change, landscape degradation, systemic geopolitical instability, socio-economic friction, and the general representation of female subjectivities. The novel has remained understudied from an integrated eco-feminist perspective, particularly through the theoretical matrices propounded by Ynestra King. Limited researchers have applied to Ynestra King's Eco-feministic perspectives on Bina Shah's novel *The Monsoon War* and this thing brings a research gap to this study.

3. Theoretical Framework

The present research has been conducted under the theoretical frameworks of eco-feminism applied to Bina Shah's novel *The Monsoon War* (2023). The researcher has chosen the eco-feminist ideas propounded by Ynestra King in her essay *The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology* (1898). D'Eaubonne introduced the link between feminism and ecology, while King expanded that link to include peace, social justice, race,

and class. Together, their ideas allow this study to examine how literary texts represent women, nature, and structures of power. In this framework, King is treated as the major theorist because her concepts of interconnection, diversity, and anti-militarism directly guide the literary analysis. Françoise d'Eaubonne is recognized as the first scholar to connect feminist concerns with ecological crisis. In her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974), she argued that the forces causing environmental destruction are the same forces that maintain women's subordination. She rejected the idea that environmental problems should be studied in isolation. Instead, she placed them inside a larger structure of domination that affects both human society and the natural world (Derzelle, 2021). She further argued that patriarchal authority has caused harm to both women and nature simultaneously.

The origins of eco-feminist thought are commonly associated with Françoise d'Eaubonne who first coined the term in her work *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974). She proposed that both ecological destruction and women's subordination stem from patriarchal ideologies that prioritize exploitation and authority. In her view, the same structures that justify control over women also encourage the domination of the natural world. Her contribution created an important theoretical link between feminism and environmental studies, forming the basis of later eco-feminist criticism (D'Eaubonne, 1974). Ynestra King (1989) further developed eco-feminist theory by expanding its focus to include all interconnected systems of oppression. She argued that environmental issues, sexism, and broader social injustices are linked through hierarchical structures that privilege power and control. King emphasized that eco-feminism seeks to challenge these structures and promote more cooperative and balanced relationships between humans and nature. Her work remains influential in shaping literary interpretations of ecological and gender-related concerns (King, 1989). Ecofeminism argues that damage to the environment and unfair treatment with women comes from the same source. Both problems are produced by systems that value control, ranking, and domination. These systems treat natural resources and human beings as objects to be used for economic and political gain. Ecofeminism responds by demanding a relationship between humans and nature that is based on balance, ethics, and long-term survival.

3.1. Ynestra King's Concept of Eco-Feminism

Ynestra King developed her eco-feminist ideas in her famous essay entitled *The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology* (1988). She argued that control over women and destruction of nature both come from patriarchal values that support hierarchy and inequality. For King (1989), environmental issues cannot be separated from broader social problems because different forms of oppression often support each other. A central idea in King's theory is connection of women with natural environment. She rejects hierarchical models that place some groups above others. Instead, she emphasizes

relationships among all forms of life. King (1989) stated, “**All human beings are natural beings**” (p. 18). This claim removes the artificial divide between humans and nature. She also noted that “women are believed to be closer to nature than men” (King, 1989, p. 18). King did not use this idea to limit women, but to challenge the dualism that ranks culture above nature and men above women. King (1989) also argued that “**ecology requires a feminist perspective**” (p. 24). For her, ecological solutions will fail if they ignore gender. She added that “diversity in nature is necessary and enriching” (King, 1989, p. 24). This idea rejects uniform, control-based approaches to the environment and instead values variety, difference, and mutual support. She further explained that “the hatred of women and the hatred of nature are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing” (King, 1989, p. 18). This observation highlights the close link between environmental exploitation and gender-based oppression. King broadened ecofeminism by showing that systems of discrimination do not work alone. She claimed that “the domination of sex, race, and class and the domination of nature are mutually reinforcing” (King, 1989, p. 20). This means that inequality based on gender, race, and class strengthens environmental exploitation, and environmental harm in turn deepens social inequality. For King, any real ecological movement must also be a movement for racial and economic justice.

3.2. Ynestra’s Concept of Militarism/ Eco-militarism

Another key part of King’s work is her critique of militarism. She argued that war and violence are extensions of patriarchal power. King (1989) explained that “**the eco-feminist analysis of militarism is concerned with the militarization of culture and the economic priorities**” (p. 26). She saw military values not as separate from daily life, but as part of a culture that celebrates control and competition. Eco-feminists employ military tactics to defend her female body and identity. For eco-feminists, military technologies reflect a cultural and political situation. They are connected with “rape, genocide, and imperialism, with starvation and homelessness, with the poisoning of the environment” (King, 1989, p. 26). This shows how King connected weapons and war to other forms of violence against bodies, communities, and the earth. King (1989) also noted that “military and state power hierarchies join and reinforce each other through military technology” (p. 26). For her, the state and the military support each other through systems of technology and control. This link reveals why ecological destruction often increases during war and why peace is an environmental issue. She argued that “the survival of the species necessitates a renewed understanding of our relationship to nature” (King, 1989, p. 20). Her theory promotes values such as empathy, responsibility, cooperation, and care as the foundation for both environmental and social progress. She therefore advocated peaceful change, ecological responsibility, and collective action to build a more just and sustainable world. Ecofeminism has become a strong approach in literary studies because it allows scholars to explore the relationship between environmental issues and gender dynamics

inside texts. Eco-feminist criticism examines how literature represents nature, ecological crisis, women's experiences, and social power. It also studies how authors challenge systems of domination and encourage ecological awareness.

4. Textual Analysis

Bina Shah is a contemporary Pakistani novelist, columnist, and short story writer on the firmament of Pakistani literature in English. Her literary works explore the issues of gender inequality, social justice, and ecological crisis in modern Pakistani society. Her novel, *The Monsoon War* (2023), a sequel to *Before She Sleeps* (2018), has gained the status of scholarly attention for its futuristic eco-feminist concerns. *The Monsoon War* (2023) has been analyzed under the lens of Eco-feminism. Eco-feminist issues like impact of ecological changes on women and nature, modern ecological crisis, climate changes, and militarism have been highlighted in the structure of the novel. *The Monsoon War* (2023) is saturated with the issues of ecological crisis emerging as a result of wars, bombardments, seasonal changes, pandemic effects, and natural disasters. These ecological issues affect the lives of women characters in the novel to a large extent. One of the major ecological crises has been exemplified through Shah's depiction of the Final War and its aftermaths on the lives of novel's characters. This Great War brought about a massive destruction to both India and Pakistan in the form of diseases, starvation, and poisonous radiations: **"The great conflict had destroyed two countries_India and Pakistan...Millions more died of starvation and radiation poisoning"** (p.21). Another incident of ecological crisis deals with the bombardment on the Glass Mosque in Iran. It is exemplified through the following quote: "The Pink Mosque in Shiraz. It was destroyed during the Iran bombardments. Shah further develops these concerns by adding environmental collapse to her dystopian world. The novel depicts a society struggling with climate change, ecological instability, political disorder, and resource scarcity. Alongside these environmental challenges, women continue to experience structural oppression and forms of resistance. The

4.1. Militarism/Anti-Militarism: An Eco-feminist Stance

The Monsoon War (2023) is saturated with the eco-feminist stances of militarism or anti-militarism. In the novel, women organize a military group called "Hamiyat" for the protection of females' rights and honor. By employing different military tactics, this military organization plays its crucial role in empowering women in a male-dominated society. The following textual phrase mentioned in the novel exemplifies the eco-feminist as well as eco-militarist stances proposed by Bina Shah in *The Monsoon War*: **"Woman to woman, fighter to fighter"** (Shah, 2023, p.226). This first part of the phrase "woman to woman" builds a connection of the novel within the frameworks of eco-feminism to highlight a strong connection of women with natural ecology. While the later part of the phrase "fighter to fighter" plays its pivotal role in addressing the issues of women via

revolutionary movements to fight against the oppressive patriarchal notions of exploiting women as well as natural environment. Fatima Kara, a Hamiyat fighter, is a true representative of women liberation as she is given the charge of the “Commander of the Hamiyat’s Dawn Battalion” (Shah, 2023, p.131). She is fighting for the rights of female body, productivity, and political freedom: “You teach your Hamiyat fighters about **women’s emancipation, women’s science, women’s dignity**” (p.132). The women fighters of Hamiyat fight with full zeal and zest against the Sheba City Guards who finally surrender themselves to the Hamiyat troops. Ababeel, a secret spy and helper of the Hamiyat also plays a military role for the protection of women. Hamiyat fighters and their conspirators live in mountain areas. They befriend the inanimate objects of nature as they admit: “Concrete is our friend: it can stop enemy bullets, limit their navigation and radio signals” (p.148).

4.2. Women and Nature

In *The Monsoon War* (2023), the novelist develops a strong connection between women and nature. The Hamiyat women are a true specimen of eco-feminist view that women are the guardians of natural recourses as well as their femininity against the capitalist patriarchal system. This stance has been exemplified through the following sentence of the novel: “Soraya’s troops will stay higher to protect the mountains” (p.147). Sometimes, nature or its catastrophic elements appear as a protective force for women to liberate them from the cruel clutches of patriarchal society. The title of the novel is also a true manifestation of it. The futuristic depiction of monsoon wars appears as a source of protection for the women in the Green City. Women find solace and comfort in the lap on Nature. As the novelist says: “**The Monsoon War** has really only just begun” (p.226). In the novel, the Khareef Festival is celebrated to stay connected with natural environment and revive the old traditions. Furthermore, Shah’s fictional *Green City* seems to be building a strong connection with **Green Studies**, a terminology synonymous with Eco-feminist ideologies. Eco-feminists take nature as a “feminist issue” as they want to establish a deep connection with the elements of nature. According to them, trees, water, animals, rain, and mountains are feminist concerns. The Chipko Movement in India about the protection of trees was an eco-feminist stand against the capitalistic society’s schemes of deforestation for industrial benefits. Likewise, the Green Belt Movement in Kenya was an indigenous grassroots organization founded by Wangari Maathai in 1977. This movement empowered rural women to fight against deforestation and Technological advancements also fall under the domain of feminist issues.

4.3. Patriarchal Oppressions and Women’s Resilience

In the patriarchal society of Green City, women are facing the issues of commodification. They are supposed to be taken as child-producing machines because they are being forced to marry more than one man at the behest of capitalist government.

Therefore, women were forcibly sent to the Girls' Markaz in Sheba City for getting married to the provincial capital's richest men. In this way, they become a true victim of gender stereotypes in the polygamous culture of city. In the words of novelist: **"Childbirth is women's business"** (Amna, 2023, p.19). Further, the Panah women face the issues of surveillance and suppression at the hands of patriarchal society. In Shah's *The Monsoon War*, women show resilience and resistance against the hegemonic technological tools of oppression employed by the capitalist patriarchal society. Women appear as **anti-militarist** forces to resist the capitalist agendas of male-dominated societies. In the novel, the Hamiyat women employ military tactics to fight against the women's slavery and the ecological crisis as well. As Kara says in the novel: **"We're soldiers...our aim is to end this regime of enslavement and torture"** (Amna, 2023, p.52).

4.4. Artificial Intelligence: An Emerging Ecological Concern and its Future

Artificial Intelligence, Machine learning, Algorithms, all are the salient features of a techno-culture. They are considered as ecological changes influencing the lives of present as well as future generations either positively or negatively. In Bina Shah's *The Monsoon War*, the Zaalim, the most dreadful of drones, is marked by the latest technological features. Zayn Battuta, the scientist in the novel sheds light on the features of Zaalim: **"It's a combination of camera, artificial intelligence, and weapon"** (p.198).

According to current study, Shah depicts women as determined and resourceful individuals capable of confronting social, political, and cultural restrictions. Rather than accepting oppression passively, these characters actively negotiate their circumstances and resist the forces that attempt to limit their autonomy. The researchers therefore regard the novel as a significant contribution to discussions of women's empowerment and resistance. When considered together, these scholarly works demonstrate that *The Monsoon War* is a multifaceted text that addresses environmental concerns alongside issues of gender and power. While eco-feminist and eco-linguistic studies draw attention to ecological degradation and its broader implications, feminist criticism emphasizes women's strength, agency, and resilience. These perspectives collectively enrich the understanding of the novel and reveal its critique of systems that perpetuate inequality and domination. Despite the valuable contributions of previous research, there remains a need for a more comprehensive investigation of the relationship between ecological destruction and gender oppression in the novel. Existing studies often prioritize one aspect of the text while giving less attention to the interaction between environmental and social forms of injustice. Therefore, further research can contribute to the field by offering an integrated eco-feminist and eco-militarist analysis that examine how these interconnected forms of oppression operate simultaneously within *The Monsoon War*.

5. Conclusion

Through an eco-feminist lens, literary works can reveal parallels between the exploitation of nature and the marginalization of women. The theory provides insight into how writers show resistance against oppressive structures and imagine alternative relationships based on harmony, equality, and sustainability. Themes such as environmental responsibility, ecological crisis, gender inequality, and social transformation become central concerns in eco-feminist readings. King's ideas of interconnection, diversity, and anti-militarism serve as the primary tools for interpretation. Her stance humans as "natural beings" the need for a feminist ecology and the critique of militarism guide the reading of characters, imagery, and plot. By applying these eco-feminist principles, the research aims to show how literature can reveal the connected challenges of ecological sustainability, gender equality, and social justice. The findings also demonstrate the relevance of ecofeminism as a valuable approach for interpreting contemporary literary texts that engage with environmental and social challenges

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