



**SLOW VIOLENCE AND WAR: A COMPARATIVE
ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF *THE BLIND MAN'S
GARDEN* AND *NO SPACE FOR FURTHER BURIALS***

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Abstract

This study offers a comparative ecocritical analysis of Nadeem Aslam's (2013) *The Blind Man's Garden* and Feryal Ali Gauhar's (2007) *No Space for Further Burials* through the lens of Nixon's (2011) perspective derived from *Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor*. The study explores how these narratives depict the gradual yet devastating environmental degradation caused by prolonged conflict, a phenomenon often overlooked in traditional discourse. Both novels highlight the inseparable bond between human suffering and ecological destruction, illustrating how war obliterates not only the physical landscapes but also the cultural, moral, and social fabrics of society against the backdrop of the post-9/11. The research identifies key findings: first, the representation of slow violence as a pervasive and insidious force that extends the horrors of war beyond immediate human casualties to the environment; second, the novels' portrayal of the interconnectedness of human and ecological suffering, suggesting that the damage inflicted on nature is a reflection of the violence within humanity; and third, the role of historical and cultural contexts in shaping the narratives, the enduring impact of colonialism and global conflicts on contemporary ecological crises. These findings emphasize the urgency of addressing the environmental consequences and societal degeneration caused by wars.

Keywords: *Ecocriticism, Environmental Degeneration, No Space For Further Burials, Slow Violence, The Blind Man's Garden, War Literature.*

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1. Introduction

The environment plays a crucial role in the development of societies and guiding the direction of civilization. Comprising both living and non-living elements—such as insects, birds, animals, and humans, as well as deserts, mountains, oceans, hills, jungles, and seas—the environment shapes human civilization. The harmonious existence of humans with these elements is essential for their survival and well-being. However, modern human activities, driven by material gains and often marked by carelessness, have resulted in environmental degradation, disrupting the balance and beauty of nature. This deterioration is exacerbated by warfare, which not only leads to loss of life and infrastructure but also leaves lasting scars on the environment.

War has a particularly devastating impact on the environment, making it difficult to restore natural beauty and ecological health. Regions like the Northern areas of Pakistan, once known for their paradisiacal landscapes, have suffered due to military operations aimed at eliminating terrorist threats against the backdrop of post-9/11 scenario. The natural beauty of these regions has been significantly marred, illustrating the broader environmental consequences of conflict. In response to the growing environmental crisis, scholars, thinkers, and eco-concerned activists have launched campaigns to raise awareness and promote environmental security. The emergence of ecocriticism—a theoretical framework that explores the relationship between literature, humanity, and the environment—has been instrumental in highlighting the importance of preserving nature. This discipline emphasizes the interconnectedness of human civilization and the natural world, advocating for the protection of the environment to ensure the survival and well-being of humanity.

Despite the recognition of the environment's significance, there remains a gap in understanding how literature can effectively convey environmental concerns and influence societal attitudes toward nature. Specifically, there is a need to explore how contemporary South Asian literature, particularly in the context of post-9/11 conflicts, addresses environmental degradation and the human-nature relationship. Texts like Aslam's (2013) *The Blind Man's Garden* and Gauhar's (2007) *No Space for Further Burials* offer rich insights into these themes. Understanding the environmental discourse within South Asian

literature is essential for several reasons. First, it sheds light on the ecological consequences of socio-political events, such as wars, which are often overlooked in mainstream narratives. By analyzing these literary works through an ecocritical lens, we can gain a deeper appreciation of the environmental awareness embedded in the region's cultural production. This knowledge can also contribute to broader discussions on environmental conservation, encouraging readers and scholars alike to consider the profound impact of human actions on nature. Moreover, it underscores the need for sustainable practices and policies that prioritize environmental health, ensuring that natural beauty and ecological balance are preserved for future generations.

The exploration of warfare and environmental degradation as represented in both these novels reveals the profound connections between human conflict and the natural world. While each novel offers a distinct narrative perspective: one set against the backdrop of post-9/11 Pakistan and Afghanistan, the other deeply embedded in the ravaged landscapes of Afghanistan. Both Aslam (2013) and Gauhar (2007) highlight how the scars of war extend beyond the immediate human toll, permeating the environment and disrupting the intricate balance of ecosystems. By juxtaposing these two works, this study aims to uncover the underlying ecocritical concerns that resonate across different contexts and narrative styles, thereby offering a nuanced understanding of how contemporary South Asian literature grapples with the entangled fates of humanity and nature in times of conflict. Through this comparative analysis, the research has delved into how these novels not only reflect on the consequences of warfare but also advocate for a deeper ecological consciousness in literary studies.

1.1. Research Objectives

1. To analyze the depiction of slow violence resulting from war in *The Blind Man's Garden* and *No Space for Further Burials*
2. To examine the element of the environmental and societal consequences of war on Pakistani and Afghan landscapes and their people as depicted in *The Blind Man's Garden* and *No Space for Further Burials*

1.2. Research Questions

- How does the concept of slow violence manifest itself in the ecological and human degradation as depicted in *The Blind Man's Garden* and *No Space for Further Burials*?
- How do *The Blind Man's Garden* and *No Space for Further Burials* depict the environmental and societal consequences of war on Pakistani and Afghan landscapes and their people?

2. Literature Review

Ecocriticism is a new field of study in literature and got recognition gradually, particularly, for the last three decades. It has changed views of the people about nature significantly. It is evident from many dramatic and significant changes during this period. In the 1990s, the field of ecocriticism has been accepted as a literary discipline academically. This new area of study has fascinated many researchers and excited young scholars to research and write on the issues regarding environmental degradation and improvement for future generations.

Love (1990) is perplexed at insignificance of literary studies toward environmental devastation. He appeals to the mankind that they have been blessed with rationale and consciousness, while other creatures lack it so they should recognize their responsibilities and duties towards their non-human objects. God has made humans as crown of creation, possessed with so many sterling qualities including self-awareness and looking at the world from different perspectives. He analyzes the works Toynbee's (1976) *Mankind and Mother Earth* that is about the idea that this planet earth is the only place to live in. Rest of the divine planets is devoid of human life or life of any kind as there is no suitable environment to live in there. So, this earth is only place suitable for life and that is being depleted and this is becoming unsuitable for the stability of long life due to human follies for next generations. It is, therefore, up to the literary scholars to carry the burden to make people aware of their duties in preserving nature and environment.

Exploring the detrimental impact of pollution on the human psyche, Yaqoob (2010) conducts an ecocritical analysis of Hamid's (2000) *Moth Smoke*. It argues that a toxic and unhealthy environment distorts human reasoning and corrupts emotions. Set in Lahore—a city enveloped by vehicle emissions, air conditioning exhaust, dust, heat, and smoke—the novel illustrates the profound effects of environmental degradation. Research indicates that Lahore's air contains suspended particulate matter levels 6.4 times higher than World Health Organization guidelines, posing serious health risks to its inhabitants. The novel draws a parallel between environmental pollution and the contamination of human consciousness. Regardless of social class or profession—be it the elite, the working class, police officers, government officials, drivers, or bankers—everyone inhales polluted air and, in turn, reflects this toxicity in their social roles and responsibilities (Hamid, 2012).

Shah (2015) has highlighted ecological themes in the poems of a great Sanskrit poet, Kalidasa. Kalidasa is considered as one of the great poets of the world. The researcher highlights the ecocritical aspects of Kalidasa's poetry, focusing on the depiction of natural

elements. He has talked about physical environment created by the poet and the natural beauty in the poems. The natural depiction of beautiful flowers and crops makes it attractive and creates interest of ecritics in the poems. He depicts the natural beauty by giving powerful description of number of flowers, trees, plants, crops which grow in different seasons. He has painted the poems with all these ecological concepts.

Makwana (2016) examines Coelho's (1988) *The Alchemist* that echoes eco-critical elements. Findings of the study reveal that the narrative is a fine example to comprehend the relation and connection between human existence and environment. In this situation, humanity should think not only about development and comforts but also of survival and protection of the environment. This narrative also gives lesson to the humankind that it is nature that gives courage to achieve our aims. Coelho (1988) aptly contends "When you want to get something, the whole universe conspires in helping you to achieve it" (p. 24).

Makhdoom & Yaqoob (2019) examine how language conveys and shapes humanity's relationship with the environment across different cultural contexts. Through an analysis of selected fictions by different authors, the study explores the distinct characteristics of American and Pakistani environmental discourse. Drawing on interdisciplinary approaches such as ecocriticism and toxic discourse, it highlights how different fiction writers engage themselves with issue of environmental degradation. The study aims to underscore the need for diverse perspectives in addressing global environmental contamination. By investigating how different cultures perceive and articulate ecological crises—particularly in relation to toxicity, pollution, and contamination—this study examines how selected Pakistani and American writers depict their societies' ecological connections with both the living and non-living world. In doing so, it acknowledges the intricate and evolving relationship between the environment and the social sphere.

Rahman (2023) explores in Aslam's (2013) novel *The Blind Man's Garden*, the post-9/11 conflict in Afghanistan and its impact on a Pakistani character, Mikal, who endures imprisonment and torture at the hands of both Afghan warlords and American soldiers. Throughout his journey, Mikal remains acutely aware of the interconnectedness of all living beings. The researcher contends that while the novel critiques the destructive effects of hegemonic masculinity through its portrayal of war, it also offers an alternative perspective. Mikal embodies a non-hierarchical approach to the War on Terror, gender equity, and the treatment of nonhuman animals, modeling constructive rather than harmful behaviors.

Rabani & Mishra (2024) explore Khan's (2012) *Thinner Than Skin* through the lens of ecocritical perspectives, examining its engagement with ecological ideologies that shape our understanding of climate change. The novel highlights the destructive consequences of environmental and ecosystem degradation and their far-reaching effects on both humanity and the non-human world. As ecological deterioration emerges as a pressing global issue, challenges such as desertification and deforestation remain critical environmental concerns. This study investigates the depiction of the indigenous people of Pakistan's Kaghan Valley, their land, history, and culture, emphasizing the threats posed by expanding capitalism and rapid urbanization. Khan underscores the dangers of biodiversity loss and critiques the materialistic forces that continue to deplete the planet's natural resources.

3. Theoretical Framework

Ecocriticism offers a valuable lens for analyzing literary texts by focusing on the intricate relationship between literature and the physical environment. Glotfelty (1996), examines ecocriticism as the representation of the natural world in literature, particularly in contexts of environmental degradation resulting from human activities such as warfare. This theoretical approach provides an avenue to explore how novels depict ecological destruction and its socio-environmental repercussions. By integrating literary and environmental perspectives, ecocriticism enables a nuanced understanding of the interplay between human conflict and environmental harm.

The comparative study of *The Blind Man's Garden* and *No Space for Further Burials* within the context of warfare and environmental degradation is guided by Nixon's (2011) perspective derived from his essay *Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor*. This framework analyzes how these novels depict the long-term and often invisible impacts of war on the environment and human suffering. Nixon (2011) focuses on the gradual, less visible consequences of environmental harm caused by conflict and other forms of slow violence. He argues that the effects of such violence are dispersed over time and space, making them less immediate and perceptible compared to other forms of violence. He explains slow violence as "violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). He intends to explain that this violence affects environment and poor people more than rich and capitalists.

He further contends "the destructive effects of environmental harm are delayed, dispersed, and rarely linked directly to specific perpetrators" (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). Nixon

refers to harm that is incremental, delayed in its impact, and often invisible in its unfolding. Unlike immediate acts of violence, slow violence occurs over extended periods, making its consequences—such as environmental degradation—difficult to trace back to specific perpetrators or events. He further highlights that “Environmental damage from conflict zones may continue to impact communities long after the immediate violence has ceased, perpetuating a cycle of suffering and ecological decline”(Nixon, 2011, p. 24). He further examines that the environmental harm caused in conflict zones often outlasts the conflict itself, affecting ecosystems and communities over time. This ongoing damage disrupts livelihoods, depletes resources, and perpetuates suffering long after the visible violence ends.

Talking about the slow violence he says, “The slow violence...inflicted upon marginalized communities often goes unnoticed by mainstream discourse, leaving these populations to deal with the enduring effects of ecological and social damage” (Nixon, 2011, p. 76). Here, he emphasizes that slow violence disproportionately affects marginalized communities, who endure long-term ecological and social harm. This suffering often remains invisible in mainstream narratives, leaving these populations to grapple with the lasting consequences without adequate recognition or support. This approach will guide the analysis of *The Blind Man’s Garden* (2013) and *No Space for Further Burials* (2007) emphasizing their role in articulating the intersection of human conflict and ecological devastation.

4. Textual Analysis

The Blind Man's Garden (2013) is a novel written by Pakistani novelist Nadeem Aslam. The story is set in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks and follows the lives of two brothers and their families who are affected by the ensuing war in Afghanistan. The story centers on two brothers, Jeo and Mikal, living in the fictional town of Heer, Pakistan. Jeo is a young, idealistic poet who dreams of a peaceful world and is married to Naheed, a strong-willed and ambitious woman. Mikal, the younger brother, is charismatic and possesses a magnetic personality that attracts people around him. After the 9/11 attacks, the United States invades Afghanistan in pursuit of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The brothers' lives are drastically altered as the war spills over into Pakistan, affecting their small town. Jeo, inspired by the notion of Islamic duty, decides to cross the border into Afghanistan to provide medical assistance to the Afghan people who are suffering from the war. Mikal, in love with Naheed, secretly follows Jeo into Afghanistan, leaving Naheed behind. In the war-ravaged country, the two brothers face the harsh realities of conflict and the consequences of their decisions. As the narrative unfolds, the characters grapple with

issues of faith, love, loyalty, and survival. The Blind Garden, a recurring motif, symbolizes a place where the characters can find solace and beauty amidst the chaos and destruction of war.

4.1. Slow Violence and Environmental Destruction in The Blind Man's Garden

The use of atomic weapons causes constant fear and death. In the 1990s, the Gulf War and the Kosovo experiences demonstrated the environmentally destructive capacities of conventional weapons. In the novel, *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013) the writer shows environmental damage due to war on terror in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Aslam (2013) has sketched the condition of war running after accident of Twin Towers. America attacked Afghanistan and used Pakistani roads to lead its military convoy to Afghanistan. Due to the war, the condition of both countries became miserable. The Taliban became angry with Pakistan due to being friends of America and to lend the roads to American army. This anger was felt in Pakistan in the series of suicidal attacks in Pakistani cities. It not only damaged buildings of the countries but also the whole surrounding with natural beauty causing constant fear of death.

The text of the novel speaks of, “weeks later, it is the buildings, orchards and hills of Afghanistan that are being torn apart by bombs and fire-shells”(Aslam, 2013, p. 6). Here, the destruction of Afghanistan's buildings, orchards, and hills symbolizes a form of environmental harm that is gradual, dispersed, and enduring. Unlike the immediate spectacle of warfare, slow violence emphasizes the long-term and often invisible impacts of conflict on ecosystems and communities. The bombing of orchards and hills reflects not just the visible devastation of war but also the delayed and persistent consequences for the environment and livelihoods. Orchards, for instance, represent food security and economic stability for local communities. Their destruction disrupts agricultural cycles, leading to hunger and poverty that may persist for generations. Similarly, the damage to hills—symbolic of natural stability—can result in soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and altered ecosystems, all of which unfold over time. Buildings, as cultural and communal spaces, embody the social fabric; their obliteration contributes to displacement and the erosion of cultural identity. This imagery aligns with Nixon's (2011) idea that the impacts of environmental violence are often overlooked because they lack the immediacy of visible, dramatic events. Yet, they accumulate over time, perpetuating ecological degradation and human suffering in ways that are deeply intertwined and slow to heal.

War on terrorism has inflicted huge devastation on the earth. It has swept away everything whether bad or good. The towns and cities of Afghanistan have been engulfed by the malice of the war. Their condition is poor. The houses look as if they belong to the

uncivilized human beings. Bullets and bomb shells smashed the habitats of humans as well as animals. The novel describes it as, “The doors and the windows of many houses have had splinters torn out of the wood by bullets and in one place a number of people have been lined up and shot in recent days, their blood remaining in bursts on the walls. One of these is at the height of a child’s head” (Aslam, 2013, pp. 50-51).

It is claim of America that they are the flag bearer of peace in the world but in true sense they are responsible to have created terrorism in the region. The Taliban government in Afghanistan is not willing to accept the dominance of the Americans over their country which is totally secular and authoritative in nature. In this regard they have their houses filled with weapons to fight against the Americans. “The Taliban are still in power in Afghanistan but the Americans have sent in Special Forces soldiers – guerrilla warriors who are building alliances among the local population and orchestrating rebellion. And all the while the air and the sky are being traversed by jets and bombs weighing tens of thousands of pounds” (Aslam, 2013, p. 25). This has created terror in the region. Between the fight of two countries, environment and nature are being sacrificed. This area is rich with natural splendor but has now changed in deserts due to the use of bombs used by both forces.

The house where Mikal takes asylum was also a depot of guns and bullets. The novel describes the whole scene as, “One stable is filled to the rafters with weaponry–grenades, rockets and firearms, crates of ammunition, anything made for killing, even Lee Enfield rifles with dates stamped on the bayonets–1913–from the time that the British were contesting the area” (Aslam, 2013, pp. 59-60). All kind of weapons bring disaster. The writer laments on this and shows us through his character Mikal the condition of environment. “Mikal crouches by the windows and raises his head to look out. Rooms, trucks and trees are on fire, as is the golden dome of the mosque, and he cannot believe the intensity of the fight, hundreds of guns firing at the same time. The attackers are advancing and are being brutal with each person they find” (Aslam, 2013, p. 66). In the context Nixon's theory of slow violence, these lines from *The Blind Man's Garden* highlight the immediate spectacle of war while gesturing toward its enduring and insidious aftermath. The vivid imagery of burning rooms, trucks, trees, and the golden dome of the mosque symbolizes not only the visible destruction caused by the Afghan war but also the slower, less visible consequences that ripple through time and space.

The fire consuming the mosque and natural elements like trees signifies a deeper, ecological and cultural loss that extends beyond the immediate battle. The destruction of trees, for example, disrupts ecosystems, reduces biodiversity, and exacerbates

environmental degradation, leading to consequences like deforestation and soil erosion that unfold over years. Similarly, the loss of cultural landmarks, such as the mosque, represents a blow to communal identity and spiritual heritage, leaving scars on the collective psyche of affected populations. While the ‘hundreds of guns firing at the same time’ and the brutality of the attackers evoke the visceral violence of the moment, slow violence draws attention to the enduring impact on displaced communities, broken infrastructures, and degraded environments. The devastation of war extends far beyond the battlefield, perpetuating cycles of poverty, ecological instability, and psychological trauma for years, even decades, aligning with Nixon’s framework of violence that is often ignored due to its invisibility and temporal dispersal.

Radioactivity, released into the environment in many phases of production and testing processes, poses a serious threat to the health of biological species, including humans. Nadeem Aslam also shows this danger into his novel:

In deep twilight they cross a broad flat valley with a river and river flats in it, every bit of it scorched black where a Daisy Cutter bomb had been dropped, reducing everything to ash, pumice, lava, the sides of the hills torn up into segments, and scattered over it all is the yellow haze of the unrisen moon, the cold night falling on them out of the east, the stars beginning their slides through the black slopes. It looks like the site of a cosmic incursion such as a meteorite, not the work of men. (Aslam, 2013, p. 126)

Atomic bomb turns everything in ash. There remains nothing but deserted ruins. Everything is in damaged state. The earth stops to produce things. It is sorrowful condition for human beings. The example of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is clear before all of us that are still deserted, and their lands have become non-fertile. Babies born in these cities are abnormal. The radioactivity has enhanced to maximum level. The same condition is dealt by Aslam in his novel.

Aslam is a writer who mainly talks about the safety of nature and environment. For him health of nature is utmost necessary. That is why he has shown the nature and all the objects of nature in his novel and these natural images enhance the beauty of his novels especially the novel under discussion. The description of villages, garden, landscapes, mountains, deserts; all show his interest in nature. Moreover, supreme natural phenomenon such as evening, morning, sunset, sky full of stars, season and its change, birds and animals related to the season, environmental and seasonal diseases, rays of sun, sun-rising, moonlight etc. all are highlighted in the text just to know about writer’s concern and way of using them in the setting and orientation of the story of the novel. All the sensitive and

forceless objects of nature including children and women are victims of atrocity of powerful persons who subjugate the rights of nature and innocent things.

“History is the third parent.” (Aslam, 2013, p.1) This line from Aslam’s *The Blind Man’s Garden* (2013) suggests that history, much like a parent, shapes our values, behaviors, and relationships—including our relationship with the environment. History is not just a chronicle of human actions but an ecological force that leaves lasting imprints on the natural world. Wars, colonization, and industrialization have all left indelible marks on the landscape, altering ecosystems and communities in ways that are often irreversible. Nixon’s (2011) concept of *Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor* helps us understand how historical events continue to impact the environment long after they have occurred. The legacy of these events—whether through pollution, deforestation, or resource extraction—persists, influencing how ecosystems function and how communities interact with their surroundings. Recognizing history’s role in shaping our current ecological reality is crucial for fostering ecocritical awareness. By acknowledging the environmental consequences of historical actions, we can better appreciate the need for a more responsible and sustainable approach to our treatment of the environment, ensuring that history’s influence serves as a guide for protecting the planet rather than perpetuating its degradation.

“There are no innocent people in a guilty nation” (Aslam, 2013, p.3). This quote underscores the inextricable link between individuals, nations, and the environment, especially within the context of war. It implies that the collective guilt of a nation extends beyond its human populace to encompass the natural world. War disrupts not only human societies but also devastates ecosystems, displaces wildlife, and contaminates the environment. The concept of slow violence, as articulated by Nixon (2011) emphasizes the subtle, often unrecognized harm caused by such environmental degradation. The guilt of a nation at war manifests in the long-lasting wounds inflicted upon the land, water, and air—wounds that endure for generations. War’s violence is not confined to immediate human suffering; it also triggers a cascade of ecological imbalance, leaving a legacy of contaminated soil and water, and disrupted ecosystems. This long-term environmental damage illustrates how the guilt of a nation permeates every aspect of the natural world, leading to a slow but relentless degradation of the environment and its capacity to sustain life.

“Love was the result of having caught a glimpse of another’s loneliness” (Aslam, 2013, p.11). At another place, Aslam asserts that love is portrayed as a response to recognizing another’s vulnerability, a concept that can be extended to the relationship

between humans and the environment. Loneliness here serves as a metaphor for the isolation experienced by both individuals and ecosystems. Just as humans seek connection and companionship to overcome loneliness, ecosystems thrive through interconnectedness and mutual support. Neglecting the environment perpetuates a form of loneliness for both humanity and nature, as the bonds that sustain life are weakened. Love for the environment, therefore, involves acknowledging its fragility and the deep interdependence that exists within it. Nixon's (2011) work emphasizes the vulnerability of marginalized communities and ecosystems, highlighting the isolation they face in the wake of environmental degradation. In this context, loneliness extends to nature itself—manifested in the loss of biodiversity, deforestation, and pollution. Love, then, is not just an emotional response but a call to action to restore and protect these vital connections, ensuring the resilience and flourishing of both human and natural communities.

Nixon's (2011) concept of slow violence—a form of harm that occurs gradually and often goes unnoticed—resonates deeply with the themes of Nadeem Aslam's *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013). The novel vividly portrays the enduring environmental and psychological damage caused by prolonged conflict, particularly in the context of the U.S.-led War on Terror in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Aslam highlights how the devastation of war extends far beyond immediate destruction, impacting landscapes, natural resources, and cultural heritage over time. This aligns with Nixon's idea of violence that is incremental and disproportionately affects vulnerable communities. The novel's depiction of bombings, deforestation, and resource contamination reflects the insidious effects of slow violence, while its characters' struggles illustrate the long-term personal and inter-generational trauma it creates. By chronicling these gradual yet pervasive impacts, *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013) offers a poignant exploration of how slow violence reshapes lives and environments long after the visible conflict has ended.

4.2. Slow Violence and Environmental Destruction in No Space for Further Burials

Set in Afghanistan in late 2002, *No Space for Further Burials* (2007) is a chilling story of the madness of war and our collective complicity in the perpetuation of violence. In September 2002, a year after the 9/11 attacks and the US invasion of Afghanistan, a U.S. army medical technician is captured by Afghan rebels while conducting a reconnaissance mission. He is then confined to an asylum alongside around a dozen other inmates. These inmates encompass a diverse range of backgrounds - they could be war refugees, derelicts, fugitives evading capture, individuals consumed by grief and loss, or simply exhausted from enduring their country's repeated violations. The novel becomes a

powerful evocation of the country's desolate history of plunder and war, waged by insiders and outsiders, all fueled by ideology, desperation, and greed.

Afghanistan is the country where mostly Muslims live. They are strict followers of Islam. They also say funeral prayer when anyone who is Muslim dies. They dig the grave for the dead body. As the land of Afghanistan is rocky and rugged, it is not easy to excavate or dig the land for the grave. There is so much atrocity of the war that sometimes when the grave is dug, grave of another person is found beneath it. It means, in graveyard, there is little space to dig another grave. The situation is described as under:

The earth is dry and hard; there are many stones and jagged objects buried beneath the surface, and sometimes I can recognize the remains of a young child or a woman, a swatch of torn fabric, sometimes deep red like a pomegranate, sometimes blue like the sky above. Many times, I have felt my hands stroke the severed limb of someone I may have known the skin cold and layered with the fine dust of his desolate land. It is as if these limbs and the fragments of clothing were the people themselves, people for whom the graves were dug, hurriedly, before more bodies began to pile up against the wall, waiting for a space for burial. (Gauhar, 2007, p. 1)

The fragment from the text shows the horrors of war and the harm that unfolds gradually over time and often unnoticed. The vivid description of desolate and war-torn landscape reflects the cumulative effects of violence on both people and landscape. The space for the burial for them who have been killed in the war is not enough. And other people are being killed whose bodies are waiting for the burial. Such is the pathetic scene. People are tired of digging graves. They are in trauma of war. They always remain busy in the funeral or digging graves. Such effects of war have been felt by them. Thus, the passage captures the essence of slow violence by portraying its incremental, far-reaching, and deeply personal effects. In another place in the novel, one of the characters goes for digging grave. "Sabir has appeared, armed with a spade and a pickaxe. I must go with him and look for a suitable place for the grave. I leave Waris and Noor Jahan to grieve for the dead body" (Gauhar, 2007, p. 22).

War does not kill a single man; it engulfs scores of men at the same time. It takes life of thousands of people. For example, when a village or town is air-raided, it cannot be estimated how many deaths of people have occurred. The whole village becomes a heap of debris. Belongings of people are burnt with their desires to live long life and enjoy the beauty of nature and their lives. Hundreds of men die at the same time. In this situation it becomes much difficult to dig grave separately for each person. The remnants dig a combine grave that is big and wide in which all the dead bodies are buried. The text of the

novel describes the situation in the following words, “We did not dig separate graves for the dead. There was no time – burials have to take place here before sunset and in winter the sun sets early” (Gauhar, 2007, p. 61). This line from the text portrays that the cascading impact of conflict is not limited to the people or landscape but it also affects the cultural and environmental practices of the people. It portrays how slow violence extends beyond immediate physical destruction, embedding itself in societal and cultural decay, leaving a lingering legacy of grief and disarray.

The war on terror is being fought between the Jihadists and the allied forces. But the effect of the war is being felt by the innocent people of small villages and towns. The stories of wars are now famous in the cities. People talk about the bombings, firings and smashed things in the battle. In this novel, a boy narrates the story of war. The boy was in the prison who tells the things as, “He has many tongues, this boy. And fluid hands with which he etches the stories he tells, embellishing his accounts of war with the objects found in the courtyard – shards of broken vessels, smashed bottle caps, empty vials, shattered syringes” (Gauhar, 2007, p. 2). This passage from the text illustrates the insidious and enduring impact of war on both people as well as things and environment. The boy's fragmented stories, woven through discarded remnants of violence such as shattered syringes and broken vessels, symbolize the pervasive and lingering scars of conflict. The boy's many tongues and fluid hands suggest an attempt to make sense of the chaos, echoing Nixon's idea that slow violence often manifests in ways that resist immediate visibility, yet profoundly alter lives and landscapes over time.

“I was not here then, but Bulbul tells me in his combination of many languages, that the looters came through a hole in the wall after first bombing, which killed many of men who had been let out by the staff to stroll in the compound or to take some sun” (Gauhar, 2007, p. 5). The looters’ entry through a bomb-created hole symbolizes the cascading impacts of war, where immediate violence transitions into enduring societal breakdown. The bombing not only claims lives but also disrupts the fragile order, leaving survivors vulnerable to exploitation and further harm. The description of men, once free to enjoy simple acts like strolling or sunbathing, now reduced to casualties, underscores the gradual erosion of humanity and dignity in war-torn environments. This aligns with Nixon's view of slow violence as a process that inflicts profound, long-term suffering, often overlooked amid the more dramatic spectacles of violence. In the novel such news is told in the following words: “At the base we were told that a dissenting warlord had begun attacking the villages outside the city, many of them perched like sentinels on the edges of the mountains which surround the city” (Gauhar, 2007, p. 6). This war has destroyed the moralities and ethics of the people. They are low on morality. The person

who was friend once had turned into foe. They were all enemies. There was disrespect, dishonor of women by the hands of their brothers. “I know the boy Bulbul told me that the village had been destroyed, but I didn’t want to believe that – how could brother turn against brother, killing and looting and dishonoring our sisters, our mothers?” (Gauhar, 2007, p. 46).

Bombing has reduced the remnants of the asylum half in numbers and there is nothing left for the treatment of the injured and the patients and in result they are also dying day by day. They lack of proper diet and food. The scarcity of food is also fatal for them. As I mentioned that there only leaves helplessness and death. This is described as under:

He was pulling me towards the cell where the only female inmates of this asylum were housed. I had never been there, even when Noor Jehan had wanted me to look at the young girl who refused to eat or to sleep, staring out of the ventilator set high in the wall of the cell. I did not know what to expect and feared only more confusion and the incredible weight of my own helplessness. (Gauhar, 2007, p. 25)

People of every age are affected by the war. These lines reflect the psychological and physical degradation of people in the wake of war. The narrator’s fear and helplessness mirror the broader societal failure to address the underlying causes of suffering, showcasing how slow violence persists in spaces removed from the immediate spectacle of conflict, yet deeply shaped by its repercussions.

“There was the ten-year old girl, Zarmina, I remember, who came to us with one of her legs blown off and the other so terribly damaged that it would have to be amputated. She was bleeding so heavily that the doctors at the army hospital thought she wouldn’t make it” (Gauhar, 2007, p. 53). Zarmina, a ten-year-old girl, embodies the collateral damage of conflict, her physical suffering serving as a stark reminder of the enduring toll of war long after its immediate violence has passed. The amputation of both legs not only represents the irreversible physical harm inflicted on her body but also symbolizes the long-term psychological, social, and economic consequences that will persist throughout her life. This slow, accumulative destruction—impacting individuals and communities over time—is at the heart of Nixon’s theory, which critiques the imperceptible and often overlooked forms of violence caused by systemic neglect and warfare.

Moreover, the war added fuel to fire. It caused a great destruction to the health of trees. Bombing destroyed the trees and biodiversity. It proved death angel for the forest life as many jihadists took shelter in forests and the allied forces bombed in the forests.

Where they took life of many people there, they gave harm to the nature and caused a permanent threat to the environment. The novel describes the situation in the following words:

But the winter was very cold that year, made bitter still by the fact that the trees we chopped for kindling had been destroyed in the bombing, and those that survived had been felled by the government which said the rebels hid in these trees which gave us fruit and shade in the summer and warmth in the winter. (Gauhar, 2007, p. 29)

The destruction of trees—first by bombing and then by government actions under the pretext of eliminating rebel hideouts—symbolizes the gradual yet devastating impact of war on both nature and human life. These trees, once sources of sustenance, shelter, and warmth, were vital to the community’s survival, and their loss exacerbates the hardships of an already harsh winter. The cumulative effect of such destruction extends beyond immediate survival challenges, signaling the slow, lingering violence that dismantles ecosystems, erodes livelihoods, and deepens human vulnerability over time, all hallmarks of Nixon's framework

The author beautifully sketches the scene as, “Imagine my horror when I got to the village: there was no one about – the houses had been razed to the ground, the crops burnt, everything destroyed” (Gauhar, 2007, p. 46). The razing of homes and burning of crops signify more than physical annihilation; they embody the erasure of a way of life and the slow unfolding of suffering through famine, displacement, and environmental degradation. The absence of people and the destruction of their environment highlight how violence extends its reach over time, creating a persistent state of loss and helplessness, emblematic of the enduring scars of slow violence. In another place the novel describes the horrors of war and destruction of environment. “The rest of the buildings have been wrecked. In some places only walls stand, as if they were waiting for someone to reclaim them and reassign some sort of purpose to their existence”(Gauhar, 2007, p. 76). The remnants of buildings, standing like empty shells, symbolize the lingering scars of conflict and environmental degradation. These walls, waiting to be "reclaimed" or repurposed, evoke a sense of prolonged displacement and stagnation, where recovery is delayed indefinitely. The imagery of purposeless structures mirrors the unresolved trauma and environmental decay that define slow violence, illustrating how devastation persists silently, eroding hope and community over time.

The war on terror continues day and night. Attack of any kind can be expected at any moment. They do not hesitate to attack in the night. When the attack is made in the night, people cry and their cries become the part of horror of night. It suddenly breaks the

silence of night. The grilling sound of air-planes used for bombing is no less than any disaster. The day remains hazy with the dust and smoke rising from the bombing. The writer describes this as:

The bombing began late at night. I did not hear the aircraft passing overhead. It was the massive explosion which jolted all of us out of sleep. One corner of the compound had been hit – I heard the huge blast and then the sound of screaming and barking and braying. Then a deep silence. The second time the compound was hit, I could actually hear the whistling sound of the explosive hurtling through the air. The second bomb did not detonate. We saw it in the morning, lying half-buried in the debris of the shattered building which housed the patients. (Gauhar, 2007, pp. 60-61)

The bombing disrupts not only lives but also the psychological and physical stability of the compound, symbolizing how violence persists beyond the immediate act of destruction. The bomb buried in the debris embodies latent threats and unresolved damage, a hallmark of slow violence. It underscores the perpetual state of vulnerability and the slow erosion of safety, security, and the environment, illustrating how such violence extends its impact across time and space.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, *No Space for Further Burials* (2007) and *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013) offer harrowing explorations of the intertwined fates of humanity and nature in the context of war, revealing the profound and irreversible impacts of conflict on both human life and the environment. Drawing on Nixon's (2011) concept of Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor, the novels expose the insidious nature of environmental degradation caused by war, where violence and destruction obliterate not only physical landscapes but also the moral and social fabric of society. These narratives underscore the interconnectedness of human and ecological suffering, the role of history in shaping environmental consequences, and the theme of human responsibility and environmental guilt. Together, they serve as powerful reminders of the heavy cost of war on all aspects of existence, emphasizing the urgent need to protect and preserve both human life and the natural world, while highlighting the critical importance of greater awareness and action to address the environmental consequences of wars.

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