

**FEMALE SUBJUGATION AND LIBERATION: AN ECOFEMINIST STUDY OF
THE SELECTED NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE AND BAPSI SIDHWA**

Sobia Raza

Supervisor: Dr Nur Sheena Baharudin

MPhil Candidate, Student ID 20313374

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School of English

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

University of Nottingham Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Utilising the lenses of cultural ecofeminism and material ecofeminism, this study attempts to understand women's subjugation by patriarchy. Societal constructs are mostly built around dualism, women and their nature versus men and culture, wherein women and nature are regarded as inferior, and used for subjugation. This thesis also investigates how the institution of marriage, religion, and mythological beliefs are abused to dominate women in the societies of Pakistan and India as depicted by Bapsi Sidhwa in "*The Bride*" and Shashi Deshpande in "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*." Women are forced to give up their identities and fundamental rights. Better health care, education, economic independence, and the right to make decisions for their lives are often denied in these societies. Women, nature, land, and animals are placed in parallel. They are exploited by men like non-living entities. For instance, women are often divorced by men if they cannot produce children. They are equated to barren land in these societies. They are killed for suspected infidelities and traded for settling blood feuds and financial debts. This research primarily focuses on female suppression and their independence. Material ecofeminism helps in understanding the ongoing exploitation of women, nature and other species for material gains, physical pleasure and satisfaction of men's ego. To defy subordination, material ecofeminism encourages empowering women through better education and financial self-sustenance. Ecofeminism also engenders the idea of the liberation of women for ecological protection. Owing to their intimate relationship, innate affection, and endowed spiritual linkage with nature, women can play a vital role in the protection of the environment, if given a chance. This research endeavours to establish that females are living beings. They have feelings. They are equally passionate beings with ambitions having their own material and physical needs. The study concludes that akin to other living beings, their potential is also defined by their

determination and audaciousness. They have the ability to transcend all the impediments curated by patriarchal subjugation.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This eco-feminist study of the selected novels, written by Shashi Deshpande and Bapsi Sidhwa, aims at understanding women's subjugation in the depicted patriarchal societies that exploit socio-economic, cultural, and religious constructs to suppress them. Woven around the analysis of the protagonists in these novels, this research will also attempt to underline women's intrinsic potential that can help them liberate from the societal constructs that have restricted them. These novels exhibit different time zones and settings, but reflect somewhat similar socioeconomic environment. For the basic understanding of ecofeminism, this thesis takes guidance from Greta Gaard and a few other authors. For eco-critical and eco-feminist debate, she has delved in the western concept of dualism at length. It revolves around the connection between women and nature, and the confluence of men and culture. She suggests that women-nature duo is devalued, while men and culture are overvalued. This leads to women's subordination, suppression and exploitation by men by the use of culture, customs, traditions religion and mythology. Nature and land have been unable to escape exploitation by men for material gains. Ecofeminism comprehensively covers the exploitation of not only women and nature but also all the species. Therefore, this research takes main inspiration from ecofeminism, especially material ecofeminism. For objective research, it is important to understand and make use of eco-criticism and its evolution, intersectionality, and development of ecofeminism over the years. Ecofeminism is also intertwined with the environmental movement that stands against ecological degradation.

For the last three decades, environmental issues have become increasingly important in social, literary, and political realms. It has now a global issue that has rapidly evolved into an academic discipline. Various environmental activists tirelessly worked worldwide to create

awareness. They have recommended several measures to protect natural resources and environment from manmade catastrophes.

These concerns are inextricably tied to human life and the environment. Regardless of their location, race, religion, or colour, the entire human race and flora and fauna are inseparably interconnected. Ecology has developed a unique relationship between an individual and the rest of the universe. They are interconvertible. Understanding these ecological relationships are critical for individuals, societies, and ultimately the entire globe to become more conscious of the environment.

Ecofeminism has been expanded and added to the literary theories by Greta Gaard and others around 20 years ago. Over the years, the scholars have criticised, appreciated and also contributed to the evolution of ecofeminism as it stands today. A few thought that ecology had no linkages with feminism, and have criticised it also. However, over the years, the support for ecofeminism snowballed into making it a mainstream theory, having various shades. Ecofeminism also aims to empower women to play an active role in the environmental protection. Today ecofeminism has expanded into multiple types like cultural, postcolonial, material, spiritual, vegetarian and ecofeminism for earth.

To understand that every woman has a unique experience of subjugation and liberation constructed on eco-feminist explanation, it is appropriate to make a case for how women and nature, subjugation and exploitation, and their liberation in a predominantly patriarchal societies were chosen as the main objective of this study. The Almighty God made the earth like a heaven, to be inhabited by His best of the creations, the humans. He created all the species to make the earth a lovable, friendlier and a happier place for the mankind. He created a unique filter in the shape of Ozone Layer (D. Wuebbles, 2022) to protect and nurture all the species. This unique filter allows useful sunlight but hinders the harmful rays from reaching the earth. Similarly, though the harmful gases are outflowed but oxygen keeps its salience in the life of

the living beings on earth. The Greatest Creator, the God, has blessed the mankind with clean water, air, greenery, various crops, trees with their soothing shades, delicious and colourful fruits having appetising aroma. multi coloured flowers adorning the earth seasonally, wild life, huge trees to use as fuel to cook and heat and travel large distances, means of tilling the land and transportation, sun and shade, night and moon, the stars to adorn the night sky and travellers guide on land, skies and seas. Love and attraction between women and men for recreation and to carry the life forward as God's representatives on the earth is how she is made a co-partner in the Creator's most vital function. He bestowed women with a place higher than men; a goddess and a mother under whose feet the paradise rests.

In fact, no religion, no prophets, no men of God, no person of wisdom ever said or taught anything against women's respectable and rightful place in the society, nor they condoned women's oppression and subjugation in any form. Likewise, the culture in its original form and spirit does not support merciless treatment of women or her disrespect. It is the man who misuses the religion blended with cultural constructs to suppress women. In most of the global south, the religion is dominated by culture (S. M. Thomas, 2010). Despite women empowerment through education and self-sustenance, occasional brutalities keep recurring. This phenomenon is evident particularly in the less developed parts of the world where cultural and tribal norms overshadow the actual social systems and religious norms.

Today, leading women ecofeminist environmental activists are more concerned about environmental issues, especially when it comes to their children's health and protection. Women's knowledge on environmental degradation and environmental regeneration is imperative. Their environmental knowledge can help in dealing with the issues of the climate more effectively. In the case of ecological degradation, female and children are amongst most affected segments of the population.

Land is a major means of livelihood for all. Often females of rural areas are part of tilling land, sowing, harvesting and plucking the produce. This global crisis can be better overcome by togetherness, as the earth is a shared space for all the organisms (Hussain, 2020). However, it is important to emphasise here, that as compared to the times and the societies discussed in Bapsi Sidhwa and Shashi Deshpande's selected novels, a lot has changed. The post graduated women are increasingly getting empowered to resist oppression due to their economic independence and better status in the society. A few even prefer not to marry till they have achieved their ambitions and have started earning well. Some prefer divorce against unfair dominance and abuse without any fear of societal anathemas.

During the War on Terrorism (WoT) in the post 9/11 environment, women and children around the globe, more specifically in the Pakistan – Afghanistan region, suffered the most. The beautiful and serene areas, which were in a way untouched habitat, were damaged, destroyed and ravaged by war. The people of those areas were displaced to the makeshift camps before conducting antiterrorist operations by using kinetic means. Their cultural, and traditional way of life was badly inflicted during makeshift arrangements. The villages became piles of rubbles during these operations. People lost their kith and kin, businesses and jobs, and precious possessions. The orchards of apples, grapes, pomegranates and pine-kernel producing trees were destroyed. Ecological and socio-economic fabric of the society was tattered. This cataclysmic situation impacted nature and women the most (Bari, 2009, "*Gendered Perceptions and Impact of Terrorism / Talibanization in Pakistan*"). It may be assumed that other South Asian women might be experiencing more or less similar situations, as they have been part of the subcontinental society that was colonised, subjugated and robbed by the imperialist forces for centuries.

These and many more such aspects inspired this work on women suppression and ecological **degradation of the two societies that share a few commonalities. Initial**

challenge during this quest was the selection of appropriate books to carry out research on the aspects discussed in the preceding paras. Shashi Deshpande and Bapsi Sidhwa's work appeared to be the most relevant, comprehensive and appealing as it encompasses the pertinent facets of the Pakistani and Indian societies. Apart from their novels, multiple research papers on their works are also available. Some researchers have combined analyses of the books of both the authors.

To have an in-depth understanding of the themes and ideas of both the novelists, four of their novels were studied to begin with. They included; "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" and "*In a Country of Deceit*" by Deshpande and "*The Bride*" and "*Water*" by Bapsi Sidhwa. Later, a brief study of two additional books i.e. "*A Matter of Time*" by Shashi Deshpande and "*An Ice Candy Man*" by Bapsi Sidhwa were included in the literature review too. This thesis homes on to one novel each by them; 1) "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" and 2) "*The Bride*" (sometimes also referred to as "*The Pakistani Bride*"). Both authors have portrayed female protagonists suffering through patriarchy, who endure the exploitation and resurrect. Both the authors have also displayed their concerns on ecological degradation in the name of development. The time of partition of the subcontinent, as depicted in these books, also impacted women and nature negatively.

This work commenced with the theory of feminism as the medium, however, it was later considered more appropriate to explore the possibility of applying ecofeminism being a newer and relevant theory. Various researchers have worked on the novels selected while employing various theories, but very few have viewed these from ecofeminist perspective. This research, therefore takes a step forward to analyse the lives of protagonists of "*Dark Holds No Terrors*" and "*The Bride*" from eco-feminist, more specifically from material ecofeminist viewpoint. It explores women and nature's subjugation by patriarchy and prospects of their emancipation using the lens of material ecofeminism. In this back drop of

ecofeminism, identification of women and nature connection, their domination and exploitation by misusing culture, religion, institution of marriage and mythology will remain central to this quest. This thesis attempts to highlight that the protagonists of the selected novels are defiant. They are not hesitant in fulfilling their material needs and attain economic independence, which are considered as ‘men’s only’ domains. Only brave and courageous women discover and employ their potential against suppression and escape the perpetuating physical torture successfully. These protagonists are perceived as the agents of change and possible role models for women liberation as well as of overcoming ecological issues due to female’s intrinsic attachment to the nature. This aligns well with the spirit of material ecofeminism.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There is a growing realisation of ecofeminist issues in India, Pakistan and other South Asian countries. Education and self-sustenance are inspiring actualisation of embodiment in females. The harmful impact of the environmental degradation is looming large. However, the patriarchal dominance remains a major discouraging factor against enhancing efforts to forge gender equality as well as environmental protection in general, and in the societies of under review novels, in particular.

Patriarchy is augmented by dualism that links men with culture and women with nature. Culture and men duo has developed such societal constructs that encourage dominance and exploitation of women, nature and feminised others. Misuse of religiosity and abuse of the institution of marriage complement this phenomenon.

While employing material ecofeminism, this thesis attempts to highlight remorseless exploitation of women and nature for material gains, as portrayed in “*The Bride*” by Bapsi Sidhwa and “*The Dark Hold No Terrors*” by Shashi Deshpande. This dissertation will also

investigate as to how the protagonists of Bapsi Sidhwa and Shashi Deshpande empower themselves using their innate potential to defy the exploitative societal constructs.

1.3 Research Questions

How do “*The Bride*” and “*The Dark Holds No Terrors*” portray an intersection of women oppression and environmental degradation in the patriarchal societies?

How women, nature including animals and feminised others’ subordination is legitimised by male dominant social order subverting culture, religion, institution of marriage and mythology?

How women empowerment may help in addressing the issues of women suppression, ecological degradation, and defying the structure and control of patriarchy?

What ecofeminist discernment accrue consequent to comparative analysis of both the novels, specifically in the back drop of cultural and material ecofeminism.

1.4 Research Objectives

- 1) Investigate as to how “*The Bride*” and “*The Dark Holds No Terror*” epitomise material dimensions of the women oppression, degradation of environment, and women's bodies and the nature’s exploitation?
- 2) Examine how the selected novels represent women's defiance and activism in the face of patriarchal oppression and environmental degradation?
- 3) Study experiences of the protagonists related to environmental degradation, including its impact on their livelihoods, health, and social relationships?
- 4) Analyse the societal constructs that have stemmed from dualism, and determine as to how religiosity, marriage and culture are abused to legitimise exploitation of women, nature and feminised others?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This thesis is an attempt to contribute to the existing research works on the native English literature of Pakistan and India. The research on the native English literature attains significance on multiple counts. The native writers, having roots in the societies make them ethnographers in a sense. They write depict what they see, and live through. Their sensitivity and creative abilities make them depict visible or invisible realities of the society. These realities may include; happiness and sorrows, successes and failures, distresses and triumphs, suppression and liberty. The female writers have been often viewed as feminist writers.

The feminism can be traced back to the times of Roman Empire. It is a movement in the modern times began with the demand of equal rights for women and resistance against women suppression. The ecological concerns gained popularity 1970s onwards. It was realised that not only women but nature too was being exploited by men of this predominantly patriarchal world. The other conclusion has been that women are more passionate about the nature, and that empowered women can help redress the issues of ecological degradation better.

This study is also a quest to highlight the perpetuating exploitation of women and nature through the analyses of the female protagonists of the selected novels of Shashi Deshpande and Bapsi Sidhwa. Misuse of culture, religion and institution of marriage, protagonists' journey to self-discovery and courage to use their physical, material and spiritual potential to defy patriarchy and liberate themselves will be the focus. This thesis becomes more significant from the point of view that the selected novels have not been reviewed by any researcher for comparison and analysis from ecofeminist perspective.

Furthermore, this work contributes to the understanding of material ecofeminism, South Asian women's experiences, and informs approaches for addressing the interconnected issues of patriarchal oppression and environmental degradation.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

This research is limited to two novels; “*The Bride*” written by Bapsi Sidhwa and “*The Dark Holds No Terrors*” of Shashi Deshpande. The study is further delimited to highlight the exploitation of nature and women, and women’s courage to liberate themselves and their empowerment for fighting ecological degradation.

1.7 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis is organised into seven Chapters: -

1.7.1 Chapter 1: Introduction. It encompasses the introduction to the thesis.

Feminism is a women emancipatory movement to win equality for women and rid them of men’s domination that has been woven around cultural, societal and religious constructs. Ecofeminism provides a new context and lens to view the objective of shedding light on women oppression and empowering them to free themselves from undue oppression, and to play a role in addressing ecological degradation. In addition, this chapter also encompasses the significance and delimitations of the thesis, research questions, research objectives and how to achieve these.

1.7.2 Chapter 2: Literature Review. This review attempts to give an overview of the literature consulted. The literature review included Deshpande’s “*A Matter of Time*,” “*That Long Silence*,” “*Roots and Shadows*,” with more focus on “*The Dark Holds No Terrors*” and “*In the Country of Deceit*.” Bapsi Sidhwa’s “*Ice Candy Man*,” “*An American Brat*,” Abidi’s “*Twilight*” and Aslam’s “*Maps for Lost Lovers*,” “*Lahore, Lahore Aye: Bapsi Sidhwa and Mohsin Hamid’s City Fictions*,” “*Water*” and “*The Bride*” (also referred to as “*The Pakistani Bride*”). Major focus of the literature review is on selected books; “*The Bride*” by Bapsi Sidhwa and “*The Dark Holds No Terrors*” by Shashi Deshpande.

1.7.3 Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology. Chapter 3 explains in details various approaches and theories discussed in this thesis. Ecofeminism

makes the edifice of this work. Multiple aspects of environmental issues, intersectionality, eco-criticism, ecofeminism and its types have been discussed at length. Women emancipation is also discussed employing material ecofeminism in this Chapter. The material ecofeminism encourages women to actualise their potential, and attain socio-economic independence to use it as a tool to challenge men's dominance as well as address ecological issues.

1.7.4 Chapter 4: An Ecofeminist Study of Shashi Deshpande's "The Dark Holds No Terrors." This chapter discusses relevant elements, selected passages and texts from "*The Dark Holds No Terrors.*" The whole effort revolves around the attainment of laid down objectives of this study. After textual analysis of the novel the elements that are found important for discussion and analysis of the novel are, 1) Use of Religion and Mythology to Exploit Women, 2) Patriarchal society: an Institution of Domination, 3) Nature and Women Bondage 4) Women Potential to Defy Tools of Subjugation, 5) Misuse of the Institution of Marriage. The review of the novels is based on eco-criticism with a particular focus on ecofeminism and material ecofeminism, which shall be done in the backdrop of elements mentioned above.

1.7.5 Chapter 5: An Ecofeminist Study of Bapsi Sidhwa's "The Bride." "*The Bride*" is a classic work of Bapsi Sidhwa written in postcolonial setting. The novel is inspired by a true story, albeit framed in a different setting and different ending. "*The Bride*" projects how women can become indirect victims of political decisions, like the partition of the subcontinent? It also reveals the biases of patriarchal society towards women, more specifically in the North-West of Pakistan. The protagonists' will to fight oppression and ability to resurrect and escape physical torture as symbolism is also visible in the book. Using ecocriticism, ecofeminism and material ecofeminism study of this book will revolve around six elements, as done for "*The Dark Hold No Terrors.*" These include 1) Use of Religion and Mythology to Exploit Women, 2) Patriarchal Society: An Institution of

Domination, 3) Nature and Women Bondage, 5) Women Potential to Defy Tools of Subjugation, 6) Misuse of Institution of Marriage.

1.7.6 Chapter 6: A Comparative Analysis of “The Bride” and “The Dark Holds No Terrors” from Ecofeminist Perspective. This chapter is the essence of the thesis. It contains inferences drawn after analysing the selected novels and their specific parts by applying ecofeminism, complemented by material ecofeminism. The main focus has been on the research questions and objectives designed for this thesis: have these been attained successfully or not?

1.7.7 Chapter 7: Conclusion. In the back drop of research questions, objectives and conceptual framework, this chapter concludes discussion and analysis of the whole thesis. It amply highlights that desired end of this work have been attained.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section critically reviews, and elaborates content, spirit and essence of various novels by both, Shashi Deshpande and Bapsi Sidhwa. This literature review is an attempt to analyse the selected work of from the lens of ecofeminism, especially the material ecofeminism. While main focus remains on “*The Dark Holds No Terrors*,” and “*The Bride*,” the review also includes their other novels. Purpose of expanding this review to their other works is to understand and amplify their style in the interpretation of the society, environs, and characters and discern aspects that may help in the attainment of the research objectives. This literature review also embodies the literary criticism on Deshpande’s “*A Matter of Time*,” “*That Long Silence*,” “*Roots and Shadows*,” “*The Dark Holds No Terrors*” and “*In the Country of Deceit*.” And Bapsi Sidhwa’s “*Ice Candy Man*,” “*An American Brat*,” Abidi’s “*Twilight*” and Aslam’s “*Maps for Lost Lovers, Lahore, Lahore Aye: Bapsi Sidhwa and Mohsin Hamid’s City Fictions*,” “*Water and The Bride* (also referred to as “*The Pakistani Bride*”).

Primary emphasis of Deshpande and Sidhwa has been to uncover the unjust, violent, and brutal subordination of women, nature, animals and land by men, misusing religion and culture as tools, commonly referred to as patriarchy. The patriarchy is strengthened by socio-cultural and ideological thoughts, societal norms, customs and traditions constructed over centuries by men; all aimed at denying women personal liberty and choice for a life of their choosing. The female characters of these novels sometimes submit to these control systems

under the institution of marriage and family pressures, but they also stand up against the patriarchal injustice to break these shackles put around them. The mainstream ecofeminism discourse stresses upon the liberation of women to protect the environment and political action for this pursuit.

Very few of the researchers have used ecofeminism, particularly material ecofeminism to analyse the literary works of the South Asian female writers. Rehman claims that a ‘Modern Language Association’ database has no environmental justice, or ecofeminism entries and a very few post-colonisation of 2018 and 2019, from this region (Rehman, 2019, p. 2). She mentions of an annual conference held on South Asia in Madison, Wisconsin USA, that was attended by various scholars of humanities and social sciences from various countries. She reports that “social inequalities were discussed on many of the panels, but environmental problems were explored in far fewer forums” (Rahman, 2019, p. 5). From April 2020 to April 2021, Taylor and Francis's database shows only eight entries on ecofeminism from Pakistan. Similarly, JSTOR offers only twelve peer-reviewed research papers on ecofeminism and zero entries from Pakistan for the year 2020-2021.

Therefore, this research will attempt to analyse selected works of both the novelist from the perspective of material ecofeminism with major focus on the two selected books. The ensuing literature review has been done author wise. The critique on each work has been built within the review.

2.2 Shashi Deshpande’s Novels

2.2.1 “The Dark Holds No Terrors”

In “*The Dark Holds No Terrors*,” Shashi Deshpande skilfully constructs a whole from multiple pieces to depict culture and life. According to Sree the ‘Dark’ has been used as a symbol by Deshpande. She says that the expression of darkness has been used as a symbol to depict Saru’s husband, not the darkness in real sense. Saru’s husband haunts her just like

the darkness haunts somebody. Sree's work highlights many techniques and subjects used by Deshpande, citing examples, thereby providing a thorough insight. Shashi's female characters mostly come from the middle class. After understanding the circumstances of their suffering and listening to the voice of their inner self, these women often achieve the objective of finding their self-identity successfully i.e. actualise their embodiment. This point of view is established well in this dissertation by the elaboration of women's journey to self-discovery to identify their strengths and shun the fears created by societal pressures.

This most appealing aspect of this novel is the explanation of the family and the house (Nair, 2010, p. 175). Nair highlights grounding of "*The Dark Holds No Terror*" about the day to day life in India. Ancestral homes, traditions, family bonds and relationships always play an essential role in the depicted society. Nair draws attention towards parallels between the darkness of conscience and the dark homes, which is a particular feature of the old Indian architecture. Nair says that like Virginia Woolf, Shashi also portrays the inner world of her female characters and presents their journey through conscience. Nair has pointed out the ability and potential of Deshpande's female characters to dive deep into their inner self and find out solutions to challenge male hegemonic forces. "Shashi Deshpande points to the fact that the woman needs to think for herself, yet be attached to traditional values and attitudes" (Nair, 2010, p 179).

Asha has reviewed "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" from ecofeminist perspective. She believes that ecofeminism is one of the many kinds of feminism that has evolved as a consequent to environmentalist and feminist movements. She adds that the ecofeminism addresses intersectionality of the social and cultural impacts of class, race, gender and all types of oppression. Asha also compares western ecofeminism and women's treatment in the society as depicted in Deshpande's novel. Asha extends her argument by elaborating the depicted culture where females are considered weak and traded like a property owned by

men. Their only role is to serve a man, his family and bear children. Females are considered nothing without having a male in some dominating role in their lives. Through this novel,

Deshpande depicts that fathers dominate and protect females at a younger age and husbands are expected to be their custodians after marriage. Females are not allowed to have their own opinion or right to decide about their lives at any stage. Deshpande has highlighted the way female characters are caught between the dilemma of maintaining a typical image of women in accordance with the prevalent socio-cultural and religious norms, and modernity. Asha has however, not underscored Shashi's woman, as an agent of change. Neither has she discussed the possibilities for women to shun the restrictions and surmount the fences erected around them by culture and tradition. If these restrictions are removed women could contribute better towards ecological betterment as well. Women's self-confidence and being a professional in some fields is viewed negatively, seen as an attempt to adopt a "masculine" demeanour (Asha, 2012, p. 159).

Sowmya (2016) in her research titled "*Man in Shashi Deshpande's The Dark Holds No Terrors: A Study*" further explains how Deshpande also depicts her male characters as victims of patriarchy, "The patriarchy, changed modern lifestyle and empowerment of woman made the men character feel inferior to women characters." In this novel, women characters are dominant. Saru dominates her friend Boozie and her husband Manu. Saru's father is depicted as an insignificant, silent man who never raises his voice when Saru's mother accuses Saru of heinous act of letting her brother drown to death that actually she is not responsible for. After the death of Saru's mother, she feels her father has transformed into a different person. He has become very understanding responsive and responsible.

Rajakumari (Rajakumari, 2018, p. 809) highlights how women play a role in denying other women's rights by supporting the patriarchy. She believes that male characters in "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" are also victims of patriarchy. She has focused on two perspectives,

firstly, she challenges the “myth of men’s superiority, and secondly, the myth of women being a custodian of all virtues” (Rajakumari, 2018, p. 810). Her work highlights that women themselves can be cruel to other women. For instance, Saru detests her mother’s views and attitude towards her, and there are examples of other women in the novel who suffer due to their humiliations by their mother in-laws.

2.2.2 Emergence of a New Woman: A Study of Shashi Deshpande’s ‘A Matter of Time’

“*A Matter of Time*,” is set in the present day’s Karnataka. It unravels the complex relationships in an extended family spanning over three generations. Images from religion, mythology, and local history delicately intertwine with the images of contemporary India. This multigenerational story by Deshpande with the individual voices of various characters, catches each in the cycles of love, loss, strength, and reincarnation. Briefly, one morning Gopal, a respected professor, devoted husband and caring father suddenly walks out on his family for reasons even he cannot clearly articulate. Aru, the eldest daughter rushes to her mother Kalyani. Kneeling by her mother’s huddled body she says, “Amma, I’m here, I’m your daughter, Amma, I’m your son, I’m here with you...” (Deshpande, 1996, p. 233). She tells Gopal, “Yes, Papa, you go. We’ll be alright, we’ll be quite alright, don’t worry about us.”

Consequent to this, his wife Sumi, with their three daughters moves to her ancestral home. She rises up to the challenge. She is well educated; hence she becomes a play writer, learns to ride a scooter and starts earning well. With economic independence, she overcomes the traditional dependence on men for earning and running the household. This fits well into the concept of material ecofeminism that centres on women empowerment. In free times she keeps herself positively occupied with gardening. Her eldest daughter Aru, takes over the responsibility of day to day chores for running the house. She undertakes all those

responsibilities that are traditionally the men only domain. She is strong and focused “She has the concentration of a rope-walker, holding the weight of her grief in her two hands, not as if it is a burden, but to balance herself.” (Deshpande, 1996, p. 246).

Published in 1996, this novel carries a unique message. The protagonist of this novel is comparatively braver than Deshpande’s heroines of the past novels, who were dependent upon the institution of marriage for their identity and subsistence. In this novel, the women are portrayed as more self-reliant and self-dependent. The protagonist claims and carves out her own space in the society. She is proud of her selfhood and courageously defies the patriarchy. The other aspect is that Deshpande uses patience and silence by women as a measured approach to contest subordination. The protagonist, instead of complaining or blaming others, makes use of her will power and courage for building her own identity. This element fits well into the material ecofeminism. Shashi Deshpande attempts to project the idea of a woman rediscovering herself and emerging out of the cocoon of self-pity to spread her wings of self-confidence.

“*A Matter of Time*” moves beyond feminist concerns. It rather raises the existentialist question. The important conclusion of this novel is that self-pity is not the answer. Secondly, it is not a must that only sons can earn and take care of the household. The educated and earning girls can do so as well. Nor the women are to remain dependent upon the institution of marriage for their subsistence. They have the abilities and the courage to stand on their own feet, like the protagonist does; from tests and trials, from adversity and domination, she emerges as a self-assured new woman.

2.2.3 Shashi Deshpande’s ‘That Long Silence’

The protagonist of the novel, “*That Long Silence*” is Jaya. She is well educated and wants to make her own place in the society. But she is caught by the orthodox forces that hinder her modernity and progression. “*That Long silence*” denotes the long wait of Jaya to

be heard, to express her desires and seek their redressal, and to be on her own. Deshpande describes silence as, “You learn a lot of tricks to get by a relationship. Silence is one of them. You never find a woman criticizing her husband, even playfully, in case it might damage the relationship.” Jaya the protagonist follows the same norm.

Jaya happily adapts to, and successfully lives life of a role model wife, as expected by the society. She quietly endures the patriarchy, stands by her husband who uses her for soft image and as a buffer. However, a modern convent educated, English speaking girl can hardly adjust with the double standards of the society. The societal norm of dealing with women and men are different, applying two standards; one for men and other for women.

She realises that she can no longer play the role like Sita Devi.

Jaya’s husband Mohan, in his quest of material gains, indulges into malpractices. He is likely to be caught, arrested and punished. To escape defame and embarrassment, the family shifts from their Churigate flat to a flat in Dadar, that belongs to Jaya’s maternal uncle. Their children are luckily away on a tour with their family friends. Jaya complies with her husband’s decision, albeit in silent resentment.

It is there, in the painful period of waiting and rising panic, the process of retrospection and self-criticism commences in Jaya’s mind. She is engulfed by the reminiscences of the past, her earlier life, her marriage with Mohan, the frustrations and disappointments of her seventeen years married life and her personal failures. These thoughts come to haunt her. Consequent to this phase of introspection and retrospection, Jaya carves out a new plan for her future life. At the end of the novel, the crisis is averted. Apparently, everything appears to be normal but Jaya has changed significantly. After contemplating, during a kind of exile and hiding in Dadar Flat, she resolves to give up submissive demeanour and becomes a strong woman to defy subordination to patriarchy.

Deshpande's contribution lies in her sensitivity to women's sufferings, and projects well-known realities of the society from newer angles. In this novel she has aptly described an educated woman, who is married in a home where she has to suppress her feelings and be submissive. She is unable to fully attain her embodiment. She suffers for 17 years, but then decides to stand against patriarchal suppression. She is ultimately emboldened, and decides not to remain meek and traditional wife any more. She decides not to endure undue pressures and un-just treatment. She resolves to speak up, react, resent and break her long silence against forced subordination.

2.2.4 A Study on the Characterisation of Women in Shashi Deshpande's Novels "The Dark Holds No Terrors," "Roots and Shadows" and "That Long Silence."

"A Study on the Characterisation of Women in Shashi Deshpande's Novels," revolves around three novels of Deshpande; "The Dark Holds No Terrors," "Roots and Shadows" and "That Long Silence." Septima reviewed these. She says that Deshpande's stories are "about a woman: her travails and privations, tensions and irritations and pains and anguishes. Her stories suggest that compromise is what characterises the life of a common middle-class woman. Deshpande finds women unable to defy prevalent social codes and traditional concepts of morality, that emanate from the misconstrued and subverted cultural constructs. She adds that the middleclass women are caught between the needs and miseries, anxieties and optimisms, love and hate, suppression and oppression, marital discord and male chauvinism (E. Septima, 2017).

2.2.5 "In the Country of Deceit": Analysis of Protagonist Character

Deshpande's world is a world of women entangled in the web of relationships in which they try to find alternatives to break away from the cocoons of domesticity, a world in which they are out to confront their conditional socio-cultural familial selves (Bande, 2009, p. 244). Bande analyses "*In the Country of Deceit*," which is a story of protagonist Devayani.

Bande elaborates how Deshpande has connected the main female character to minor female characters to depict their stories of trials, and tribulations, failures and successes? On the other hand, male characters of the novel are playing just a supportive role to create a situation for Devayani, wherefrom she has to decide about herself. Deshpande has made use of appropriate expressions to make a good impact on the reader. It covers the complicated relationships but has no mention of women's link with the nature.

One topic that recurs multiple times in the novel is women's physical desire and its relevance to life. Sindhu thinks that life is lived through the body. Devayani exercises freedom in shaping her life according to her philosophy of life. She experiments with a live-in relationship with Ashok, the forty-year-old married Superintendent of Police. However, the moral clock within her continues to tick, and ring alarm bells. Although Devayani makes a conscious move to break the traditional norms and exercise her right to sexual satisfaction outside the institution of marriage, she fails to overcome the fright of societal stigma that such an act could entail. Therefore, the societal values resurge and re-assert in her life. Like her other novels, Shashi Deshpande makes her protagonist Devayani, repent, introspect and walk out of the illicit relationship.

Nirmal believes that like other novels of Deshpande, in her this novel too, the protagonist lives between the pulls and pushes of tradition and modernity. Despite troubles and challenges of her life, ultimately, she comes out so strong that she manages to survive and win (Nirmal, 2012, p. 1). Nirmal has tried to clarify the act of deceit through the question that 'who has deceived whom?' She has analysed the novel from the points of view of adultery and love. She believes that the protagonist, realising the infidelity, exercises courage to pull herself out of this mess. Nirmal considers Devayani the most passionate and strong character of Deshpande.

Bhardwaj (2014) and Manikandan (2015) explores revisionist myth-making in Deshpande's "*In the Country of Deceit*." They opine that the revisionist mythmaking:

...is a technique of rewriting a myth, often from a feminist perspective, radically subverting the old story in such a way as to render the woman's experience which has been ignored in the original, patriarchal version (Manikandan, 2015, p. 296).

In this novel, the female protagonist is named after a legendary character Devayani, who spends a loveless life, "Deshpande takes liberty with the legend by supplanting the legendary Devayani from the role of the wronged wife to that of the mistress." (Bhardwaj, 2014, p.722).

"*In the Country of Deceit*" (2008) presents many themes like oppression of women, cultural and societal norms, mind-body conflict and a journey through the mind but is unique in its bold subject. Body needs like sexual desires are also highlighted in this novel (Allam, 2019, p. 50). For instance, Devayani's aunt says that body needs a man which should be fulfilled. At the beginning of this novel, Devayani has to witness the demolition of her ancestral house to build a new one. According to Alam, the destruction of the house is symbolic. This rebuilding of the house symbolises Devayani's personality transformation into a new person, after she sacrifices her love. Alam supports this symbolism by quoting the lines from this novel, wherein Devayani wishes to migrate to a place where nobody knows her so that she unshackles from her past and is liberated to become a new person:

...an anonymous nobody. Thus, the dialectics between the forces of cosmic, social, psychological and biological determinism on the one hand and individual's urge and struggle for freedom on the other tend to cohere and make her works of art look perfectly unified and organic wholes (Alam, 2019, p. 52).

Alam has also uncovered the aspect of egalitarian forces suppressing women. However, he has not discussed the protagonist's courage that Deshpande has infused into her character, to pick up courage and fight against the man-made socially, culturally and politically dominating forces. He has highlighted the plight of women and the suffering they have to endure from innocence to adolescence and then to maturity. His work also highlights traces of post-colonial literature. He rightly sheds light on the novel's central theme being a gift of colonialism, including English language.

This novel is a careful and in-depth representation of nature of love entwined with suffering, deception and evasion in the life of its female protagonist Devayani. The novel represents competing feelings and forces of pleasure and unhappiness, the traditions and modernity, progressiveness and taboos, future hopes and disappointing negative memories. There is a conflict between the inner and outer world of Devayani. Bala has brought out many examples to establish her stance about competing for conflicting forces of life like demolition of the old house after Devayani's parents' death and construction of the new house in its place, which indicates Devayani's positive outlook. According to Bala, her defiance of socio-religious norms and adultery are used by her as means to come out of the clutches of painful memories of her mother's illness and death, and her father's suicide.

The architecture of their house is also presented artistically, as a symbol to elaborate competing forces of light and darkness. The new house is spacious, airy, and brighter than the older house, which was narrow and dark like old Indian architecture. Devayani and her sister like the new house, as it depicts their transition towards a new life. The new house also embodies the demolition of the traditional system and reshaping the ethics on modern lines. Devayani spends her time teaching English to a few children, gardening and maintaining the pond in her new home that has frogs in it. She thinks, "I am happy my garden is blooming.

Everything I planted has come up. The right amount of rain, the right amount of sun. I feel blessed”(Deshpande, 2008, p. 164).

2.2.6 Shashi Deshpande’s Novels- A Critique

Shashi Deshpande, a winner of many awards for feminist writings, has beautifully depicted Indian culture, traditions, and social patterns of the Indian society in her novels. She is known for portraying the complex Indian family system, relationships and love, by aptly highlighting feminist issues. Her novels beginning with “*The Dark Holds No Terrors*” (1980) to “*Moving On*” (2004), depict how women survive under intense family and societal pressures by discovering their inherent strengths. Her heroines are strong. They are portrayed as remarkable symbols of struggle for liberation from suppressive patriarchal norms and culture, while successfully keeping their families and relationships intact. “Shashi Deshpande’s women are the architects of their fate. “Here is the authentic, poignant tale of the middle-class, educated women and their exploitation in a conventional male-dominated society.” (Mishra, 2006, p. 27)

Shashi Deshpande novels are extraordinary for depicting women’s oppression in the patriarchal society. Her approach is different from other feminist writers. She highlights the varieties and shades of subjugation being experienced by the females since ages, leading to their suffering in quiet and resignation. The disappointment and feeling of helplessness push them into a state of submissiveness and unquestioned obedience. However, she also proposes that how the women can rebel against domination, suppression and exploitation. In a hostile society, dominated by male chauvinism, such courageous women can build their own identity to fight domination and fulfil their wants. She also signifies importance of a home, so essentially required for peace and love; a home that can ensure security for the women (Sree, 2003, p.10).

There are numerous examples to establish Shashi Deshpande's place, not only as a fiction writer, but as a perfect craftsperson. She admires Shashi's skill to portray multiple human characters and non-living things and their interaction in an imaginary woven web of family and society. "Deshpande suggests a balance between the traditional respect for the family as an institution and the Western idea of self-identity and expression, as a working philosophy for the Indian woman." (Priscilla, 2018, p. 385) Priscilla believes that Shashi's novels depict Indian culture and women while explaining a middle class, urban educated women's psyche.

Shashi Deshpande is the first rank novelist of contemporary times because he has projected women's emotional turbulence in prevalent social issues of the Indian society (Manohar 2015, pp. 310-311) claims. Manohar discusses how Shashi Deshpande creates her women characters to be central to the novel, the way she creates the dilemma for the characters by the characters themselves. Deshpande also explores, and inspires her female characters to resolve that dilemma in their favour. Deshpande's female characters also project harmony between the traditional values and modernity. They are family-oriented women who endeavour to keep their families intact while adopting modern values. They are good mothers, caring wives and loving daughters:

Her novels explain a realistic depiction of those self-targeted women, who are on the quest of self-searching. Deshpande explains that there are no boundaries for life that nobody can draw a line and say, I will not go beyond this line. (Manohar, 2015, p.311)

Deshpande's female characters are natural, dynamic, emotional and replicas of true-life. (Singh 2019) She uses her characters to convey hidden, mythical and symbolic messages. Deshpande dives deep into women's inner world and presents them before the reader. "If truth is spoken, most of her protagonists are autobiographical in nature, similar to

a class; gender, location, and education seem to be reinserting a particular representation.” Singh (Singh, 2019, p.55) has written about the inner emotions, feelings, and decision power of female protagonist “*In the Country of Deceit.*” He also explores how Deshpande talks about a challenging and conflicting mental state of the Devayani who is torn apart between desires and societal values as a young woman. She is characterised as a dynamic, free soul, lively, happy to live alone, and fond of gardening. She falls in love with Ashok, who is already married. On the one hand, it is her love for Ashok, and on the other, a societal reality that they can never marry each other and live together. The conflict is presented throughout the novel, until Devayani shows courage to take a difficult decision to leave Ashok. She uses her inner strength to give up on the love of her life. “In the case of Devayani, Deshpande presents an example of ‘mind-body problem,’ according to which mind and body are two fundamentally different parts of an organism; even though they coexist, they remain distinct.” (Singh, 2019, p. 62)

Nirmal in her work “*Who is Deceived in Shashi Deshpande’s In the Country of Deceit*” (2012) writes about that:

Her heroines Saru, Indu, Jaya, Urmi, Sumi, Madhu, born out of her pen during the period 1980 to 2004, in the form of characters are seen entrapped between tradition and modernity. It is noteworthy that Deshpande’s heroines are so strong that they not only win over the tumults of life in due course of time but also testify their ‘Creator’s vision’ of ‘reformative feminism.’

The glory on the attained fulfilment, does not come to a woman without strings attached. It demands its pound of flesh. However, Shashi Deshpande’s effort is to evolve a strategy where the woman can have the cake and eat it too. That is, enjoy autonomy and yet fulfil the societal roles expected to be shouldered. Despite the odds her protagonists continue to battle, strive, persevere and endeavour to liberate themselves. Her major focus has been on

women struggle. Her protagonists also make efforts to find and preserve their identities as wives, mothers, and most importantly as human beings. She portrays these women initially suffering through suppression, but later resurrecting like phoenix from the ashes to claim their place and space as resolute women, not less than men. The material ecofeminism is also about female embodiment, their empowerment for self-sustenance to resist dominance and play a role in ecological conservation that is intrinsic to their persona.

2.3 Bapsi Sidhwa's Novels

2.3.1 "The Bride": Women's Literary Portrayal and Sufferings in Pakistani Society

In "*The Bride*" (also referred to as "*The Pakistani Bride*"), Sidhwa's protagonist Zaitoon escapes from the bond of a marriage that she detests. Zaitoon liberates herself from a male-dominated oppressive system through her bold and courageous steps. By reflecting her protagonist in this manner, Sidhwa effectively presents courage and abilities of the women to challenge forces of women subjugating and the oppressive male dominated society. "She is a survivor, and she gets herself free from the clutches of the brutal marriage, the wild hills, the honour-thirsty tribesmen, and the cruel rapists," (Alvi et al., 2012, p. 87-91). Zaitoon's choice of freedom from the clutches of a brutal marriage is a courageous and heroic action, a testimony for the never yielding spirit of a woman, "strength of nature, a force-perhaps of God, within. Zaitoon symbolises the human spirit that struggles against all odds but exists with integrity. She represents the strength of a woman, unyielding and irrepressible." (Alvi et al., 2012)

Ahmed has reviewed works on feminism done by the female writers of the subcontinent. These highlight the miseries and pains of oppressed women in a male-dominated patriarchal society. (Ahmad, 2013, p. 1-5) Elaborating three marriages in "*The Bride*," Ahmed discusses the question Sidhwa has raised on the misuse of marriage as an institution. Marriage is considered a sacred religious bond and societal obligation in the

subcontinent. Ahmad explains how Bapsi's heroine is married as a trade-off to settle a financial debt and resolve family feud. Ahmed points out towards increasing addition of feminist writers in subcontinent. He writes, "One of the most striking features of the contemporary literature in English from the Indian subcontinent has been the sprouting of feminist fiction." (Ahmad, 2013, p. 1)

According to him this literature highlights the sufferings, pains and plights of women in a male-dominated society. Ahmad's research brings out many such traces from Bapsi Sidhwa's work. He particularly emphasises Zaitoon's daring escape to save herself from physical harm, mental and spiritual agony. However, his review lacks in depth examination of protagonist's individuality and comprehensive portrayal of other female characters of this novel.

Ahmed has compared "*The Bride* and *The Joys of Motherhood*" with regards to the treatment of infertile females in Pakistan and India in comparison to the Igbo women of Africa. Like them, the mothers of the sons are more privileged in Pakistan and India too. In that society infertility is only about women. He quotes "When Nun Ego was not successful to conceive in her first marriage, she receives harsh comments from her husband, I am a busy man; I have no time to waste my precious male seed on a woman who is infertile." (Salman, Andleeb, Awan, 2015, p. 6399) Similarly, in "*The Bride*," *Pehlwan* (wrestler) Nikka tells Qasim about his wife that she is "barren," as she cannot bear a child.

In "*The Bride*" (1983), Zaitoon symbolises strong human spirit. She stands up against a male-dominated society, fights suppression, perseveres and survives. She also tries to resist domestic violence by stopping the slapping hand of her husband Sakhi. She defies unfair norms of a society where a man is considered to be a man only if he can effectively dominate women, particularly his wife. For men, it does not matter whether a woman belongs to the Western society or Pakistani society. Zaitoon, however, demonstrates bravery and courage.

This act “endorses a challenge to the structure of patriarchy.” (Ross, 1991) Her efforts to run away from the suffocating culture of tribal areas and her cruel husband Sakhi are considered a victory against males who regard females as their property.

“*The Bride*,” has a positive ending. Sidhwa has endeavoured to inspire women for empowering themselves, be courageous and exercise their right to decide for themselves (Jabeen, 2015). Zaitoon is a Punjabi girl, who is one of the victims of the subcontinent’s partition in the British Empire’s post decolonialisation era. She lost her parents during the partition of the subcontinent. Qasim adopts her as a daughter, but later uses her as a mean to go back to his area and reunite with his family, his tribe and the mountains that he adores. Qasim paints a rosy picture of the tribal areas, like a land of fairy tale to entice her. She is fascinated to visit that area. Her all fantasies and dreams shatter when she starts experiencing the reality of traumatic suppression there. Qasim forces her to marry one of his relatives who is a tribal man, in a deal to settle debt. She abhors the idea, but she is threatened of death if she refuses her foster father’s decision of this marriage. She has to suffer through harsh attitudes, verbal abuse, slander, ridicule, and forced sexual relationships with her husband.

She narrates the sad side of the culture prevalent in those areas wherein the women are forced to accept every abuse and harsh behaviour of husbands as a fait accompli. It is a self-designed rule of the *Pakistani* society having an unquestioned ownership of the women bodies. Hence, they have a right to mistreat their wives, beat them, and own them for the fulfilment of their sexual desire. Society chooses not to interfere because it is a male’s matter. (Jabeen, 2015, p. 141)

A woman’s identity in the society is only of a daughter, sister, wife, or some man’s mother. This “identity is always built up, and she is identified under her relation to male.” (Jabeen, 2015, p. 143). If she does not carry any of these self-presumed identities, she becomes worthless in this society. Zaitoon bears painful sexual torture as her husband strikes

at her sensitive body parts as punishment on very minor acts perceived as disobedience. Similarly, using Islam the patriarchal society's exponents suggest that a husband is considered '*The Majazi Khuda*' (a demigod). He has the right of violence and suppression, which is given to him by the patriarchal society. Similarly, the religious exploiters also do not expect even negligible disobedience of any sort from a wife. If a woman disobeys her husband and dares to refuse to accept his decisions, or even resists his abusive behaviour, she is threatened with the worst punishment of 'burning in Hell in the world hereafter.' Men like Sakhi misuse religion, culture and traditions as a shield for their excesses. Sakhi always thinks that he is superior to Zaitoon because he is a man. Zaitoon tolerates the domestic violence for a long time. However, she ultimately decides to rebel against these excesses and runs away to save herself and get rid of this miserable life. Her ordeal ends when a Pakistan military Captain rescues her. Sidhwa has also written a story of a second bride, who is a US national, named Carol. She, despite belonging to a civilised Western society, is forced to live with a *Pakistani* man in a male-dominated society after her marriage.

'The Bride' includes the events preceding the 1947 partition of the subcontinent. It also encompasses women's virtual enslavement in the post-colonial patriarchal society, which enhances women oppression due to colonial mindset and attitudes, inherited by the men from the colonisers. Nair (Nair, 2018) focuses on the issues concerning women in formerly colonised India and Pakistan. During the pre- and post-Independence era, the society was mostly patriarchal and was dominated by males.

Sidhwa has portrayed vivid pictures of women plight in the depicted society of Pakistan's underdeveloped northern regions very well. She projects how the women in that society are enslaved in the name of marriage, treated as a transactional commodity to be exchanged against financial debt, or to settle blood feuds. Marriage between Afshan and Qasim, right at the commencement of the novel, is also a similar arrangement. Afshan is

transacted to pay the debt to Qasim's father by Sakhi . She is a young mature girl with the expectations of love and care by an equally mature husband whom she had never met. Her forced marriage to an under-aged husband surprises her on the wedding night. Mishra writes:

...woman as per Sidhwa are mere bargaining commodities and Qasim has been shown to wed Afshan, a girl much older to him. He was only ten and Afshan suffered alienation at the marital front because her little husband was too young to delve into the intricacies of marital bliss. (Mishra, 2018, p. 289)

This novel also presents the universal mistreatment of women. "The novel is a presentation of how women residing in different societies are bound by a string of womanhood," (Maseeh, 2017, para 1) He believes that all women writers have expressed discrimination of women belonging to different cultures and religion in their own ways. This aspect is more pronouncedly discussed in the character of Zaitoon. However, all other minor female characters also face discrimination. Maseeh finds "*The Bride*" an illustrative pain, which women across the globe face consequent to discrimination. With minor differences, the sufferings and struggles of Zaitoon, Hamida, Carol, Alia, and Afshan are identical.

The portrayal of a demeaned women's status in the *Pakistani* society is well expressed by two points; first when Qasim's father was thinking to marry Afshan as he had only one wife. However, due to fatherly love, he bestows the Zaitoon on to his son. The second incident is a dialogue between Carol and Mushtaq when she asks Mushtaq if Zaitoon's husband will kill her. He replies he did not know. He would kill her if she were his wife, and develop relationship with someone else when Mushtaq, ironically carries extra marital relations with someone else's wife. It shows double standards of the society. A man is free to indulge in adultery but a woman will have to pay the price for such an act by death. (Devi and Raja 2018, p. 276-278)

This novel elaborates women's struggle and their survival in *Pakistani* patriarchal society, Kavitha and Usha. (2019, p. 256-259) There are similarities in the *Pakistani* and Indian culture. This aspect can be established from the comments of Nikka *Pehlwan's* wife Miriam in "The Bride" is about Zaitoon's schooling. Miriam pronounces "she has learnt Holy Quran, she will have to marry and bear children ultimately, and what will she do by getting more education." It is identical to Bapsi Sidhwa's "*Water*" wherein Somnath, the father of little girl Chuhiya says a "woman is recognized with her husband, without him, she is nothing." Thereby meaning that the only purpose of women's life is to marry, please her husband, bear children, take care of household as well as extended family. Kavitha and Usha opine that the restrictions, which the society imposes on women to keep them subordinated to men, have no link with morality. The educated, empowered and independent women are considered a threat to male domination.

2. 3.2 "*The Water*": Women's Free Soul and Liberation

"The *Water*" is written in the setting of 1938. Sidhwa's idea of women's freedom is connected with the 1936 freedom movement by Mr Mahatma Gandhi. This struggle was aimed at making people conscious of their free soul, help them in liberation from societal backwardness and get rid of superstitions. Praising Gandhi, Mercanti writes that the liberation of untouchable and oppressed people in Indian society was part of Gandhi's freedom movement's objectives. This novel highlights oppressions spanning all nationalities and also projects Gandhi's philosophy of liberation of all casts and all species effectively. Characters of the novel exhibit Gandhi's philosophy of peace. (Mercanti, 2011, p. 167) The subject of the novel is human lives that undergo sufferings and need attention and emancipation. The theme of the novel goes beyond patriarchy. It questions the misuse of religion. Mercanti also points towards gender inequality and institutional oppression deeply rooted in socio-religious practices of that time. (Mercanti, 2011, p.175)

In the portrayed society and setting, according to Sidhwa a woman is nothing if she does not belong to a man as a wife in the defined society. Underaged Chuhiya is forced into marrying a man who is old enough to be her grandfather. In this underage marriage, all the rituals of Bengal and Bihar are performed. With her childish innocence, she enjoys her marriage ceremony but her happiness does not last long. The death of her elderly husband leaves the young Chuhiya, the childlike wife, as a widow at the age of eight. In the portrayed society of that time, she is compelled to leave the safety and warmth of the family to be condemned to live as a widow, in an Ashram, (the designated house for widows, “religious pilgrimage sites Vrindavan and Varanasi, the birthplaces of Lord Krishna and Lord Shiva respectively, these are regarded as very sacred.” (Sahoo, 2016, p. 64-71)

Mishra (2020, p. 830-834) explains that till 2020, India had about 33 million widows, that amounts to one in every ten females. 54 per cent of these women were in the age of sixty. In the Indian culture, women’s economic well-being is connected to their husbands. After the death of their husbands, most of them take shelter in Ashrams. Ashrams are homes for the homeless, especially the widows. The widows spend the remaining years of their lives in these Ashrams.

Sobha Rani, (2017, p. 691-692) has elaborately discussed the plight of women, especially the unheard outcry of widows before independence (the 1930s) as curated in “*Water*.” In a society where a woman is epitomised as a goddess, she is also seen as a victim of strict conventions, traditions, lust and greed of men. The dark side of the patriarchal system, which has prevailed over most of the recorded history, is rampant with rape, wife battering, incest, and other forms of violence perpetrated by men dominating the women. Sobha Rani traces many untold miserable stories of widows living in Ashrams and how they rebel to re-assert and reclaim their right to freedom.

Mohril (2013), considers Bapsi Sidhwa's "*Water*" as the best example of ecofeminist literature. The way Sidhwa has used the Ganges River as a symbol, and the mythology linked with this sacred river is remarkable. She writes that the water of River Ganges is believed to be a source of purity. Unfortunately, people living on the banks of this sacred River dump their pollutants in it, making it impure. The widows living in Ashram, located on the banks of sacred River Ganges, are deemed to indulge in repentance and seek purification of body and soul. On the contrary, this Ashram has been made an impure abode and a place of women suppression. (Mohril, 2013, p. 2)

Kalyani is the bread earner for the Ashram. She has to earn money by selling her body to society's wealthy and so-called pious class. Against the Ashram rules, despite being a widow, she is allowed to keep long hair to become more attractive to impress her clients. She falls in love with a man who wants to marry her but is denied by the religious and societal norms. On the other hand, the parents of her beloved only allow him to keep her as a girlfriend (a concubine), but not to marry her. Heartbroken, she comes back to Ashram and commits suicide. Mohril writes, the Ganges is used as a metaphor, Kalyani hands herself over to waters of Ganges to get rid of all worries and pains, like a child hides himself in the lap of his mother. (Mohril, 2013, p.4)

The oppression is further manifested through another character in this novel. Gulabi. Gulabi is a transgender, a she-male, who works as a pimp and is a sex worker too. Gulabi admits of having many admirers. After Kalyani's suicide, Chuhiya is chosen to replace her as a bread earner. She is drugged, and is taken to a wealthy man for prostitution deceitfully by Gulabi. Novel's beauty is that the protagonist Chuhiya, despite being an underaged girl, successfully breaks those societal and physical barriers with the help of a kind hearted widow who manages her escape from the Ashram.

Amanat and Rehman (2015) highlight the portrayal of women only as an object: to be married and bear children. Their work highlights how Sidhwa presents her female characters subordinated to men and culture. Sentences like “woman is recognized only when she is with a husband” by Somnath, father of protagonist Chuhiya, explicitly elucidates women’s place in the society as narrated in this novel. The societal norm, and the practice are that a woman becomes respectable only when she is married. Ironically, as a daughter also the women gets lesser care and attention compared to the sons.

When husband of a woman dies her role of being a child producing entity concludes. . She is then rendered as a useless object and sent to parish in Ashram, living in gloom and despair for the rest of her life. She is doomed to rejection and redundancy. It is often a secluded place, located far away from the villages and cities, where men are not allowed to enter, nor can these widows contact them. . These women are considered useless when they do not have a husband to serve. They are expected to be clad in two pieces of white cloth, with shaven hair. No ornaments, no make-up and perfume to be worn or anything that could make them look beautiful and attractive, or even look like a woman.

Different facets of women characters are immaculately depicted in Bapsi Sidhwa’s novels, and how women are victimised by the society. (Sharma 2018, p. 464-467) He believes that female characters in Sidhwa’s novels “*Water*” and “*The Bride*” are described to highlight the discriminatory social behaviour in a patriarchal society. However, good thing is that her characters have the ability to re-discover themselves as free human beings and they also possess resilience to overcome the constraints of a male dominated society.

Rajan 2019 believes that “*Water*” describes the situation of widows. The caste and religion also contribute towards women oppression. A widow in the society is considered unfortunate, and is held responsible for her bad fortune. She is considered to be a burden on the society. She is not allowed to re-marry and at the same time is denied of fulfilling her

physical needs legitimately regardless of her age. These perspectives are further ensured by societal customs for instance, disfiguring the widow by shaving off their heads, breaking their bangles and forcing them to wear only white clothes. Widows are asked not to even come near the unmarried girls. The myth is that widow's shadow should not fall on an unmarried girl because the widows could bring them bad luck.

Bapsi Sidhwa's "*Water*" depicts the oppression of women under the intersectionality of religion, race, gender and class. (Khan, 2021, p. 43) With a particular focus on religion, Khan discusses how religion suppresses women in the Hindu society:

The South Asian fiction writers also demonstrate a feminist approach in their works. Pakistani authors have indicated religious exploitation as one of the central intersectional elements in their literary work. Bapsi Sidhwa is one of the prominent feminist voices from Pakistan in diasporic English Literature. (Khan, 2021, p. 44)

"*Water*" also illustrates the inner realities and intersectionality of the Indian culture. Religion and other dominating powers like gender, caste, and class subjugate women and deny them the fundamental rights of life. There exists discrimination in the women of different castes as well. Lower class women are doubly suppressed; for being women as well as hailing from a lower class. Khan's focus in the paper, however, is centred on the misuse of religion. She has highlighted how power structures exploit gender, class, and race to make women suffer silently in the pretext of religion. She has explained femininity as anything considered female or related to women in culture. For instance, land, nature and tenderness. However, the daring individuality of the female protagonist of Bapsi Sidhwa is not mentioned in her paper.

2.3.3 "Lahore, Lahore Aye: Bapsi Sidhwa and Mohsin Hamid's City Fictions"

Claire Chambers has written about the culture of Lahore, its heritage and people who had lived there before partition in her work entitled "*Lahore, Lahore Aye: Bapsi Sidhwa and*

Mohsin Hamid's City Fictions." (2016) Chambers states her two-fold objective of this research as follows:

.... to highlight the precariousness of the urban poor (particularly working-class women, who occupy a doubly marginalised position) in the global city and its rural hinterland, and secondly, to draw Lahore in to the twice-born fold of those highly scrutinised South Asian cities such as Bombay/Mumbai, Calcutta/Kolkata, and Delhi. (Chambers, 2016)

Thus, in her research, comparing Bapsi Sidhwa's "*Cracking India*," Mohsin Hamid's three novels, weaving in the approaches of 'Fredric Jameson, Edward W. Soja, Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau and others, she has particularly focused on marginalised women and marginalised status of Lahore as a city. She identifies the lack of funding to *Pakistani* writers and literary organisations as a cause for the absence of Lahore's appropriate mention as an important city in the international scholarship. She also says:

Lahore used to be an important destination along the hippie trail (loosely mapped onto the old Silk Route). After the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and occupations of Afghanistan by the USSR and later the US, ordinary tourists could no longer enter or exit Pakistan's western gateways with ease. (Chambers, 2016)

She projects positivity about Lahore too:

Yet there is another Lahore that of Faiz and his daughter, filled with cultural and intellectual energy, pluralism, tolerance, the arts, and sexuality. It should go without saying that Lahore is not a space—as represented in fiction, life writing or scholarship—that can or should be mapped in terms of binaries. (Chambers, 2016)

Though divided by the new borders, these people carry nostalgic memories of their pre-partition friendships, regardless of religiosity. Baldev from Delhi and Yousaf from Lahore, who were pre-partition childhood friends, are brought together in 2013, as a surprise on Baldev birthday by Saman, who is the granddaughter of Baldev. She posts an

advertisement on the google to find Yousaf. It receives huge, and positive response from Pakistan and India. The book also gives the message of carnage, destruction of people as one of the consequences of the partition, and the suffering of the marginalised segment of the population. Chambers also refers to strict censorship during General Zia-ul-Haq's regime of 1978-1988 and impact of Iranian Revolution of 1979. She praised General Musharraf 's rule from 1999-2008, that opened up the society, and gave more freedom of expression.

2.3.4 Partition and Women Account: A Study of Bapsi Sidhwa's "*Ice Candy Man*"

In "*Partition and Women: A Study of Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice Candy Man*" (2017), Aastha Bhatia, Assistant professor from Dayal Singh college quotes Butalia:

... mass scale migration, death, destruction, loss – no matter how inevitable Partition seemed, no one could have foreseen the scale and ferocity of bloodshed and enmity it unleashed . . . still less could anyone has foreseen that women would become so significant, so central and indeed so problematic... (Aastha Bhatia, 2017)

This passage amply illustrates the pains, sorrows, sufferings and losses that accompanied the partition of the Subcontinent: children, crops and animals could not escape the harm; however, women were the most affected.

"*The Ice Candy Man*" by Bapsi Sidhwa (also referred to as "*Cracking of India*"), is a narration by a handicapped Parse girl Lenny in the setting of 1942. The narration starts when she is 4 years old and the novel ends when she is about 10 years. Sidhwa illustrates the peaceful coexistence of the people from various religions and ethnicities in Lahore before partition. Then the horrors of religious intolerance, rape, arson, mistreatment of women and abuse were experienced after the partition of the Indian Subcontinent. She also examines the experiences and difficulties of a handicapped girl, the consequences of religious and racial conflicts, and subjugation of women through arranged child marriages, prostitution, obsessions with sexuality and the dangers of politically-motivated violence.

The most important element is the portrayal of a collective effort made by the *Lahori* women. These women unite, regardless of ethnic and religious identities, to repair some of the damages done by the partition and its aftermath. Lenny's mother earns money through illegal trade on the black market to rescue women from enforced prostitution and sex slavery. She takes risks and disregards danger of being caught. Lenny's Ayah, is a beautiful Hindu girl. She is kidnapped by the "*Ice Candy Man*," because she refuses his advances. She is sexually exploited and forced to work as a prostitute. She is ultimately rescued and sent back to her family in Amritsar, India by these efforts. This is the most hopeful sign for the future of Pakistan and humanity, that suchlike women come together to help one another, regardless of ethnicity or religion. They are courageous enough to resist against patriarchal subordination. This is seen as a real step forward in the way of the women empowerment.

2.3.5 "The American Brat"

Bapsi Sidhwa's novel "*The American Brat*" is a story of a Parsee girl Feroza, who is on a visit to USA, where she starts studying. She quickly adopts the American way of living. She grows bold and confident. She develops friendship with an American boy David. She drinks, dances and has sexual relationships without any inhibition. She defies all the familial and cultural norms and restrictions. Her mother Zareen goes to the USA to bring her back but gets caught between the preservation of Parsee culture of marrying her daughter to a Parsee boy and her daughter's choice to marry David who is a Jew:

.....although Zareen finds David admirable and appealing, she reasons that he would deprive her daughter of her faith, her heritage, her family, and her community. She would be branded an adulteress and her children pronounced illegitimate. (Sidhwa, 1994,p. 289)

Due to religious and cultural differences and family pressures, their marriage is not approved by the respective families. This book explores harsher cultural and religious

realities that inhibit inter religion marriages by the young boys and girls of varying cultures and religions from diaspora in the West and the USA.

2.3.6 Bapsi Sidhwa's Novels- A Critique

One of the celebrated and prominent names in the feminist English literature of South Asia, Bapsi Sidhwa is a renowned award-winning Pakistani writer. She witnessed the brutal partition of the subcontinent after colonisers had left. According to a short essay on her bibliography, published by "*Voices from the Gap*," born in Karachi, Bapsi migrated to Lahore during partition. She as a young girl, saw the bloody Partition of 1947 first-hand, "in which seven million Muslims and five million Hindus were uprooted in the largest, most terrible exchange of population that history has known." (Malmberg & Zaviailova, 2001, p. 242)

Partition was the outcome of a multitude of social, religious and political movements by the people of the Indian subcontinent. This effort was aimed at winning freedom from the colonisers. The Partition was also catalysed by a complicated set of social and political factors, including religious differences and the decolonisation of colonies by the British Empire post-World War II. Sidhwa, in an interview, narrated that she was only seven years old at that time, "but ominous roars, fire, blood in the streets of Lahore and dead bodies are part of her memories." (Montenegro & Sidhwa, 1990, pp. 513-533)

The post partition Lahore, her home town, became a border city between Pakistan and India. This division turned out to be bloody and brutal due to the division lines drawn unwisely by the colonisers, and the religious hatred. Lahore was overwhelmed by thousands of refugees, including women, children and domestic animals. A few amongst these women were raped and tortured during the process. She was told that those women were considered as "fallen women," a war booty. Like any such situation, their molestation was considered to be easier and the quickest means for hurting pride of their men, a source of shame for

husbands, hence such women were permitted to re-enter their own homes. She realised from a young age that, “Victory is celebrated on a woman’s body; vengeance is taken on a woman’s body. That’s very much the way things are, particularly in my part of the world.” (Graeber, 1991, p.6)

It seems such like gory experiences made her sensitive for the rights of women and consequent activism. She visited the migrating families’ camps and witnessed the plight of the women who had been raped. These women were degraded, hated and considered like a stigma for their families. Sidhwa has portrayed those camps and the situation of women in those camps in “*The Pakistani Bride*” so well that the reader feels himself a part of those agonising situations. Certain commonalities are found in her works. She emerges as a feminist and a women rights’ activist.

Apart from multiple other aspects, her works like “*Water*” and “*The Bride*” include intersectionality. Intersectionality “refers to the interconnectedness of social categories, such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability—all of which shape an individual's experiences and opportunities.” More than one factors reinforce each other for the exploitation of a suppressed group by implication. “*Water*” and “*The Bride*” explicitly explain the intersectionality of religion with sexism, race, caste, gender and post-colonialism. Widowed women are exploited in the name of religion in “*Water*.” These widows are kept secluded from the society in specially built and organised houses for purity- The *Ashrams*. They are not allowed to enjoy life after their husbands have died. In “*The Bride*,” she explains the sufferings of the people of a country, which was created in the name of religious freedom for every individual. Men and society of the same country badly suppress women through the institution of marriage, which is considered a religious obligation. In that sense, religion is exploited to suppress women.

Sidhwa exhibits a particular interest in the condition of the women who suffer because of gender and class-based subjugation in the Pakistani society. She has underscored various kinds of miseries women suffer through. However, her female characters are strong and possess the ability to resist the male-dominated society's controls. For example, Sidhwa's protagonist Zaitoon escapes from the bond of a marriage that she detests. Zaitoon liberates herself from the shackles of a male-dominated oppressive structure taking bold and courageous steps. By depiction of her protagonist in this manner, Sidhwa presents courage and abilities of these women who challenge forces of subjugation and oppression.

Her female characters are strong enough to live their lives independent of males. She specifically features issues of the women hailing from lower strata of the society. Through Zaitoon, Sidhwa targets abuse of the institution of marriage. Zaitoon, who is married against her wishes, often experiences violence at the hands of her husband. Bapsi Sidhwa enables her heroine to resist such aberrations by boldly standing up, pick courage to escape in the desolate wilderness and save her life.

In "*The Bride*" (1983), Sidhwa discusses the dilemma of females being treated as an extension of the male for their recognition. She exposes patriarchal societies' physical, emotional and social subjugation of females. She has very aptly exposed the gender-based class structure. Sidhwa illustrates the exploitation of women in the remote parts of the north of Pakistan during those times. She writes that women did not get independence even after partition and freedom from the colonial masters. (Jabeen, 2017, p. 144) She terms these marginalised women as doubly colonised. She presents them as victim of patriarchal culture. These women face multiple domestic issues, but are expected to compromise their individuality for their husband, family, society, religion and culture.

According to Maseeh, (Maseeh, 2017, para 1) "The novel is a presentation of how women residing in different societies are bound by a string of womanhood." He calls it a

universal mistreatment of the women. All women writers have written on the discrimination of women coming from different cultures and religion in their own ways. However, this aspect is more unambiguously portrayed through *The Brides'* protagonist Zaitoon. In "*The Bride*" the author illustrates pain, suffered by the women across the globe as a consequence of discrimination. With minor differences the travails and struggles of Zaitoon, Hamida, Carol, Alia, and Afshan are alike.

Bapsi Sidhwa has also attempted to highlight the differences between urban and tribal cultures through her work. "*The Bride*" also reveals national and domestic issues encountered by Pakistan at the time of partition. Though Sidhwa has mentioned hardships encountered by men as well, however, men are not suppressed and they don't have to compromise their identity. Her novel "*Water*" also depicts oppression women experiences under the intersectionality of religion, race, gender and class. (Khan, 2021, p. 43)

2.4 The Ecofeminism

Rachel Carson's book "*The Silent Spring*" is by and large believed to be the start of an environmental movement. She wrote this fiction in 1974. This is her first effort aimed at making people aware of the harmful effects of the use of pesticides. Her book inspired establishment of a committee by President J. F. Kennedy, to review her assertions. This committee affirmed Carson's concerns, making way for legislation to curtail the usage of pesticides and fertilisers. Later, in the 1980s, other environmental movements started emerging as well.

The United Nations' declaration of World Conference 1992 at Rio de Janeiro, emphasised on environmental awareness by every individual. It also contributed to inspiring contribution to environmental policy-making; as quoted by Daniel H Henning:

Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the international level, each individual shall have an appropriate

access to information concerning the environment. An effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy shall be provided. (Henning 2006, p.5)

Environmental activists and their supporters attempt to promote a feeling of responsibility and sensitivity in the people for the preservation of nature and environment. Consequent to the increasing academic pursuits on environmental challenges, eco-criticism, deep ecology, social ecology, environmental justice, ecofeminism, and environmental racism have been included in the discipline of environmental studies as well.

While feminism is considered pretty old, the term ecofeminism was first used by the French feminist Francois D'Eaubonne in her 1974 work "*Le Feminisme ou la mort*" (Feminism or Death). She proposed that females could help save the ecology. Ynestra King further developed the concept. She said that ecofeminism was about the wholeness of the theory and practice. According to her views, the devastation of the mother earth by "the corporate warriors is a feminist concern."

2.5 The Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism made its way to the literature in 1970s/80s. Buell opined that the debates on the ecological concerns were already going on when the ecocriticism emerged. He says that it was characterised differently by different scholars like, "literary environmentalism," "literary ecology," or "green cultural studies." The ecocriticism has been explained by him and a few other scholars in three waves. This division makes understanding of the ecocriticism easier. Ecocriticism, its evolution, and the four categories in the postcolonial era have been described in Chapter 3.

2.6 Intersectionality

The term 'Intersectionality,' as being used today in the literature, is credited to Kimberlé Crenshaw. She introduced this term to underscore the discrimination against "women of

colour” in jobs and other areas. This term primarily highlights the injustice within the same gender, class, or species based on race, colour and religion etc:

Intersectionality is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experience of discrimination and oppression and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalise people – gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc. (Bridie Taylor, 2019)

Vandana Shiva’s thoughts with reference to regard for, and protection of all species may also aptly fit in here; no discrimination for any living being. Intersectionality has become a major mean for understanding and analysing the relationship amongst systems of oppression that construct our identities and our social place in the hierarchies of privileges and power.

2.7 The Patriarchy

The patriarchy as a term and expression has been used extensively in this research. Briefly, patriarchy can be explained as a socio-economic phenomenon or system in which males enjoy primacy in physical power, and dominate politics, moral authority, social privilege and ownership of the property. Mostly women in a patriarchal society are silent victims whose voices are stifled by unjust and self-acclaimed male authority. The culture, societal norms, religion and mythology are misused to complement this perpetuating exploitation. This study would also analyse the role and condition of women in India of colonial era, and how women of those times chose to liberate themselves by boldly transgressing the exploitative social norms laid down by a male-dominated society. The patriarchy has been associated with the exploitation of nature as well. This thesis amply explains this factor too.

2.8 Transgression

Transgression is considered to be an act to break the law or a moral code. In this study it defines the struggle of female characters of the selected novels to survive in the toughest scenarios, by breaking physical and emotional barriers created by social and cultural constructs,

through their courage and will power. Bapsi Sidhwa's female protagonists are prototypes where they endure the pains and tribulations, but finally strike back at the oppressor. The zest for liberation is witnessed in the young and dreamy Zaitoon, the oppressed Afshan, the bold and outspoken Carol, the boisterous Chuhiya and the courageous widow Shakuntala, who perseveres to liberate the young girl Chuhiya from exploitative and toxic environment.

2.9 The Research Gap

Various scholars have undertaken extensive research on Sashi Deshpande's "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" and "*The Bride*" by Bapsi Sidhwa. However, a fairly significant literary gap is found in the analysis of these novels from the lens of ecofeminism, in particular from the view point of material ecofeminism. The material ecofeminism merits special attention for the reason that female education, their financial independence and economic empowerment play a very crucial role in their liberation from patriarchal oppression. Elaboration of the intricate equation between women oppression, environmental degradation, patriarchy, and need for appropriate action is found missing too.

Hence, this thesis attempts to fill this gap in the back drop of intersectionality of environmentalism and feminism, women embodied experiences and their impact on women. Women empowerment through economic independence and use of their innate potential as means to liberate themselves from patriarchal subjugation shall remain under special focus as well.

2.10 Conclusion

An attempt has been made to conduct, as extensive as possible, review of the available literature on Shashi Deshpande and Bapsi Sidhwa's works in general and the two selected novels in particular. It is found that most of the researchers have used the feminist approach, primarily focusing on the criticism of patriarchal societies of Pakistan and India. A few of them have included literary criticism on mythology and exploitation of the religion

also. Many of the researchers have highlighted powerful characters of female protagonists from Bapsi Sidhwa and Shashi Deshpande novels. These characters have courage and possess abilities to challenge the set rules and norms of the patriarchal society. Some scholars have focussed on the double standards of a male-dominated society. The female characters of both the novelists express their own desires, their likes and dislikes and fulfil their material needs like normal individuals would like to. They attain economic empowerment, and sometimes also exploit others for the accomplishment of their dreams and needs. As agents of change, the heroines of Shashi Deshpande and Bapsi Sidhwa stand up to suppression and successfully liberate themselves. This makes them role models for oppressed women. The notable aspect is that minimal research has been conducted from material ecofeminism's point of view on the novel under review.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Theoretical Edifice

Ecofeminism in general, but more specifically material ecofeminism forms the theoretical edifice of this thesis. The prime objective of this research is uncovering women subjugation and subordination in a predominantly patriarchal world where the man misuses culture and religion to relegate women and nature to the category of others. Ecological degradation and its impact on women shall be the second area of major focus. Employing material ecofeminism, intersectionality of a patriarchal domination, especially women and nature by men and culture duo shall be the core focus of this research.

Over past four decades, the eco-criticism and ecofeminism have expanded in scope and function to include liberation of not only women but nature including all species from all kinds of exploitation. This chapter briefly traces eco-criticism, post-colonial eco-criticism, intersectionality, ecofeminism as a movement and this theory briefly touching its various shades relevant to this thesis, with particular focus on material ecofeminism to undertake extensive analysis of the selected novels, i.e. Shashi Deshpande's "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" and "*The Bride*" written by Bapsi Sidhwa. A considerable amount of discussion is included about dualism, or concept of twin domination as well. The quest focuses on understanding and applying this theoretical concept to analyse the selected novels.

3.2 Understanding Eco-criticism and Ecology: The Connection between Suppression of Women and Domination of Nature

To begin with, understanding the ecology is considered essential. The word ecology is derived from the Greek word 'Oikos,' meaning home, and 'logos' which means reason or study. So, the meaning of ecology is the study of home, or in more general terms, a study of the Earth. A reader can focus on the deep and expanding link of home, from a micro consideration towards the universal understanding and cosmic interpretation of ecology,

everything seems related to it. Bringing feminism and ecological movement together considering that any campaign for ecological awareness and protection cannot be completely successful unless it addresses the societal constructs of male domination is termed ecofeminism.

Eco-criticism refers to the study of literature and the physical environment from interdisciplinary point of view under critical paradigm. “Interdisciplinarity, multiculturalism, internationalism, according to Cheryl Glotfelty, are crucial areas for eco-criticism’s continued development.” (Gaard, 2010, p.1) The eco-criticism emerged in the 1970s and the 1980s. By the 1990s, it had evolved into a separate school of literary criticism. Debates about ecological concerns were already going on when eco-criticism appeared. According to Buell “term eco-criticism denotes literary environmentalism, literary ecology, or green cultural studies.” (Buell, 2009, p.12) It is a conventional view of nature that includes wilderness and non-human things as distinct entities. Some scholars believe that the initial stage of eco-criticism enriched the literature of conventional writings on the nature. For a few others, eco-criticism emerged as a challenge to industrialisation because many eco-critics of the first wave consider nature a “victim of modernisation.” (Heise, 1998, p. 262-269)

Towards the end of the twentieth century, eco-criticism and environmental studies gained popularity and expanded into various connected disciplines of study, including geography, biology, sociology, and psychology. Wildlife, pastoral location, and scenery were all depicted in the most basic forms of medieval literature. One may see numerous travelogues, letters, and folktales in the historical evolution of environmental or ecological literature. This feeling was held about bulk of the literature, both inside and outside America.

Estok maintains, that the eco-criticism, which does not bring a connection between suppression of women and domination of nature, is not eco-criticism. The eco-criticism includes the relationship of all humans with nature. He opines that opposition to superiority

based on gender, sex, race, and colour should be central to its debate. He sees parallels between eco-criticism and ecofeminism. According to Estok, empowerment of women takes the priority. He maintains that though the word eco comes first in ecofeminism, yet social justice and women liberation from the powers of domination are a priority in the eco-feminist movement. Extending the argument, Estok stresses that eco-criticism is a feminist issue. Eco-criticism is linked with social justice; hence it cannot negate women subjugation from its ambit. (Estok, 2009, p.200)

Thoreau's (1971) account comprise the experiences of his stay in a hut, in wilderness, just two miles away from his house. He wanted to verify and emphasise that living a simple and nature-connected life was adequately charming. It was an attempt to make his readers contemplate about ecology rather than thinking of individual preferences only. Many consider him as a father of eco-criticism. His books, "*Walden*," "*The Maine Woods*," "*A Week on the Concord*" and "*Merrimack Rivers*" are nature-based works that are included in eco-critical studies. Robert Frost, William Words Worth, Keats, and many other poets and prose writers have also emphasised the importance of living closer to nature. They used woods, forests, birds, lakes, as a comparison of city with the country life, trees, fruits, natural sounds and serenity in their works. William Words Worth was criticised by many for his avoidance of economic factor in his poetry while writing his urban and rural comparisons. His critics term this as politics of poetry. Contrarily, in "*Romantic Ecology*," Bate (1991) argued how the poetry of Words Worth was a green politics by terming Words Worth as the first poet of ecology.

Buell (1999, p. 699-712), divided the evolution of eco-criticism into three waves. Other critics have embraced his point of view as well. Slovic (2010, p. 4), also used the term "Waves" for explaining the evolution of eco-criticism. There is no clear line drawn between the waves. Buell states that it has been seamless transition from one wave to the other.

However, the classification of eco-criticism into three waves makes its development easier to grasp. Slovic points out that there are only a few research publications available on the first wave. On the contrary, many works can be found about the second wave. Glotfelty (1996, p.5), for instance, considers humans as part of nature, which is the concept associated with the second wave.

Critics of first wave eco-criticism restricted their works to the description of land, animals and plants. Therefore, Buell terms it to be local or a regional work. Their focus was poetry, nature, wilderness and nature-based fiction as it did not embody humans. (Buell, 1996, p.138) Coupe also said that their focus was to raise a voice to protect the biotic community. (Coupe, 2000, p. 4) It was initially for the care of the earth and protecting fauna and flora from cultural activities. Their criticism does not seem to be on global issues, but primarily on local and regional land, biotic issues, the description of fauna and flora. The approach is criticised due to its narrow focus. At the beginning of the first wave, eco-criticism was entrenched in limited areas, and it did not address the issues of globalisation; it was restricted within the borders.

Heise, (2008, p. 2), beautifully draws attention to the need for understanding global impacts on ecology by knitting a fictional story in which a heart-wrenched boy sits in his house watching their lawn being dug to build a highway. Then there is some announcement from a spacecraft that the whole earth will be dug out to construct a road for some particular traffic. The imaginary story takes readers entirely out of the local discussion of the first wave. The approach of the critics of the first wave is criticised because they consider it a hurdle to make eco-criticism a transnational theory. Secondly, it terms humans as the crown of creation, which is the construct linked with the domination of nature by humans. A major contribution of the first wave of eco-criticism is ecofeminism.

Even though “eco” comes first in ecofeminism, but it is the second part of the term that has ontological priority i.e., “feminism.” This implies that ecofeminism is a social theory; a human-centred approach. To some degree, eco-criticism tries to maintain its identity to move away from anthropocentric models “eco-criticism is always a feminist issue.” (Estok, 2009, p.200) Estok argues that eco-criticism which does not bring a connection between suppression of women and domination of nature is not eco-criticism. The eco-criticism includes a relationship of humans with nature. Criticism on domination based on gender, sex, race and colour should, therefore, be central to the debate in ecocriticism.

Consequent to criticism on the first wave, the second wave tended to be more tilted towards ecological justice. It raised voice for the communities that had been affected by acts of destroying the environment. (Buell, 1996) The basic idea of the second wave, that distinguishes it from the first wave, is the inclusion of the human and nature in its debate. Humans are affected by nature and ecological changes, and humans impact the nature too. The second wave engendered numerous discussions due to its vaster canvas. Movements about social justice joined eco-critical discourse. Theorists differ whether nature is the centre of the debate, or the social justice? However, the outcome in both the cases is the liberation of suppressed women from male domination and environmental protection.

Ecofeminism emerged as a separate discourse during the second wave. The second wave indicates closer relationship between women and nature. Halkes (1991, p. 2), says that men in a patriarchal society view nature and women as something that ought to be dominated. They consider themselves as the custodians of the culture. Halkes extends her argument by adding that the patriarchal society is imbalanced so that men dominate women and nature. They consider themselves entitled to tame both. Halkes talks about a western culture where women are associated with nature and are dominated. Women’s subjugation, in the Indian and Pakistani societies, is also considered to be linked with this particular factor associating

them with land and nature. Hence, both are exploited. Enger and Bradley (2000, p. 48), in their work "*Environmental Science, A Study of Inter Relationships,*" argue that environmental justice includes justice and protection for every constituent of the environment and all those that are affected by the environment, i.e., humans and non-humans both. It seeks equality for all humans and negates the notions of domination. The exploitation of nature is in the social as well as in the material spheres.

In "*The Future of Environmental Criticism,*" Buell (2005, p.13) opines that the second wave of criticism concentrated on highlighting social injustice, and acts that affect the environment. Hence, the literature in the second wave of eco-criticism raised the voice for those exposed to social injustice, and those who suffer from ecological changes more than the decision-makers. It is the main reason for the expansion of eco-criticism. Buell's approach includes humans as part of nature and urges ecological and social justice. Buell's eco-critical approach opens a new avenue for the literature that links environmental destruction to racial, gender and social issues.

Vijayaraj opines that the eco-criticism also examines the relationship between humans and nature with the aim of the restoration of the environment to its original shape by creating awareness and consciousness among the people. It is also linked to efforts for women's rights that have taken the shape of ecofeminism:

As a value system, ecofeminism aims to explore the links between androcentrism (conscious or unconscious assertion of giving priority to a masculine point of view on culture and history, thereby trying to marginalise femininity) and environmental exploitation, and it calls for an end to all kinds of oppression. (Vijayaraj, 2017, p. 71)

Vijayaraj adds that ecofeminism addresses suppression of numerous kinds of species, not only the women suppression. He accords special priority to earth, saying that ecofeminism is a movement to provide justice to the sacred Earth. He asserts that, as a

movement, the ecofeminism advocates living in greater harmony with nature. It negates the idea of domination by a particular agent or power structures, it rather emphasises on the revival of natural systems, where humans live carrying a responsibility to protect and preserve the nature.

Vijayaraj discusses cultural and religious prospects of ecofeminism by highlighting that men and women are different from each but are counterparts, however, women are more connected with nature:

... ecofeminism seeks to reconstitute our living by resurrecting a sense of oneness with nature... balancing the ancient feminine principle with male principles dismantling the dualistic concepts, we can establish a symbiotic living.” (Vijayaraj, 2017, p. 75)

3.3 Postcolonial Ecocriticism

Huggan and Tiffen finds it essential to bring postcolonial impacts on society and environmental concerns in picture. They say that imperialism is an expression of patriarchy. It promotes domination. It abhors denying the rights, and accords importance to the people who help it thrive. The continuing imperialist modes and colonialist attitudes of social and environmental dominance can be challenged (Huggan & Tiffen, 2015, p.11). In “*Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*” Huggan and Tiffen discuss postcolonial ecocriticism in four categories: (Huggan and Tiffen, 2015, p.12)

The first category is masculinist centred on culture, which helped imperialists to dominate. This type of domination is ruinous. The second category is bio colonisation, which is basically about the bio-political impacts of the western technological advancements. Third and Fourth categories of postcolonial eco-criticism highlighted by them are racism and speciesism respectively.

3.4 From Environmental Movement to Ecofeminism

Concerns on the protection of environment and ecological degradation are closely related to ecofeminism. It is commonly recognised that Rachel Carson's book "*The Silent Spring*" (1962). was the commencement of the environmental movement that took shape on the Earth Day in 1970. (Gaard, 2011) Rachel Carson was the first one to raise her voice against the assaults of the man on the environment. In her fictional writing she revealed the dreadful environmental challenges brought by the use of pesticides. Her book is still considered to be a powerful appeal against ecological degradation. Her efforts severely impacted the business of the chemical industry. Consequent to the publication of her book, the US President J. F. Kennedy constituted a special committee to look into this matter. The committee's report that was presented after complete investigations vindicated Carson's concerns. Her style of writing was the most impacting aspect. She started with a fable:

...there was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings. The town lay amid a checkerboard of prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of orchards, where in spring, white clouds bloom. (Carson, 1962, p. 10)

Continuing the tale, equating effect of the pesticides she wrote about a 'strange blight' that crept over the town and changed everything. She termed it 'an evil spell,' which settled on the community, "Mysterious maladies swept the flocks of chickens; the cattle and sheep sickened and died." (Carson, 1962, p. 12)

3.5 Intersectionality: Theoretical Underpinnings and Applications

The term intersectionality and its present-day utilisation as a particular approach are, by and large, credited to Kimberlé Crenshaw. (1989, p.139) She started using this term to highlight the discrimination against women of colour, especially their share in the jobs. Since

then, numerous disciplines have begun making use of the ‘tools’ of intersectionality. In her paper *Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory*, Anna (2017), elaborates:

...in feminist theory, intersectionality has become the predominant way of conceptualising the relation between systems of oppression which construct our multiple identities and our social locations in hierarchies of power and privilege.

(Ref?)

Anna explains the origin of intersectionality as a metaphor. She adds that it has been theorised and widely adopted “as a paradigm by feminist theorists in a period marked by its widespread and rather unquestioned – if, at times, superficial and inattentive – usage.” (Anna, 2017) Intersectionality gained added importance for the women activists and the anti-racist talk. It is being used for more effectively highlighting the specificity of the subjugation confronted ladies of colour.

Garry (2011, p. 826-850), believes that intersectionality is like a mountain on which other liquids of various colours are running down with their ends coinciding and mixing. History of the evolution of intersectionality that Crenshaw started using some thirty years back, in itself is complex too, as multiple variants use interpretations, and explanations kept adding on. It seems like a complex web of entanglements where every single strain is linked to the other. The concept of intersectionality can help in effectively explaining the interconnectedness and effects of race, gender, sexuality, caste, religion, age in their numerous forms, which are exploited for segregation, abuse, and suppression of individuality of the women, and the ecology. Initially, intersectionality was introduced as a concept to elaborate types of subjugation faced by black women, but with time feminists also started using this term. Intersectionality has also helped in overcoming the differences of opinion amongst feminists.

The intersectional venture has given ecofeminism and women's rights activists an excellent opportunity to stand up to a few of the skeletons in their closets that were constraining them to challenge a frequently essentialist and exclusionary past. Interestingly, Crenshaw suggested an excellent technique, which can help researchers understand intersectionality. She explains her own experience of asking questions wherever she witnesses a type of subjugation. She poses a question about the other kind of subjugation. For instance, she explains, "When I see something that looks racist, I ask, 'Where is the patriarchy in this?' When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, 'Where is the hetero-sexism in this?' Eventually, these questions help the way one may think and figure out other types of subjugations. She believes that asking questions helps to enhance awareness about other social injustice issues and helps to understand if there exists any bias in the given information. (Matsuda, 1991, p. 1189)

Intersectionality was introduced in the late 80s and early 90s, but ecofeminists used it for many years before Crenshaw introduced it as a separate term and subject. The intersectionality is , when more than one factor reinforces each other for the exploitation of a suppressed group. "*Water*" and "*The Bride*" explicitly explain the intersectionality of religion with sexism, race, caste, gender and postcolonialism. Widowed women are exploited in the name of religion in "*Water*." Religion and other dominating constructs like gender, caste, and class subjugate women and deny them the fundamental rights of life. This thesis amply covers the employment of intersectionality and links it with the assumptions of ecofeminism. Intersectionality of women oppression and environmental degradation, due to its ruthless exploitation for material gains, assumes greater significance for this research paper. Both are well intertwined. Patriarchy exploits both for physical gains as well as material motives.

3.6 Ecofeminism: Women Empowerment and Ecology

The term 'Ecofeminism' was coined by the French feminist Francois D'Eaubonne in her 1974 work "*Le Feminisme ou la mort*" (feminism or death). She was of the view that if women are empowered, they can play a useful role in protecting the environment. Ynestra King further developed the concept in 1976. It gained momentum as an ideology and movement in the late seventies. According to Ynestra King, "Ecofeminism is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice. It sees the devastation of mother earth and human beings by the corporate warriors as a feminist concern." (King, 1987, p.127)

He further adds that:

...we live in a culture that is founded on the repudiation and domination of nature.

This has a special significance for women because in a patriarchal thought, women are believed to be closer to nature than men. The hatred of women and the hatred of nature are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing. (King, 1989, p.18)

The proponents of this theory believe that if ecofeminism is concerned with suppression, it should also include suppression of 'Queer.' (Gaard, 1997) Gaard writes that:

in the west, ecofeminism is an environmental theory and practice that developed in the 1980s through antinuclear peace protests at Greenham Common in England, as well as Seneca Falls, the "Women's Pentagon Actions" has roots in Feminist Vegetarianism, Feminists for Animal Rights, Antiracist Feminism, Woman Earth Feminist Peace Institute, Feminist earth-based Spiritualities, Feminist Political Engagements, and International Green Movement. (Gaard 2010, p.47)

Mallory says that ecological feminism, popularly known as ecofeminism is a branch of philosophy concerned with the relationship between women and nature's subjugation. According to eco-feminist political theory, the oppression of women and the environment are related "conceptually, historically, physically, but not essentially." (Mallory, 2010, p. 309)

Ecofeminism recognises the ethical interconnection between the domination of women and nature. The ancient precedent, which separates people from nature, and places them above nature, is also considered responsible for implementing the ‘violent rupture’ between humankind and nature. This rupture allows humanity to become ignorant of its responsibility towards the natural surroundings and the non-human things. Eco-feminists highlight that this dualistic concept of culture-nature seeks to maintain both the “ecological superiority of humans and the cultural superiority of men” (Mallory, 2010, p. 309), meaning that women’s liberation cannot be achieved without the concurrent liberation of nature from the clutches of exploitation.

The ecofeminism went through multiple phases and experiences of acceptance, criticism and being lumped with the feminism. It however made its place in the literature:

It took two decades of activism and literary debates, theorised engagements that eco-feminist literary criticism took roots in the United States of America, Australia and Europe. However, it took another decade to reach Asia. (Gaard, 2010)

Greta Gaard’s view about the regenerative abilities of women and earth to meet defined objectives, is also interesting. She writes, “Our resilience emerges through life-sustaining connections, reciprocal and nourishing relationships across the differences of species, and class, nations and natures” (Gaard, 2018, p. 12). Domestic animals also suffer because of human domination. Humans use them for agriculture under whip and for multiple other purposes, including transportation. Animals are even hunted just as a hobby by men and are sometimes kept caged for recreational purposes. The tribal divisions have created class divisions as well.

Women have greater insight, potential and will to save the planet from degeneration caused due to the destruction of ecology by human. (Gaard, 2019) This ability and insight can be applied better if women are well educated, are at places of significance in the alleys of

power, are economically empowered, are part of entrepreneurial structures like chambers of commerce and are industrialists.

3.7 Noel Sturgeon's Five Assumptions of Ecofeminism

In his work "*The Nature of Race Discourses of Racial difference in Ecofeminism*," Noel Sturgeon, who is an active exponent of ecofeminism, outlines five main assumptions of the theory. Firstly, patriarchy perceives women and nature on the same plane. Hence the environmental issues need a feminist analytical approach. Secondly, since women and nature are interconnected, an efficacious study on women's subordination necessitates an environmental investigation. Thirdly, due to their close association with nature like farming obligations, household responsibilities and childcare, women can quickly perceive and foresee looming environmental problems. Also, women are more susceptible to environmental hazards. Fourthly, women are biologically closer to nature because their menstrual cycles coincide with nature's seasonal and cyclic patterns. Lastly, he asserts that nature-based religious practices like 'Paganism' and 'Witchcraft' provide ample means for feminist spiritual analysis, as these religions are based on the power of the female and place the female deities at par with male deities. (Sturgeon, 1997, p. 263-264) Ecofeminism has come to be divided in various shades and types, to include cultural, material also termed as social, post-colonial, vegetarian, spiritual and ecofeminism for Earth. These are very explained briefly in following section; however, the major focus shall remain on cultural and material ecofeminism.

3.8 Variations of Ecofeminism

The ecofeminism has been discussed in various shades and types. Vegetarian ecofeminism primarily exudes concerns on killing the animals by men to eat. The animal eating is linked to men's dominance of nature. This results in the extinction of animals. The vegetarian ecofeminism emphasises that "omitting the oppression of animals from feminist and eco-

feminist analyses is inconsistent,” with the spirit of feminism and ecofeminism. (Zein & Setiawan, 2017, p.3) The spiritual ecofeminism is yet another subdivision of the ecofeminism, popular amongst eco-feminist writers like Starhawk, Riane Eisler, Carol J. Adams. Starhawk terms it as an earth-based spirituality that identifies the earth as a living being. Spiritual ecofeminism expounds that we all are interconnected, regardless of religion cast and creed. It advocates values like caring, compassion, and non-violence. (Zein & Setiawan, 2017, p. 4). In ecofeminism for earth Vijayaraj (2017, p. 68-75) elaborates feminism as an approach that advocates that the social imbalance created by male dominance is the main reason for the oppression of women and the abuse of the earth. Gaard and Vandana Shiva opine that the men have tried to exploit women’s regenerative capacity, and have attempted to sever mother and baby’s association by manufacturing artificial milk. Consequently, making or grooming? babies dependent upon inorganic food and milk.

3.9 Cultural Ecofeminism

Environmental degradation is considered to be an outcome of cultural activity, thus creating a balance in culture and removing environmental preservation bias is important. (Birkeland, 1993, p.13) Cultural ecofeminism is, therefore, linked with the environmental degradation. Another aspect that ecofeminism brings to forth is that the environmental degradation and events triggered by it affect women more as compared to men. For example, infertility because of radioactive rays, water scarcity, floods, cyclones due to environmental degradation, droughts and food scarcity cause more damage to women’s health. Birkland’s discussion on ecofeminism stresses connectedness from both the perspectives asserting that the basic social transformation is indispensable. Birkland believes that respect and adorability for every human and nonhuman thing is a crucial factor for transformation in the society:

Everything in nature has an inherent value, a shift from ecological centred approach to biocentric approach, working with the land to protect life, promotion of ethics and equality,

discouraging hierarchical dominations of all kind are a must for bringing change in the society. (Birkeland, 1993, p.57). Birkeland believes that the dualistic concept of patriarchy protects the culture of male dominance, a power-based dominance, it promotes dualism of male and female, culture and nature, thought and action. Thus, changing this patriarchal approach in the society is central to solving the issue (Birkeland, 1993, p.57).

3.10 Nature -Women Connectedness: Impact of Ecological Degradation

Gaard establishes women's connection with the nature in terms of her resilience to bring transformation as an agent of change. She also advocates that we should be connected with other beings. She does not establish the link between women and earth only, she rather elaborates the connectedness of "humanimals" with the other beings. She believes that we must identify ourselves with the environmental, feminist, anti-racialism and species perspectives. Women and natives should not feel dominated. Ecofeminism also takes cognisance of information from body sense and empathy. Empathy is also connected to social, economic and justice of species.

In the South Asian rural areas, the women perform multifaceted household chores. They also help their husbands in taking care of the domestic animals and farm lands. In certain parts of Pakistan, women have to collect and bring firewood, fetch water from the village wells and natural water sources. Access to clean drinking water is a major concern for the under developed areas of Pakistan, as well as many such places in the world. A 'Water.Org' report on this issue under heading "*Women Crisis*" states:

Women are disproportionately affected by the water crisis, as they are often responsible for collecting water. This takes time away from work, school and caring for family. The lack of water and sanitation locks women in a cycle of poverty. Empowering women is critical to solving the water crisis. Women and girls spend 200 million hours every day collecting water. Every 2 minutes a child dies of water related diseases. (*The Water*

Crises,2023). This report adds that more women and children die of water-related diseases worldwide, “today, 771 million people – 1 in 10 – lack access to safe water and 1.7 billion people – 1 in 4 – lack access to a toilet. These are the people we empower”.

Rehman thinks that Pakistani women’s attachment to their familial responsibilities, sensitivities to the environmental issues and concerns for lack of water and food, and their abilities to quickly and effectively address these issues are often ignored because the patriarchal discourses and taking support of religion are dominant in multiple realms. (Rehman, 2019, p. 4) This dominance undercuts women’s important relationships to land, food and water insecurity. According to Climate Asia’s report on Pakistan, even in the face of “limited decision-making power. . . [Which] constrains women’s ability to act they tend to respond more actively than men to lack of food and water.” (Rehman, 2019, p. 4)

Pakistan is predominantly an agrarian economy. This sector provides food as well as employment to multitude of men and women:

Romero-Paris (2000) highlighted that majority of Southeast Asian countries live in the rural areas and depend mainly on agriculture. Pakistan derives two third of its GDP from agriculture, “...accounts 66% out of the total economically active manpower in agriculture.” (Begum & Yasmeen, 2011, p. 637)

A report issued by the ‘International Labour Organisation’ (ILO) states, the women farmers in South Asia, in terms of hours, have more contribution to agriculture based economic sector. Following part of this report amply manifests, and supports the argument that *Pakistani* women have a huge contribution in the agricultural/food sector:

...if we consider region and gender wise segregated data about employment and particularly, consider the case of South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, we could trace the glaring dominance of female of this region in agriculture i.e. up to 65% of the total sectors employment. (Begum & Yasmeen, 2011, p. 638)

Because of being household managers, the women from various societies are considered closer to the environment. Val Plumwood (2002), in her work “*Feminism and Mastery of Nature*,” portrays the other side of the picture, which reveals the reality of the South Asian society. Women in such societies are regarded like land; they are sold out, leased out, or misused for earning through prostitution. She also uses the term “traditional women nature connectedness.” The argument she has presented with this traditional notion is that nature in its all forms is considered to have no feelings, no emotions or passion. Nature is believed to be reasonless, and it is linked with animality and primitiveness, as if it is something non-living and it does not have any intellect. Women, as depicted in the selected books from Pakistan and India, are considered like that too -feeling less, inferior and tradeable objects.

Mies and Shiva (1993), in their work “Ecofeminism,” are of the view that ecological survival is possible only by the inclusion of fellow species (whole of nature), and women. They believe that domination in the patriarchal societies has played a vital role in the women’s suppression and ecological destruction. Sturgeon also believes that patriarchal societies consider women and nature on the same plane. Sturgeon argues that the notion of women-nature connection is central to the ecofeminist debate. Women are suppressed because of this connection. The same relationship sensitises women about environmental problems due to their close association with nature, like farming obligations, household responsibilities, and childcare.

Likewise, women are the ones who are more susceptible to environmental hazards. Women in formerly colonised societies are considered like their colonies to be patronised as objects. Nixon considers bringing colonisation and ecofeminism together in such scenarios to address the issue. (Nixen, 2005) Nixon also emphasises the same aspect, saying that in the colonised societies, women are owned and dealt with like a piece of land; “Repeatedly

naturalised as objects of heritage to be owned, preserved, or patronised rather than as subjects of their land and legacies.” (Nixen, 2005, p. 240) Thus, it is debatable if the purpose of the environmental purity, which has brought feminists and environmentalists together, can be fulfilled without considering the impact of colonisation? Unfortunately, in Pakistan and India, women voices on their concerns about environment’s degradation are less likely to be heard, as they rarely own and control the lands. (Ramachandran, 2007, p. 230) Ramachandran adds, “Discriminatory patterns of land ownership extend right across the South Asian region. Pakistan and North-West India are characterised by the severest gender-based inequities” (p. 224).

Eco-feminists believe that no ecological movement can bear fruit unless it is linked to the equality of women. So, ecofeminism is a feminist movement linked with the protection of the environment as well as women suppression. It discusses women-nature connectedness through a particular emphasis on the inclusion and equality of women to address the environmental issues. Ecofeminism proposes a connection between suppression of women, people of colour, gender, group of people and mistreatment of the non-human things. (Warren & Erkal, 1997, p.2)

According to Warren and Erkal, there are four central claims at the heart of this analysis. Firstly, oppression of the women and oppression of the nature are interconnected. Secondly it emphasises the need for decoding this women-nature association to address the issue of ecological degradation. His third claim is that the ecofeminism suggests analysing feminist issues with environmentalist insight to ensure women’s freedom and environmental protection. Fourthly, Warren believes that ecocriticism, in concert with the feminist studies, should propose solutions to the ecological problems. Warren and Erkal expand the discussion on ecofeminism by explaining connections between women and nature. (Warren & Erkal, 1997, p.4-8)

Ramachandran says that inequalities in the land ownership are not only gender based but are also part of a long history that has led to the consolidation of economic and political power in the hands of male landowners of Pakistan. From Plato, Aristotle to Kant, the philosophers logically present the subordination of groups and genders. The reason given by the philosophers show the domination of particular groups of people over others, especially men over women.

The domination is not limited to men and women relationships rather, it is constructed through reason by dividing roles of women and men in the society in a way that appears to be natural, (Plumwood, 2002, p. 11) Any attempt to change this self-entitled subjugation should not be taken as abuse against nature. Plumwood argues that the cultural construct of dualism “neutralises” dependency of dominated ones on subjugator. (Plumwood, 2002, p. 20) Gaard criticises the usage of metaphor of ‘rape’ for environment when it is compared with the metaphors of ‘mother nature’ and ‘virgin forests. She believes that a removed mountain tops or cut trees cannot be compared with the pain the raped women, children or queers bear. She says, “ the shame and self-loathing, the acute sense of violation that accompanies rape is experienced by humans, not mountains, much as we know.” (Gaard, 2018, p. 15)

Culturally and religiously the spiritual goddess factor is also linked to women’s emergence of a patriarchal culture which has historically dominated the concept of mother goddess:

...in the prehistoric period, women were worshipped as a goddess and they were held in high esteem as giver of life but due to the emergence of patriarchal culture “mother goddesses were dethroned and replaced by male gods and subsequently female deities became subservient” of male gods. (Merchant, 1990, p.100)

Gaard considers that women can bring ecological change because of their intimate relationship with nature. We (women) must identify ourselves with the environmental,

feminist, anti-racialism and species perspectives. The women and natives should not feel dominated. Ecofeminism also takes cognisance of information from body sense and empathy. Empathy is connected to the social, economic and justice of the species. Gaard also debates regenerative abilities of earth and women. She says the men have tried to impact women's capacity of regeneration and sever mother and baby's linkage (3.13), which is yet another form of material exploitation and colonisation.

Gaard strongly believes the environment is a feminist issue. (Gaard, 2010, p. 47) Ecofeminism advocates social diversity, equality and biodiversity (protection of nature). It criticises domination in all dimensions, whether it be the domination of women or ecology. It is mainly embedded in activism and emphasises sound political decisions to save the environment, heal the alienated individuals, and dismantle institutions that cause oppression. That is why it is political. (Gaard, 2010, p. 54)

3.11 Views of Indian and Pakistani Writers on Cultural Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism advocates women-nature connectedness but it is viewed and interpreted differently by various authors from India and Pakistan. For eco-feminists, the domination of women and nature is rooted in the patriarchal societal constructs. To counter this domination, one needs to reconstruct and reconceptualise the underlying patriarchal values and structures to promote equality, non-violence, and non-hierarchical forms. (Rao, 2012, p. 124-142) In "*Ecofeminism at the Crossroads in India: A Review*," Rao explains that in India, growing protests against environmental destruction, inequality and multiple struggles for the survival indicate that caste, class and gender issues are deeply rooted and interlinked.

Rao also emphasises that property plays a major role in the equation of women and men in the society. In patriarchal societies, mostly, women do not own land. Though they work harder than male counterparts to produce food and earn livelihoods, but do not get their due share in income or land ownership. Even if a female owns some land, she does not

exercise primary rights. These rights are exercised by some male relative. Women, therefore, cannot be homogenised into one category, as the ecofeminists tend to do, either within the country or across the globe. Women are victims of environmental degradation and active agents in the regeneration and protection of the environment. Effects of the adverse class-gender differences on these processes are reflected in the erosion of indigenous knowledge systems and livelihood strategies on which poor, rural women depend. (Rao, 2012, p. 138)

Kaur emphasises that if the central ecofeminist discourse is occupied by Euro-American philosophy and does not address subcontinent or postcolonial societies' suppression issues, then it cannot be considered as wholesome. (Kaur, 2012, p. 12) Double bind suppression of women should be taken into consideration while bringing ecofeminism discourse in these societies. She believes discourse on ecofeminism is incomplete without bringing postcolonial eco-criticism along.

Jabeen in her paper "*Ecofeminism and Pakistani Anglophone Literature,*" building on Gaard's idea of ecofeminism from above and below, emphasises that western philosophy of ecofeminism does not include the discrepancies of *Pakistani* women and cultural relationships. (Jabeen, 2019, p.346) In her research, she has also said that *Pakistani* female writers work is not aligned with the mainstream eco-feminist debate. She has pointed out that the *Pakistani* female writers' works differs from the postcolonial mainstream ecofeminism discourse as well. Jabeen has introduced an idea that in certain cases the men may be more connected to nature as compared to their female counter parts. To an extent, she challenges the western idea of dualism. However, she has supported material ecofeminism. Rehman stresses the need to employ the ecofeminist approach in the *Pakistani* literature and highlights the importance of criticising the biases of discussing every subject under radical Islam. Women rights activists of Pakistan do write on ecological and feminist activism but it

remains in oblivion. There is a need to project the on-going efforts and encourage more writers to include ecofeminism to their creativity. (Rehman, 2019, p. 4)

3.12 The Concept of Dualism

Ecofeminism primarily revolves around the concept of dualism that has been explained well by Greta Gaard through her writings and lectures. Ecofeminism assumes that women and nature are connected, and men and culture are intertwined. Gaard says “men and masculinity are associated with the culture and culture is valued, whereas women and femaleness are associated with nature and both are devalued.” (Gaard, 2010) In a predominantly patriarchal world, the man exploits the cultural constructs to subjugate the women, nature and earth for material and egoistic gains. In this process of domination and exploitation of women and nature, colonisation has also played a supportive role. The men of the ex-colonies, who were part of imperialism have adopted the attitude of a coloniser: considering women and nature as their colonies. Hence, the exploitation, misuse and subjugation of women and nature, with all ugliness of repressive and cruel acts, perpetuate.

Twin domination or concept of dualism thrives on the gendered nature of a society: Women are even personified as nature and have historical linkage with the goddesses. In Hinduism, there are still goddesses who are worshipped. These are named ‘*Devi*,’ meaning a goddess. *Devi*, also known as *Mahadevi* or ‘Great Goddess,’ is an all-embracing mother. Goddess... *Devi* is often manifested in the shape of fearsome female warriors *Durga* and *Kali* as well, both of whom famously killed several terrible demons in Hindu mythology.” (World History Encyclopaedia, 2019)

According to Carolyn Merchant, cultural ecofeminism, “celebrates the relationship between women and nature through the revival of ancient rituals centred on goddess worship, the moon, animals, and the female reproductive system.” (Zein & Setiawan, 2017, p.4)

Essentialists believe that this social construct of women-nature connectedness is the main cause of dualism. It is not natural, not sent from heaven, or has a logical link with reality but is a social construct. It has instead brought negative implications on the movements of women's liberation because it reinforces transcendental dualism that is at the root of oppression. Constructivists believe that it is a culture that has divided masculine and feminine qualities. These qualities are not essentially logical and should be treated accordingly. Freedom of women from oppression should not be oversimplified just by labelling the link of women with nature.

Plumwood (2002, p. 45), expresses these aspects as follows... "So, there exists a reason/nature of dualism where everything related to culture and reason is 'male', 'human' and 'civilised' while everything related to nature is 'feminine,' 'non-human' and 'primitive.'" He opines that those cultural and traditional constructs, which associated women with nature, have given the status of "others" to women and nature. Therefore, men dominate them, and women are not included in any human model or do not come under the definition of humanity.

Feminists believe ecology studies must include females, but environmentalists seldom involve women in their studies of nature domination. (Gross, 2009, p.18) Gross believes that the idea of dualism in the western eco-criticism is about the link between higher and lower and good and bad. Nature is considered to be inferior and is dominated, as women are considered subordinated and subjugated by men too. Gross work traces links between Buddhist ideology and the idea of ecofeminism. Men are inherently profit-seeking, and anything "inherent" cannot be changed. This exhibits, possibly, a moral defect in men. On the other hand, women are not considered to be profit-seeking. For Gross, women can create balance in the society and nature in a better manner. In historic theology studies, males would define females as subordinates. (Gross, 2009, p. 30)

The main focus of any feminist, according to Plumwood, should be to challenge this construct. Unless this attribution of women as 'other' is challenged, all efforts and slogans are shallow and these will not help achieve fruitful results or change the women's status.

Extending her argument, she cherishes the strength of ecofeminism that helps feminists break these constructs of denial and exclusion of women for two reasons. Firstly, ecofeminism provides feminists escape from this traditional women-nature connection. Secondly, it does not consider nature something inferior or to be dominated by men.

Ecofeminism advocates equality and inclusion of all genders, races, species, and others for environmental and social justice. Plumwood has criticised traditional women-nature's connection, and also many big names like Freud, Hegel, and Swift, who consider women inferior to men. Swift, unfortunately, compares women with a monkey. (Swift, 1989, p. 191) Freud considers women as reproductive machines who have no contribution to civilisation. (Freud, 1930, p. 80) Hegel views women as complex creatures, incapable of making scientific discoveries or attaining scientific knowledge. (Hegel, 1975, p. 9) Reuther (1995, p. 39) further explains the roots of this women-nature link tracing it back to the ancient societies. Criticising the very notion of the domination of man over nature, he argues that nature existed without humans for millions of years. Humans are embedded in it and cannot live without nature, but man has created this notion of the domination of nature. Because of their similar reproductive attribute women and earth, according to Reuther, are associated since ancient times. "The earth; a place where plant and animal life rise, is linked with the bodies of women from which babies emerge" (p. 38). In line with this very concept, men make women work in the agricultural produce, including ploughing the fields, a step further towards the oppression of women.

The subjugation of women is multi-layered. Firstly, they are suppressed based on gender by men in the patriarchal societies. In the second layer, they suffer because of class differences within the same community. The third layer is colonisers. Women are considered to be a higher level of slaves than the ‘conquered slaves through military.’ Women, children, land are the victims of wars. In a patriarchal law, possession of women, slaves, animals and land are all symbolically and socially linked together. (p.40) Hence Plumwood’s idea of domination of women because of their association with ‘Mother-earth’ resembles Reuther’s thought. Reuther believes that to bring ecological change, human relations causing domination need to be changed. King (1976), also views the “devastation of mother-earth and human beings by the corporate warriors as a feminist concern.” (King 1976, p. 127)

Similarly, one more view that is very apparent in the Gaard’s works is, that ecofeminism respects cultural differences. Kaur (2012) strengthens Gaard’s idea and emphasises that central eco-feminist discourse, that is occupied by Euro-American philosophy does not address the females’ sub-continental or postcolonial societies’ suppression issues. It, therefore, cannot be considered as wholesome. (Kaur, 2012, p.12) She highlights the double layer of subjugation in the colonised societies of the subcontinent.

Vandana Shiva in a talk on “*Ecofeminism and Decolonisation of Women, Nature and the Future*” (2020) referring to the earth and women connection says, that the earth created a hospitable environment for all the species to live and coexist. The women have been regarded as healers. When women started rising in knowledge and growing in stature men started burning them with the blames for witchcraft. After that, the devastation of nature began. Scientists have discovered degradation of the earth and have laid two options before humanity; either extinction or escape to another planet. Eco-feminist option is the third one; neither extinction nor escape, but staying here and protecting our planet. Earth is a living entity. It needs humans to protect it. With the industrialisation and modernisation, a

misapprehension has grown, which is taking roots: that earth has no creative powers, which is not correct. Along with earth and nature, women are considered as passive reproductive machines only. She terms this as the colonisation of nature and women, and calls younger generations to stand up for the decolonisation of nature, women, indigenous cultures and working people.

She adds that every day 200 species are put to extinction. Almost 200,000 people die every year due to indirect chemical poisoning. One in four people has cancer. Annual diseases caused due to the chemicals are 2.5%, including billions infected by various ailments including diabetes and infertility. All the violence in the world is because of two false senses of superiority. The powerful men are in charge of the world and some cultures and religions are considered or claimed to be more superior than others. More devastating fact is that we are detached from the nature, hence we do not own it. The consequence is degradation and destruction of the nature. Speaking about the Artificial intelligence she opines that, today, Alexa, the App, teaches children that how should they eat, what should they eat, and what they should not. She stresses that instead of Alexa, the mothers, grandmothers and teachers should teach them all this. Else, perhaps one day the men may say that we do not need the human teachers now. Similarly, the food chain is vital for life and nature. Everyone is connected in the food chain system. Agriculture, apart from means of food production, embodies love and care for humans and other species. Artificial food will ultimately make land, agriculture and farmers redundant. She advocates protection of nature, all species, ecosystem and values. (Shiva, 2020)

The novels selected for this research also present women and nature linkages in the *Pakistani* and Indian culture, as depicted. These novels also help establish in both the societies, are valued or devalued, treated or mistreated women and nature almost alike. Men dominate both them and the nature. Cultural feminism assumes that due to their empathy for

nature and passion for the society, women may take better and stronger measures to guard against environmental degradation. According to this school of thought, females are more passionate about society and family as compared to men who give priority to themselves over nature. Cultural feminism advocates women to recognise this sacred link and connectedness with nature and celebrate their uniqueness as men may not possess their kind of passionate feelings. Terms like Mother Nature and mother earth are often quoted in the texts linked to cultural ecofeminism. Proponents of this school of thought believe that the concept of women-nature relationship is a social construct. It is the culture that assigns dominant role to males in a patriarchal society.

3.13 Intersectionality of Women, Cultures and Ecological Issues

Ecofeminism deems that women can bring ecological change because of their intimate relationship with nature. (Gaard, 2010, p. 47) According to this perception, the environment becomes a feminist issue. There is a difference of opinion about the assumptions of the theory. Researchers over time have raised concerns over the universality of women's role in addressing ecological issues by all women, Asian, African etc from the western perspective. For instance, Gaard believes that feminism and eco-criticism are grounded in a specific culture, economic relations, place, and history. She says that "We cannot expect ecofeminism to be the same in different eco-social respects." (Gaard, 2010, p. 50) Therefore, it differs from one place and culture to the other.

Accordingly, literary criticism is used as a strategy for ecological and women defence. Main characteristics of ecofeminism highlight the relationship of humans with each other across different cultures, with nature, with the environment and the species focusing on the impacts of these relationships. Ecofeminism advocates social diversity but equality and biodiversity (protection of nature). It criticises the domination in all forms and manifestations, whether it be domination of women or degradation of ecology. It is mainly

embedded in activism and emphasises on making sound political decisions to save the environment, heal alienated individuals, and dismantle institutions that engender oppression.

That is why it is political. (Gaard, 2010, p. 54)

3.14 Material Ecofeminism

This type of ecofeminism can also be referred to as social feminism, or socialist ecofeminism, or Marxist ecofeminism. According to Carolyn Merchant:

Social ecofeminism advocates the liberation of women through overturning economic and social hierarchies that turn all aspects of life into a market society that today even invades the womb. (Zein & Setiawan, 2017, p.4)

Greta Gaard's point of view on manufacturing artificial milk that denies breast feeding by mothers can be connected to this point of view. Material ecofeminism is a specific strand of ecofeminism that places a strong emphasis on the material conditions and relationships between women, nature, and the environment. This focus can be characterised by several key elements within the broader ecofeminist debate:

3.14.1 Material Ecofeminism: Materialism and Political Economy

Material ecofeminism delves deeply into the material and economic aspects of environmental degradation and gender-related issues. It emphasises the ways in which women and nature are exploited as resources for economic gain within capitalist and industrial systems. This perspective looks at how economic structures perpetuate environmental destruction and subordination of the women.

3.14.2 Material Ecofeminism: Capitalism and Patriarchy

Material ecofeminism argues that both capitalism and patriarchy are intertwined systems of oppression that contribute to ecological and gender injustice. It examines how capitalism's drive for profit and patriarchy's dominance and control over women's bodies are interconnected and result in the exploitation of nature and women.

3.14.3 Material Ecofeminism: Resource Extraction and Environmental Exploitation

This perspective focuses on resource extraction, particularly in the context of mining, agriculture, and other industries. It highlights how these activities disproportionately impact women, often displacing them from their traditional roles as caretakers of the environment and their communities.

3.14.4 Material Ecofeminism: Eco-Socialism and Alternative Economics

Material ecofeminism often aligns with the eco-socialist ideas and calls for alternative economic models that prioritise sustainability, equity, and well-being over profit. It seeks to explore and develop economic systems that are more in harmony with the environment and gender equality.

3.14.5 Material Ecofeminism: Environmental Justice

Material ecofeminism is closely linked to the environmental justice movement, which addresses the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. It advocates for fair and just access to resources, clean environments, and decision-making processes for marginalised communities, often led by women.

3.14.6 Material Ecofeminism: Feminist Political Ecology

Material ecofeminism draws inspiration from feminist political ecology, a subfield that examines how gender roles and relations influence access to and control over natural resources and the impacts of environmental change on different genders.

3.14.7 Material Ecofeminism: Discrimination in Women Wages

Ecofeminism debate was initially dominated by issues like poverty, race and health-related problems linked with gender inequalities. But there is a difference of opinion regarding inequalities based on gender, as there are communities where men also suffer due to such inequalities. Inequality can affect men too in case of racial disparities for instance. Bradshaw, however, opines that women are more affected by domination and subjugation;

therefore, they are likely to be poorer than men. “*An Equal Opportunities’ Commission-funded Report*” found that:

...even when controlling for factors such as labour market status, age and number of children, and household composition, there was still a clear gender dimension to poverty and that women who are single, pensioners, unemployed, of *Pakistani* or *Bangladeshi* origin, teenage householders and/or tenants, are more likely than men with the same characteristics to be poor. (Bradshaw et al., 2003, p. 19)

Such disadvantageous equations adversely affect women, who are forced by their circumstances to work in a poor quality environment. Women are more neglected and face worsening situations in disasters than men. Men gain more benefits of relief operations compared to women. Bradshaw offers micro and macro-level statistics to reveal that women are more affected by poverty worldwide. (Buckingham, 2004, p. 152)

Consequent to the voices raised by environmentalists and feminists, some policy changes have been seen in the developed societies. These are, however, considered insufficient to address feminist or environmentalists demands. She talks about the success of environmental movements in the previous decades. She elaborates the way environmental movements included efforts against poverty, racism and inequalities as causes of environmental destruction. (Buckingham, 2004, p. 151).

Despite globalisation and the establishment of international organisations, the existing legislations against women’s suppression do not seem to address the problem. (Obiora, 1997, p. 355) Obiora discusses the reasons for the failure of the international legislative bodies in this context. According to her, the international structure does not bind traditional local systems to follow its rules. There is no proper mechanism to empower women at the local level, particularly for poverty alleviation. There is a lack of unanimity in eliminating women-linked poverty because of social and traditional differences in the

developing countries. Obiora (1997, p. 356) suggests developing some alternative mechanisms to address this issue as an instrument, which would help address the impact of globalisation on indigenous cultures and traditions as well, a mixture of relativist and globalist perspectives. In her research about the implications of globalisation on feminist movements, Obiora found that the whole world was talking about a general discourse initiated by feminists ignoring conventional radical forms of feminist issues.

Thus, it is now quite popular in the feminist circles to critique essentialism and the obliteration of what some are gradually recuperating as redeeming borders. Opposing these critical feminist posturing are trends in the realms of law, politics, and the economy which decidedly favour the conflation of boundaries. (Obiora, 1997, p. 357)

3.14.8 Material Ecofeminism: Resistance and Activism

This perspective places a strong emphasis on resistance and grassroots activism. It encourages women's participation in the environmental movements, sustainable agriculture, and other activities that challenge the exploitative practices of industries and governments.

The material ecofeminism focuses on the material aspects of the relationship between women, nature, and the environment. It emphasises the interconnectedness of the economic systems, gender roles, and environmental degradation, and it advocates structural and systemic changes to address these issues, often aligning these with the eco-socialist and feminist political ecology perspectives.

It also fosters equality of gender and criticises exploitation and the domination of women and nature. Agarwal thinks that the dualism discourse places more emphasis on the connection between women and nature, consequently ignoring the material sources of the dominance of women that are embedded in the economic advantages and political power, which men enjoy. (Agarwal, 1992, p. 122) Agarwal also criticises the discrimination in the job opportunities leading to economic dependence of women on men. Quoting Marx, he says

that according to Marx men are to be the custodians of history and culture; they run economy and earn, whereas women just reproduce and nurture the children. Agarwal argues if women are allowed to become part of the workforce on merit, and are allowed to take an active part in politics, they too can become custodians of culture and history like men.

Carastathis has examined works of many scholars who advocate the importance of the material approach in the eco-critical studies. These scholars emphasise that the feminists should consider the impact of the body, as an agency, on nature and non-human things that are the environment. (Carastathis, 2009, p. 142) In "*Material Feminisms*," she discusses the post-structural feminism's inclusion in the environmental studies. She writes that:

The poststructuralist feminism focuses, instead, on how women interact with and are shaped or constituted as knowing subjects, by knowledge, discourse, and power within the social sphere and how these women themselves exercise power through micro-practices of resistance, technologies of power, and discourse. (Mills et al., 2010 p. 711)

Sarah France undertook research on Olivia Laing's classic work "*To the River*." She reviewed it from the angles of dualism and material ecofeminism. It was published entitled "*Walking out of Dualism: Material Ecofeminism in Olivia Laing's to the River*" (2011). She concluded Olivia Laing's work as "a feminist alternative to the patriarchally-coded concepts of psychogeography and *flânerie*." She further elaborates patriarchally coded concept, "Which, I argue, do not allow for female inclusion." (France, 2011) She says that, Olivia Laing, instead of getting rid of her women nature connectedness, considers herself as a part of nature and walks into it and shares her feeling through her writing. While walking into nature, she comes out of the cultural bindings physically and spiritually. France says, "instead of rejecting her female connection to the body and to nature, Laing fully embraces it, walking into nature and writing her lived experience." (France, 2011, p. 39)

France discusses how Laing manages to escape from the male patriarchal net, finds out places in nature, and manages connections with the natural objects like water to lose her identity and become part of a bigger whole, enhancing her potential and new formation. “More specifically, she goes to the river: the place of womanly, watery rebirth in which identity can be lost and potentially, reformed.” (France, 2011, p. 39)

France opposes embracing the concept of dualism, which, according to her has made women and nature the ‘others. Using the lens of material ecofeminism she adds women’s physical beings, her body with all its needs and potentials, to nature and woman duo. She advocates that material ecofeminism, which embodies nature, women, body, desires and material aspects can be used to counter the dualism that has persistently become a tool to devalue and exploit women and nature. France writes, “Laing’s text engages with material ecofeminism, which seeks to reject patriarchal order, through an exploration of ambiguous states and spaces within nature.” (France, 2011)

Biehl believes that the argument of women and nature connection strengthens the patriarchal mind set and bolsters subjugation of women and nature. She also criticises the metaphoric links between earth and women. Establishment of such connections leads to the notion that women and earth are for reproducing only. This eventually results in the exclusion of women from the material value system, ignores their physical potentials and abilities. (Biehl, 1991, p. 15) She concludes that this will not help them liberate from domination, instead it will reinforce patriarchy. (Biehl, 1991, p. 17-19)

Janet Biehl has written a few books on the environment and gender from different perspectives. “*Their Blood Got Mixed: Revolutionary Rojava and the War on ISIS 2022*,” is the latest. It is about Kurdish war against (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) ISIS. She found that the war had reinforced social solidarity and welded together the multi-ethnic and created

of a gender-liberated society. As one man in Kobane told her, “Our blood got mixed.” This war was well participated by the females.

In “*Ecology or Catastrophe: The Life of Murray Bookchin*” (2015), she has written on the life and struggle of Murray Bookchin, Biehl writes:

Bookchin believed that social and ecological issues were deeply intertwined. Convinced that capitalism pushes businesses to maximise profits and ignores humanist concerns. He argued that eco-crises could be resolved by a new social arrangement. His solution was Communalism, a new form of libertarian-socialism that he developed.

In her Pamphlet, “*The Emergence of Eco-decentralism: Mumford Gutkind Bookchin*” (2012), Janet Biehl maps the evolution of Bookchin’s eco-decentralism from the work of two earlier thinkers, Lewis Mumford and E. A. Gutkind. This research tries to benefit from her idea of material ecofeminism as explained by her.

Biehl, in her book “*Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics,*” has challenged “traditional” idea of women nature connectedness and stresses upon the uniqueness of women connection with the natural world. For instance, she has criticised the religious basis of worship of nature and women as a liberation force. If her point of view is applied to the selected novels, she seems justified as women are exploited in the name of religious rituals in the *Pakistani* and Indian societies. She terms such attributions as a dominant activity:

In a society obsessed with mere appearances, in which all events are essentially pseudo-events (in Daniel Boorstin's memorable phrase), the goddess and the world-organism are just so many more images, marketed, packaged, and stage-managed. (p. 101)

She argues that ecofeminism asks us more than appreciating the beauty of myths and believing in them sympathetically. Biehl criticises the notion of “mother earth” linked to

women and argues that women face more suppression due to this construct (the traditional one). Biehl adds following to strengthen her argument:

These highly desperate body of hazy, poorly formulated notions, metaphors and irrational analogies, invites women to take a step backwards to an era whose consciousness was permeated by myths and by mystification of reality. “It does not bode well for women especially those who regard themselves as more than creatures of their sexuality. (Biehl, 1991, p.6)

In the “*Ecofeminist Echoes in New Materialism*,” Casellote discusses her reason to study ecofeminism and materialism together. Casellote supports the idea of naturalising culture instead of deculturizing nature. The work of the female writers through the ecofeminist lens has the potential to bring change. That is the materialistic strain of ecofeminism. Most of the work on ecofeminism is centred on cultural feminism. Many feminist activists like the idea of connecting women with nature to establish the domination of women and nature by men. A materialist lens will enthuse more power in the environmental and feminist movements to bring change and challenge accepted norms. (Casellote, 2016, p. 73)

Shashi and Sidhwa, highlighting the intersectional oppression of women by religious, traditional, postcolonial and patriarchal forces, project through their female characters that women can make use of their material endowments to fight against their subordinate role. Marx’s concept of women being inferior to men, is challenged through the ecofeminist discourse of the selected novels. Contrary to Marx’s concept, writers of the selected novels have challenged the traditional roles assigned to the males and females. They have portrayed their female characters as valuable, who are supporting their families economically.

One theme that recurs in “*In the Country of Deceit*” is the physical passion and its relevance to life. Shashi Deshpande’s protagonist Devayani is a bold character and she gives

importance to her physical needs. She chooses to fulfil these needs the way she likes to. Sindhu believes that life is also lived through the body. (Deshpande, 2008 p. 41) His protagonist says, “Yes, he took me to bed the first time we were together, but I wanted it too, I was frightened, but my god, I wanted it too.” When her friends inquire if she sleeps with Ashok, she replies that love is about the union of two bodies, how love can be without that. Devyani’s Aunt also mentions this aspect by saying that the body is important and so are the body's demands.

3.15 Colonisation of Women and Nature: Postcolonial Ecofeminism

Postcolonial ecofeminism applies to both the societies of India and Pakistan that are under review via the selected novels. It is necessary to be understood for developing a clear understanding of women liberation and environmental protection in these societies. The Indian and *Pakistani* novelists and researchers have included postcolonial impact on these societies in their works. Secondly, due importance is given to postcolonial ecofeminism literature because it is a vast field for analysis that concerns the women suppression/subjugation and environmental degradation.

Gaard (2018) mentions how rape is used as a means of warfare against women, children, various classes and nations. Hence, women suffered during the separation of the subcontinent as collateral of men’s contestation. “*The Bride*” presents a grim picture of the time of partition between India and Pakistan in this context. Gaard also elaborates that ecofeminism has its theoretical base in a sense of “self” connected with life. This connected self is depicted mainly by women and non-dominant groups based on class, gender, religion and technology. The female protagonists in the selected books, through selected texts, will be analysed from this angle as well. The way they are connected with their surroundings, animals and nature will be a part of the discussion.

The environmental degradation occurred on a massive scale when the project of colonisation by Europe was exercised across the world. William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, in the “*Environment and Empire*” conclude that, “European imperialism was inseparable from the history of global environmental change.” He further commented on the African continent as: “after the Second World War, when colonial states became more assertive regarding development, and as intervention escalated, environmentally linked protests began to feed into mass anti-colonial movements.” (Beinart & Hughes, 2007, p. 16)

It also indicates the link between the environmental degradation and the freedom movements under colonisation. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, in “*The Introduction to Postcolonial Eco-Criticism-Literature, Animals, Environment,*” observe that, “continuous imperialist’s modes of social and environmental dominance” are challenging, and the indigenous minds are aware of their rich ecology in all spheres of life. (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010, p. 2) The colonial subjugation was multidimensional and multifaceted; it encompassed all kinds of domination, human as well as social and cultural. Environmental consciousness and attempts to counter degradation require every individual to take the responsibility without any discrimination of gender, race, sex or class. No organisation, country or group of people can bring affective change unless the efforts is joined and supported by the society.

In the post colonisation context, partition of the Subcontinent is full of stories of human miseries and destruction of nature. Sidhwa has covered it effectively in “*The Bride.*” One can conclude that during such an ordeal, women and children cannot migrate safely, travel easily for different reasons; primarily being physically fragile, vulnerable to bodily harm and having dependency on men. The debate on the issue is strengthened further because of the criticism on ecologists ignoring impacts of colonisation on the environment. It is, therefore, essential not to overlook colonialisation in these discussions.

Huggan and Tiffen (2015, p. 11), have explained multi-layered dominations engendered as fall outs of colonisation based on, cultural and biological factors. They challenged the concept that the ecological issues of the colonised and colonisers can be handled employing uniform approaches. In their work, “*Postcolonial Eco-criticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*”, Huggan and Tiffen discuss various categories of postcolonial eco-criticism, including masculine domination misusing culture as an instrument. This phenomenon has led to supporting of the imperialists rule by the colonised men. The colonisation had devastating bio-political impacts as well because the colonial masters used advanced technologies for the extraction of raw materials. The other negative legacies of colonisation could include; racism, speciesism and continued domination of the former colonies in multiple manners by former masters turning these countries into quasi-states. Some other impacts include the destruction of nature, subjugation of queers and women, and suppression based on race and nationality. These aspects fall under the study and application of ecofeminism.

3.16 Research Approach

This thesis will resort to the textual analysis of selected novels; “*The Dark Holds No Terrors*” and “*The Bride*” written by Bapsi Sidhwa and Shashi Deshpande. It will, primarily be a qualitative analysis, using primary data from the text of these books pitched against the theoretical assumptions of eco-criticism, intersectionality, various types of ecofeminism; especially the cultural and material ecofeminism. Effort would be made to find answers to the research questions that have been designed to accomplish the objectives of this research. Emphasis would be laid on uncovering women subordination, suppression, inequality, nature and women exploitation in the depicted patriarchal societies to understand the aspect that how the female protagonists of these novels discover and use their potential to liberate themselves. Conceptual understanding of dualism that hinges upon man-culture, women-

nature equations will be applied to understand that how the devalued women-nature connectedness can be reversed to help in the emancipation of women. Further, how the emancipated women are best suited to redress issues of environmental degradation and exploitation of all species by men. The spiritual ecofeminism, earth ecofeminism and post-colonial ecofeminism shall be kept in the back drop of this research too.

A novel is a vast panorama of social life, in which various characters express their feelings, emotions, and comment about other characters. Qualitative approach suits the most for the analyses of the lives of people, their experiences, emotions, feelings, social movements, cultural phenomenon and interaction between the people of various shades and nations. Selected texts of, “*The Dark Holds No Terror*” from Shashi Deshpande and “*The Bride*” from Bapsi Sidhwa and a long list of the *Pakistani* and Indian female writers would be analysed. Applying the lens of ecofeminism, the research will examine how the female characters of both writers respond to various situations? What potentials they have? What type of suppression women experiences due to cultural and religious constructs? More importantly, how women’s potential and their connectedness with the nature can help liberate women and protect ecology? The texts, selected for analyses, reveal numerous intricate socio-economic, cultural and religious complexities that engender as well as strengthen female oppression in the patriarchal societies.

Most interesting discovery, as an outcome of this research would be, women characters who could be taken as role models as well as agents of change to defy women’s mistreatment and subordination. The protagonists of both the writers empower themselves materially and spiritually in their individual and unique ways to win themselves independence. To achieve the research objectives and to ensure uniformity in the analyses of the selected texts of both the novels, the analyses will be pitched against six elements to include; Misuse of the Institution of Marriage, Colonisation of Women and Nature,

Patriarchal Society, Exploitation of Women Based on Religion, Women's Link with the Nature (Spirituality), and Women's Potential to Defy the Constructed Roles.

3.17 Methodology for Research

The extensive, systematic and theme specific literature has been reviewed to conduct this study. Hussey opines that "Literary research is a systematic and methodical process of inquiry and investigation, and it increases knowledge." (Hussey, 2000, p. 2) Following this, a variety of tools have been used. It is a qualitative content analyses of the specific texts from selected novels to achieve the objectives of the study. The research also adopts a textual analyses of the selected texts with the aim to explore in-depth meanings, and understand symbols and connections between the texts. It focuses on two main aspects: the historical background of the selected texts and their linkages to the portrayed culture in the back drop of our theoretical concept. The text of the novels is considered as a primary source, while the literature review is taken as a secondary source.

The research uses textual analysis as an important tool, especially the new criticism approach by Ronald Barthes. He suggests a close relationship between writer, reader and the text. Different critics look into this relationship from varying perspectives. Roland Barthes, in his famous essay, "*The Death of the Author*" (Barthes, 2001p. 145), that examines the author-text analysis, opines that while analysing a text the reader should not analyse it from author's point of view, rather he should interpret it from his own standpoint. He places the author at the far end of a stage and considers him not more than a historical figure. The author expresses his ideas and feelings in the form of a text. This text is to be read and interpreted as an organic whole. Authors' sentiments and purpose of writing the text are not to be regarded necessarily. Barthes places the author and his text into two different time zones; one that existed when author wrote and the other when a reader reads it. He further argues that detaching the author and his feelings from a text, unwraps multiple dimensions.

Contrarily reading a text with its author at the back of mind restricts interpretation. When we detach the author from a text written by him, his feelings, passions, impressions, and emotions exist no more, except in words or dialogues of the different characters. While keeping this fact in consideration that the reader exists at present in direct relation to the text; “without history, biography and psychology,” (Barthes, 2001, p. 146) unity of the text, according to Barthes, lies in “the destiny, and not in origin,” (2001, p. 145). Therefore, Roland Barthes new criticism approach can be termed as quite unique and different from the classical approach.

This research has adopted a mix of both strategies of textual analysis i.e., classical and Roland Barthes’ concept of new criticism. However, it is more inclined towards contemporary approach, where a reader can exercise lots of liberty in interpreting and analysing a text. The methodology has helped in interpreting the selected texts to answer the research questions and objectives, while analysing “*The Bride*” and “*The Dark Holds No Terrors*” in the back drop of selected elements.

Through the excerpts of these books the complexity of relationships between South-Asian women and their environment, culture and man, has been amply established. This study also highlights as to how women in the societies under study are equated to land: they are to reproduce and used or bartered for material gains. Women are, in the most cases viewed with reference to their material conditions and social statuses rather than living beings with feelings in want of care, respect and compassion.

Selected texts from “*The Dark Holds No Terrors*” and “*The Bride*,” will be examined using this technique, in the back drop of eleven elements that have been selected to explore the aspects related to the suppression of women, their potential to liberate themselves from the oppression using the theoretical lens of ecofeminism. These elements are Use of Religion and Mythology to Exploit Women, Patriarchal society: an Institution of Domination, Women

Link with Nature (Spirituality), Colonisation of Nature and Women, Women Potential to Defy the Tools of Subjugation and the Misuse of the Institution of Marriage.

CHAPTER 4: AN ECOFEMINIST STUDY OF SHASHI DESHPANDE'S "*THE DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS*"

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on Shashi Deshpande's novel "*The Dark Holds No Terrors.*" Applying the lens of material ecofeminism, six main elements like Misuse of the Institution of Marriage, Colonisation of Women and Nature, Patriarchal Society, Exploitation of Women Based on Religion, Women's Link with Nature (Spirituality) and Women's Potential to Defy Constructed Roles will be analysed through selected texts.

Shashi Deshpande is known for her art of characterisation. Her characters are carved and embedded in the Indian patriarchal society. She is believed to be a feminist novelist who highlights the traumas of middle-class women in the Indian culture. Her female characters are often passionate and possess the potential to defy the constructed codes of a patriarchal society. "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" is one of her most celebrated novels in which she criticises the patriarchal societal constructs arrayed as exploitative tools to subjugate women. She has highlighted how patriarchy empowers the societal institutions of domination by victimising men and women. However, she has not written on the patriarchy only, as patriarchy is not the only cause of suppression and the subjugation of women. Deshpande has highlighted certain other elements that enable men to dominate, including economic inequalities, mythical stories written to induce women subordination and abuse of religious beliefs.

In this novel Sarita, the protagonist of the novel, is the narrator of her story. She is a well-established doctor by profession. She visits her parental home after a long gap. When she reaches there, she recollects and relives her past. She reflects on her mother's attitude, who is most of the time angry with Sarita. Despite being a woman, her mother, Kamla, is a true embodiment and adherent of patriarchy as she advocates, supports and practices it. She

wants her daughter Sarita to learn and respect this societal norm. Her father is projected as a marginalised member of the family who is under undue pressure of his wife. He is a withdrawn figure who seldom appears to be interfering in matters regarding the protagonist. However, after her mother's death, he regains his space as a responsible head of the family. He begins to assert himself and help her. Sarita says that he does not only change in appearance, but becomes "another man altogether." (p.14) He starts to look after himself and the household well. "Who looks after you, Baba?" Sarita questions her out of surprise, and he replies peacefully. It clarifies, "no one Madhav and I. But we managed very well." (p. 18)

In this novel, Sarita also narrates about flirting with her teacher Boozie who is a gay. She describes her love affair with Manohar, a fellow student, and her marriage with Manohar that she did against her mother's wishes and advice. Manohar later becomes indignant when she grows in her stature and becomes economically independent. Deshpande introduces many other minor characters in the novel to complement the main themes and personalities of the story. Deshpande uses the "stream of consciousness technique" to elaborate on different incidents linked with her protagonist's life and criticise all constructs and reasons prevailing in the Indian society to subjugate and exclude women. According to the Britannica definition:

Stream of consciousness is a narrative technique in non-dramatic fiction intended to render the flow of myriad impressions—visual, auditory, physical, associative, and subliminal—that impinge on the consciousness of an individual and form part of his awareness along with the trend of his rational thoughts. (Britannica, n.d.)

William James followed by a few other novelists, adopted this technique in the 20th century, to present the lives, behaviour and rationality of thoughts of his characters. The novel opens with Sarita standing at the door of her parent's home and waiting for someone to open. She has returned home after fifteen years. While standing at the door, she recollects the characters of the "Krishna-Sudama" mythological story. In that story, Sudama is a poorer

friend of Krishna. He had come to seek financial help from Krishna, who has become a king. Sarita identifies herself with Sudama, who was waiting at the door of the Palace and king and queen had run to welcome Sudama. However, she discards her thought of creating similarity of her with Sudama instantly imagining herself with a different thinking that “She was certainly no Sudama in rags, bare feet and humility.” (p.11)

The novel’s female protagonist, Sarita, also reflects that she is not returning after sacrifices like Sudama. She reflects that her life is opposite to the mythological character Sudama, because she prefers material life and has achieved a higher status in the society through her profession. She returns to reality when her father opens the door for her. Soon it is revealed that Madhav, a Brahman, son of a priest, is also living with her father in the same house. Through her narration, it is gradually revealed that her mother had died of cancer. However, it is not to sympathise with her mother’s death that Sarita has come to her parental home. Instead, she has come to her father to escape from her husband, who has become a sadist. She comes to her parent’s home “to sleep the night peacefully through” and “to wake up without pain.” (p. 25) She does not visit her parent’s home to “comfort her father.” It is “for herself.” (p. 41) Living in that old house, she recollects her life story from the time when her brother Dhruva was born. She can even remember the fragrances of flowers of that day’s celebrations and joy, “I can remember even now the smell of flowers.” (p.169)

According to Sarita, her mother ridicules and discourages her saying that she is not good looking and has a darker complexion. She recalls expressions of her mother’s eyes conveying that she will “never be good looking.” (p. 60) Like any woman or man, Sarita wishes to be admired, loved and valued. However, due to her mother’s cynicism, she apprehends rejection and is scared of social fallouts for that rejection. Sarita falls in love with the prominent and brilliant student of the college, Manohar, who is a son of a poor man. He is

a non- Brahman, which categorises him as a person from the lower cast. Her decision to marry him is an act as the last nail in the coffin of her and her mother's relationship.

Her marriage with Manohar, that had a romantic beginning, becomes irksome when she finds her husband content with the limited resources and the simple life they lead. Consequently, she works very hard and is determined to become a specialist for two reasons. The first reason seems to be her effort to prove her mother wrong by becoming successful. The second reason is her ambitious nature and desire to have a lavish lifestyle. In addition to that, Deshpande highlights that in the Indian society, not only women suffer; men suffer too. The novel starts with Sarita's entering her parental house and ends with her decision to go back to her husband, Manohar. She is a different Sarita at the end of the novel, she goes back with the realisation that she is something more than a doctor, a daughter, a wife and a mother as well. In the context of material ecofeminism, and women embodiment, Sarita is depicted as an emboldened women ultimately. She realises that it is in her interest that she must fight out all the difficulties and build upon her inner strength to become stronger to surmount all the challenges.

4.2 Patriarchal Society in "The Dark Holds No Terrors"- Twin Domination

Patriarchy, is an embodiment of twin domination. It strengthens women and nature's subjugation, by the men and culture duo. A patriarchal society empowers men in the political, social, and cultural domains as unchallenged decision-makers. Men are considered to be the custodians, and women as their subordinates. Sturgeon (1997, p. 263-264) believes that patriarchy perceives women and nature on the same plane: hence the environmental issues need a feminist approach. Birkeland (1993, p 57) believes that the dualistic concept of patriarchy protects a culture of dominance, and a power-based authority. Changing this patriarchal approach in the society is central to the solution of the issue. Patriarchy suppresses the individuality of the males as well as the females.

Huggan and Tiffen (2015, p. 11) view patriarchy as imperialism, therefore, they stress upon highlighting impacts of colonisation on women, the society and the environment. Biehl (1999, p.149) highlights the caring traits of both males and females. In this novel, males are depicted to restrain themselves from using their intrinsic caring qualities owing to peer pressure. Another angle to view this phenomenon is that patriarchy is not only nurtured and enforced by men, women also play a role in strengthening it. They willingly support and guard the male dominance in a patriarchal society. Plumwood elucidates that the cultural constructs associate women with nature, and these constructs have attributed the status of “others” to women and nature. Therefore, the men dominate them. Women are not included in any human model or come under the definition of humanity. The main focus of any feminist, according to Plumwood, should be to challenge this construct.

The characters portrayed by Deshpande in *“The Dark Holds No Terrors”* reveal the victimisation of both men and women by the patriarchal norms that prevail in the Indian society. Sons are preferred and are more privileged than daughters. The protagonist of the novel, Sarita, lives through a terrible experience. Her brother Dhruva is loved and cared by her parents more than her. Sarita’s mother never belittles him. However, Sarita is ridiculed most of the time: Her mother coaxes her to behave in a manner women of a patriarchal society “should.” Her mother tells her to hide her body silhouette, as if it was something to be ashamed of:

You’re growing up. And there was something unpleasant in the way she looked at me so that I longed to run away, to hide whatever part of me she was staring at. You should be careful now about how you behave. Don’t come out in your petticoat like that, not even when it’s only your father who’s around. (p. 62) Consequently, Sarita is annoyed to the extent that she starts hating herself for being a woman. Her mother tells her that her body lines should never be visible. Consequently, every part of her body, that portrays her as a beautiful girl,

becomes a source of embarrassment. Sarita expresses with dejection, “If you are a woman, I don’t want to be one.” (Deshpande, 1980, p. 61) Sarita rejects the constructed societal code her mother tries to implement on her in a very early age. However, later when she grows up, she takes pride in her body, its curves and its beauty.

Sarita is constantly annoyed by her mother’s strict attitude and mentions that “she cursed” her “as no mother should.” (p. 22) The novel also reveals the inner fears of a growing teenage girl who enters puberty and wishes to never have menstrual bleeding again after her first experience. She had developed some awareness of the phenomenon of mensuration cycle by watching other girls and hearing from them, even before she experienced it herself. Yet, she was not fully ready for it mentally, “I knew it was something that happened to all girls. But not to me! It was like death.” (p. 61) Perhaps she meant that the way all humans keep seeing the deaths of others, and never think of their own death that comes unannounced suddenly.

Later, she realises that it is a natural and a normal phenomenon that happens to every grown-up girl and is purely a biological factor. However, she hated this biological normalcy because of ridiculing treatment by her mother. During her menstrual cycle Sarita was not allowed to enter the kitchen or touch anything in the kitchen. She was served food in the separate bowls by her mother in the corner of the room. She mentions that it was not the hard “straw mat” where she had to sleep, neither it was the feeling of being a “pariah,” but it was something to become like her mother, which made her hate this process. Her mother said, “you are a woman now.” (p. 61)

Concerns and fears of the mother of a growing girl in that society can also be observed when Sarita’s mother rebukes her different and admonishes her for not covering herself. She tells her not to go out in the sun as she is scared that her daughter will not get a good match if her complexion gets darker. “Don’t go out in the sun, and you will get even

darker.” “Who cares? “We have to care if you don’t.” “We have to get you married.” “And Dhruva?” “He is different; he is a b” (p. 43)

She recollects the sad day and the episode of accidental death of her brother Dhruva. The day when her mother was having her usual afternoon nap, she slipped out surreptitiously to go to the mango garden in their neighbourhood to play with friends, pluck raw mangoes, spend time in those grassy fields, and find serenity in that natural atmosphere. Dhruva also followed her. Despite her efforts to send him back home, Dhruva kept following her. They played in the mango garden, and when she decided to return home, Dhruva insisted on not going back with her because he wanted to make a castle with mud. She left the place thinking that he would follow her, but he never came back. Instead, he drowned in a pond of water constructed by the labourers. His dead body was found in that pond. Sarita’s mother screamed in agony and anger, “Why didn’t you die? Why are you alive and he is dead?” (p.32) In the Hindu religion, the sons are supposed to light the pyre of their dead parents, so when Sarita gets the news about her mother’s death, the first thing that comes to her mind is: “who would lit the pyre? ...She had no son to do that for her.” (p. 18)

Through various characters and events, Deshpande depicts that fathers maintain a distance from their daughters. Commenting about her father’s indifference towards herself, Sarita says, “he left it all to her,” (p. 29) meaning to her mother. Her storytelling gives reader an insight into how her father takes Dhruva for outings on his bicycle, but she can never enjoy similar joyful ride. It is only Dhruva who can sit and comfortably talk with their father, but she cannot. Readers can understand and relate all these aspects to characters, their roles and acts, putting them in different situations and drawing appropriate inferences.

It can be noticed in Sarita’s case that women are not free in the decision making for their marriages. Her mother warns her clearly to bear the consequences of her marriage, out of caste, by herself, if anything terrible happens, “Don’t come crying to us then.” (p. 67) She

becomes a victim of patriarchal domination- the men culture confluence - to suppress women from their right to live happily, taking decisions for the important events of their lives, like marriage. Her marriage, out of her caste engenders severe consequences. She criticises the caste system, which subjugates one community, enabling the other to dominate it. Angrily she remarks that she was “never a Brahmin,” and she “hates all of it.” (p. 28) She is ousted from the family for marrying a person from the lower caste. Consequently, she becomes an outcast. Her teacher Kulkarni conveys her mother’s remarks to her, “What daughter? ...I have no daughter,” (p. 109) implying that Sarita no longer belonged to her and the family. The author also portrays another situation related to girls’ marriages in the depicted society. Madhav, the Brahmin boy living with Sarita’s father tells her that his father will select “a bridegroom for her, but he will never bother to consult her.” (p. 123)

In the described society of 1980s in the novel, the degree of male domination was more complicated and frustrating. Author writes that Madhav’s brother, Satish, despite being a grown-up male member of the family, is not allowed to take up a profession of his choice. Instead, Madhav’s father would choose a profession for him. In this situation his mother feels under tremendous emotional stress and feels helpless due to this conflict between her husband and son. Neither can she convince her son to obey his father, and bow before him for his choice of profession, nor is her husband ready to listen to her or any of his children’s dissenting views. She and Madhav find themselves helpless. Madhav is, therefore, worried about his mother.

When Satish, Madhav’s brother, fails to convince his father, he runs away from home and goes to Bombay for adopting a career of his own choice. He informs his mother in advance about his plans to leave the house, in case his father does not agree with his choice. When he runs away, his father punishes his mother for not letting him know about Satish’s plans without realising that no one can dare speak in front of him or differ with him.

Madhav's mother is punished by not eating food cooked by his mother. "And now he is punishing her in his way, He doesn't eat anything she cooks." (p. 208) Normally, the Indian and the *Pakistani* women consider it as an insult if their prepared meals are not taken by the men of the house. So, men and women all are dominated by the cultural constructs of the described patriarchal society.

Madhav elucidates how her sister is fed up with the various chores she has to perform including the duties that are to be performed only by women. These include fetching water from well, cooking food and taking care of the children at home. Interestingly, when Sarita comes to her parental home after her mother's death, she finds her father very different; a man who was "master of the house" and use to order only, is now managing the whole household. He takes care of Sarita as well. He undertakes the household works without any inhibitions being a man belonging to a patriarchal society. Sarita's father serves her tea, cooks food and washes the dishes too. He has become self-reliant, and needs no one to help him. When her mother was alive, she could never imagine her father behaving in this manner. He never objected to anything or never tried to forbid her mother from being so harsh with Sarita. Sarita reflects that her father "never took any interest" in her school or college. (p. 29)

Sarita's father is depicted as a totally transformed man after her mother's death. His attitude induces and inspires her to share her the most personal problems with him, which she could not discuss with anyone else or even with her female friends. This aspect of her father's personality and her conduct of taking care of the house, like the women, supports a unique aspect of ecofeminism as advanced by Biehl. She opposes the idea of caring being associated to women only. She is of the view that caring is about the people. It is not linked to gender or societal hierarchy. The caring, according to her, simply rests on the tenuous feelings and desire or expectation that the individuals are motivated to "care" for others. It's not about

being a woman or man, but being a human. It is also important to understand that the individuals may quickly start caring or stop caring. (Biehl, 1999, p. 149)

Although Sarita's mother uses her father as a shield to discipline and control the house, yet she dominates him so much that he prefers keeping quiet for the fear of creating an unpleasant atmosphere in the house. He keeps quiet even when she objects to Sarita's admission to a medical college saying, "But she is a girl," (p. 143) meaning by that they do not need to spend so much on a girl's higher education. During these reflective moments, Sarita recollects an unfortunate tale of a woman that was narrated by a neighbourhood woman to her mother. It is about "The woman who was tied to a peg in cattle shed for ten years, and was fed like dogs and ultimately died." Saru's mother comments, "But how do we know what she had done to be treated that way? Maybe she deserved what she got?" (p. 85) Thereby, employing that it was okay, if a woman was treated like an animal for some mistake of her.

Madhav's character also helps in highlighting the patriarchal values as well as ecofeminist concepts of care and individuality. He says that in the families like his, even sons (men) have to obey and follow whatever their fathers decide for them. He tells Sarita as to how his father's opinion dominates every happening in their house, and no one dares contradict him. His mother, who is the last person to spend some money on herself, is expected to cook and feed the family and serve them all. Sarita recalls the mythical story of a woman she learnt in school. The woman did not disturb her husband's sleep even when their child was about to be burnt by the fire. It was depicted that the fire went cold automatically as a reward for this woman's extreme act of respect and obedience for her husband. Most probably, someone might have written this story to persuade women to be subservient to men, as Sarita suggests "telling all women for all times...your duty to 'ME' comes first. And women fools believed him." (p. 208)

Manohar (Manu), the beloved husband of Sarita, who was a shining star of his college, has been raised in the same society. He is expected to be the head of the family and be responsible for their bread and butter. Sarita and Manu's life had a humble beginning. Material ecofeminism can be witnessed in Sarita's struggle for empowerment through economic independence, that helps her in the social mobilisation and become resilient. During their initial days, they could only afford the basic necessities of the life. However, their relationship is strong, and their love bond is intact until Sarita becomes a successful doctor and starts earning more than her husband. She recalls that they lived in a small dingy place. After knowing about her being a doctor, the residents of that building started consulting her for their ailments.

Gradually, multiple patients start coming to their small residence to consult Sarita. Manohar, who initially used to open the house door for every visitor, ultimately asks Sarita with "An affected indifference" to open the door herself. (p. 40) He says that he is "sick" of that place, and they should "get out" of the area soon. (p. 40) Manohar supports her decision to do specialisation. To establish her clinic, she seeks financial help from a friend named Boozie. However, when her husband comes to know that Boozie is providing finances for her clinic, his pride is hurt. He feels insulted and resultantly he stops to indulge with her in the bed.

Deshpande writes about another such incident. A friend of Manohar is a press reporter. Her comments ruin their trip to Ooty, a serene tourist spot. The reporter who visits to interview Sarita, asks Manohar a very pointed question, "How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but the bread as well?" (p. 33) This question is actually inspired by the fact that Sarita has started earning more than her husband. She is a well-known doctor whereas he is an underpaid teacher. When people crack jokes on these aspects, he laughs with them, but actually his ego is hurt, due to this he becomes a sadist and a rapist at night. He

seems unaware of this psychological disorder, or poses to be so. He enquires from Sarita about the bruises on her body in the daytime, which are actually caused by his aggressive behaviour in the bed with her during nights.

Dhruva, an innocent soul, is also under multiple pressures of patriarchal society's expectations from a man. He is made to sleep alone at night to become a courageous man when he grows up. Sarita remembers how her mother used to make her brother sleep alone forcefully. Dhruva, scared of darkness, always comes to Sarita during nights. He addresses her as Saru Tai, as her mother was called Kamala Tai. Sarita sarcastically thinks of her mother and terms her "heroic mother," as she had been trying to prepare his son as brave as *Shivaji* by making him sleep alone in a dark room. She however thinks otherwise, "that magnificent dream had ended in a slimy pond scarcely five feet deep." (p. 82)

Boozie, who is Sarita's teacher, is portrayed as a homosexual. He flirts with women to hide this side of his personality. It is the pressure of the expected role of men in the society that despite having a financially solid background, he has to hide his homosexuality. Sarita finds him harmless. He just relishes to show off his manhood through Sarita by hugging her, putting his hands on her shoulders, having dinner with her. For the creation of this false image, he spends a considerable amount of money on Sarita.

In the described society, men are expected to have sexual relationships with women only, not with men. They are to be masters, financiers and decision-makers for their wives, kids, and girlfriends. That is the reason Boozie hides his homosexuality in this shroud of flirt with Sarita. Her father never dared to stop her mother when she used to ridicule, scold or beat Saru. He does not interfere in her mother's handling of the home and the kids. He has a nominal status of the "master of the house." No one, other than her mother was allowed into the room termed as "His" room. Saru reflects how her mother successfully maintained the secrecy of the husband-and-wife relationship for years.

Her father is depicted as a simple character. He is never seen complaining of anything. Saru feels his indifferent attitude towards her whenever her mother mistreats her. But now she finds her father a confident man, a supportive and cooperative father. He listens to her patiently and converses on various issues with her. He reassures her of her potential and encourages her to lead an independent life. When Saru asks him not to let Manohar in the house if he comes to take her back home, he agrees and does not impose any decision on Saru. Probably at his age, he has become unconcerned to his societal image as a patriarchal man.

Hence, Gaard's perspective regarding the difference in understanding and application of ecofeminism in the dissimilar cultures can be examined well in the discussed Indian society. Both men and women are the victims of social injustice, and both can play a role in protecting the ecology. Patriarchy discourages economic and social justice. "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" amply manifests social and economic injustice in the illustrated setting.

Sarita's husband, brother, her teacher Boozie and Madhav, despite being men are shown as the victims of patriarchy. Sarita's father has transformed, affirming the possibility that men can be affectionate and sensitive as well. He, who never talked to her or displayed any empathy for her, turns out to be the most confidant friend. Madhav, who is not allowed to plant flowers in his own home is allowed to do so in Sarita's father's house. The house, described after the demise of Sarita's mother, in which Sarita's father, Madhav, and she live. It is now free of master and slave relationship. It is therefore, considered as an attempt from Deshpande to suggest a possible solution to the social injustice.

4.3 Misuse of the Institution of Marriage

According to the oxford dictionary, social institution is a term used "loosely to refer to the established ways of behaving or, more formally, major social systems or structures that organise the primary social practices, roles, and relationships within a culture." Bethmann &

Kvasnicka, M. (2011, p. 1006) maintain that, marriage as a social institution, is historically linked with fertility. David Blankenhorn (2007, p. 12) terms marriage as a universal social institution continuously evolving that does not have a single definition because it differs from one culture to the other. This section focuses on the misuse of the institution of marriage in the Indian patriarchal society, including the expected roles of men, women, and their in-laws.

In total, eight married lives have been covered in this novel. By analysing women's roles, their treatment by their husbands and in-laws, their economic situation and exclusion in the decision making and their stressful household duties and their sacrifices, it can be concluded that the society misuses the institution of marriage to control and suppress women. The married women are expected to practice unquestioned obedience to the men. They are expected to be lesser in height than their husbands, less educated, not to be employed or earn lesser than their men and eat after all the family members have eaten. Women have no role in the decision making, yet could be blamed for something that goes wrong.

The protagonist of the novel Sarita's parents is the first couple. Her mother is a typical Indian woman who adheres to the societal norms of being a good wife. She loves and cares for her son more than her daughter. She is too much adapted to the social constructs in the Indian patriarchal society. She upholds these and, through intense pressure on her kids, makes them follow these codes too. Kamala is however, very harsh with Sarita. She scolds her for returning home late from her afternoon walks and plating with her friends. She objects to her education. She criticises her for concluding a marriage of her own choice. She goes to the extent of giving up the mother-daughter relationship due to Sarita's out of caste marriage. The other side of the picture is bleak too. Sarita remembers how busy, day and night in the household, her mother was. She asks Sarita to help her in this because the society expects women to do all the household chores, and men are the masters of the house.

Sarita remembers her mother's cooking, washing and managing household and taking care of her kids. She remembers how irritating it was for her to handle her children with the heavy household commitments. Sarita's mother never eats food with her husband or children. After her death, a woman in the neighbourhood tells Sarita that she used to "eat as less as a sparrow" adding she says, "The amount she ate...I tell you; the sparrow would have eaten more...Your father never noticed because she never ate with him." (p. 108) However, she never complained about anything. The room shared by the two married partners is labelled to be her father's, not theirs' or hers. Though it had been 'their' room, "but it had always seemed only his." (p. 15)

After her mother's death, an old friend of her mother visits Sarita to consult her for some health issue. The lady commends Sarita's mother for her courage and patience to endure everything. She praises her mother for sacrificing her needs, her meals, and even her health. The woman extends her tribute to Kamla, saying how she suffered until she died. She was taken to a hospital in Bombay at the last stage of her disease, and she died before the start of her treatment. The woman includes this aspect also in her sacrifices that she never told her husband of her ailment. Many women come to meet and consult Sarita when they know that a "lady doctor" was there in their neighbourhood. Women share their health issues with her, which were ignored for years. Saru terms them idiotic heroines who ruin themselves and think they are committing bravery.

Then the relationship of Madhav's parents is discussed as another couple. Madhav and Sarita talk, see and discuss about the *Saris* (a dress of South Asian women), her mother had worn. Saru offers Madhav that he can take all of those *Saris* for his mother. He is reluctant but decides to accept the offer as her mother is the least priority at home. She seldom spends money for her personal shopping. (p. 58)

Sarita, the protagonist, dares to decide for a marriage of her choice. She prefers the “right man,” a man of her choice for herself. Due to this, she suffers for almost whole of her life as the boy is from a different caste. She feels disinherited and disowned. From her marriage till death, her mother never met or talked to her. Her husband is initially a loving partner, but her life and relationship are ruined when she becomes the major earner of the house. Her becoming the main earner of the family is against the prevalent norms, expected roles of men and women in a typical married life. Her mother’s words haunt her “never come back and tell us,” and she is conscious of keeping her relation intact. (p. 67) Even after spending long hours in her duty, she is expected to make her husband happy and display a pleasant demeanour when she reaches home. Her monologue expresses her this dilemma. When she returns late from the hospital, she is apprehensive about Manohar’s mood. “Pretend there’s nothing wrong. Pretend this is normal. Talk to him, keep talking,” (p. 77) she tells herself. After futile efforts to please Manu, she urges him to tell, if she could know the right way to do it. (p. 78)

With hard work and perseverance, she gains an upper-class status and can fulfil all material needs she wants to. Despite being a renowned doctor, she is not happy as her husband has become a sadist because of her social mobilisation to higher rung of society and professional status. Consequently, she feels bitter about her luxurious life, this paradise of matching curtains and handloom bedspreads, but this life is ultimately savagery and submission. (p. 26) She does not have any solution to the problem as her parents have already usurped her of her rights because she decides to marry a non-Brahman boy. (p. 28)

Throughout the novel Sarita is presented as firmly committed to making her married life work. For example, if she gets back late from work, she forces herself to talk politely to Manohar. In her narration, she even abuses a reporter who in her interview says that she not only ‘earns bread but butter’ as well for the house. As a result of which her husband had felt

bad and inferior. One of the unique themes which Deshpande repeatedly projects in the novel is that in a marriage the relationship is not equal for both sides. It is tilted unfairly towards men, making them superior. “Ah! There it is! “He”! There is always time to do all the things he wants to do.” (p. 117)

Despite becoming reactionary, Manohar is enjoying the status which has come to him because of his wife. Initially, he has no problem when she takes money from Boozie but starts feeling hurt after the reporter’s incidence. They return from the market with a tensed quietness. The night, however, turns out to be painful for Sarita. Manu becomes a sadist and harsh in the bed, and the night ends with bruises on Saru’s body. Sarita mentions about his puzzled but “relieved” face when she tells him about not taking any loan because Boozie is giving it all. (p.86) He never asks about the reason for Boozie being so kind to her. In patriarchal societies, the husbands are like owners of women bodies and souls. They go to any extreme in that relationship. Unwilling or forceful sex with a wife is not considered a rape, the way it is seen in the western societies. Despite being a successful doctor, a strong and bold woman to take a stand for her decisions, Sarita cannot express her pain to anyone, which she is suffering at the hands of her husband. Her husband is cruel with her in the bed to such an extent that she is scared of nights. But social pressure of a marriage inhibits her from complaining about her husband’s behaviour to anyone. She just talks to herself and cannot share these thoughts with anyone. Till Sarita’s father converse with her as follows, she finds herself helpless:

“Can I divorce my husband?

“Any reason?”

“He is cruel”.

“How? Will you be specific? Please give details.” (p.96)

It is only after sharing her grief with her father that she feels relieved and inspired. It is an attempt from Deshpande to challenge the self-entitled patriarchal roles. Sarita's mother is presented as a symbol and custodian of patriarchy. Her father, despite being a man of the patriarchal society, represents someone who helps her liberate from the trauma which she is suffering through. Her father asks her to talk to her husband about these problems. This suggestion probably would have never come from her mother. Based on these examples, it is argued that in the defined society, men and women both are the victims of the patriarchal values, and women sometimes contribute, advertently or in-advertently, in strengthening the forces of domination. Another marriage, anonymous tale of a woman badly mistreated like animals by in-laws has been discussed too.

Marriage is a sacred bond as long as it is linked with the religious injunctions and obligations, but this institution is exploited to subjugate women in the patriarchal societies, as explained in this novel. One infers from the study of these cases that marriage is considered a license for husbands and the in-laws to treat women in any way they wish to. It is already mentioned that Saru's mother is presented as a symbol of patriarchy. Her every comment or gesture is depicted by Shashi Deshpande in detail to explain the forces of suppression and constructs of domination of women by men supported by women even.

"The Dark Holds No Terrors" displays a painful and unforgiving attitude of a painted Indian society towards women and their exploitation through the institution of marriage. Sarita narrates another tale. It is about a woman who had committed suicide because of her in-law's mistreatment. She jumped into a well and died. Saru also recollects that people had been trying to dissuade that woman from jumping into the well. She was always sent back home by the people when she made suicide attempts during day time. Ultimately, she decides to come at night and silently jump into the well to kill herself.

Vidya, an actress, is presented in the novel to show another dimension of discrimination and exploitation. She is an artist who criticises Shakespeare's works for depicting males as dominating species and females as subjugated and weak. "Oh Shakespeare... his is a typical man's view of life the man at the centre, the woman always on the periphery." (p. 157) After her marriage, she is not permitted to perform in stage dramas or the film industry by her husband and in-laws.

Samita, an old college friend of Sarita visits her. Samita was one of the big fans of Manohar during their college days. He was a student leader then. Now, she is a married woman who needs permission from her husband to leave the home, even for visiting her college days friend Nalu. Nalu assumes that that anything the men want to do is done well in time. However, there is no priority accorded to a wife's plans. Samita presents a vivid picture of married women in the depicted Indian society. Her husband changed even her name at the time of their marriage, something which was her primary identity, a manifestation of men and culture's negative partnership. Her whole conversation revolves around her husband, his likes and dislikes. The three friends Nalu, Sarita and Samita, represent three women of varying statuses. Nalu never married, and she is a professional woman who proffered continuing her job against a controlled married life. Whereas, Samita has completely submitted to her husband. She has lost her identity and her freedom. The saddest part of her story is her economic dependence on her husband. Samita expresses her unhappiness of being dependant on her husband. "You don't know how lucky you are not to have to ask anyone for money if you knew my problems..." (p. 118) She requests Sarita to lend her some money to buy a gift for her sister-in-law.

Biehl shows great concern about the material needs of women in her ecofeminist debate. Deshpande compares an economically empowered woman like Sarita and a woman dependent upon her husband like Samita. Biehl stresses the need for women empowerment

by making use of their potentials instead of being exploited like the reproductive machines similar to the exploitation of earth by men. This traditional link of the exploitation of women and nature is traced by many, as discussed throughout this thesis. For example, Halkes (1991, p. 2) believes that men in a patriarchal society dominate nature and women. They are also considered the custodian of culture. Plumwood thinks that the women-nature dualism situates everything related to culture is 'male', 'humane' and 'civilised' while everything related to nature is 'feminine,' 'non-human' and 'primitive.'" (p. 45)

Despite having excellent job, economic independence and having married a man of her own choice, Sarita's life is painful. She makes a proverbial speech at a Girls' College when she is invited to deliver a motivational speech and share her achievements. She talks on the role of happiness in the life. Her speech is a satire on the described Indian society, where getting married is the ultimate success, and sacrificing everything for her husband, in-laws, and children makes women eternal heroines. Out of her own experience, she says that if they want to live a happy married life in that society, they are expected to earn lesser than their husbands, be shorter in heights and less educated than them. "Don't even try to reverse the doctor-nurse, executive-secretary, principal-teacher role, it can be disastrous." (p. 136)

Dowry is another gruesome aspect of the portrayed patriarchal society, which forces girls' parents to spend their lifelong savings on the daughter's dowries. When Sarita insists on choosing medicine as a profession, her mother objects it, and she tries to convince her father not to spend a huge sum of money on Sarita's education because they have to give her dowry too. She says, "Medicine or no medicine, doctor or no doctor, you still have to get her married, spend money on her wedding. Can you do both?" (p. 143)

Sarita's classmate, an old doctor friend Padma, is unhappy with his marriage too. The cause of unhappiness, as he shares with Sarita, is that though his wife is obedient, serves him, cooks for him, and looks after his parents, but she cannot be like a friend to discuss many

things. “My wife! She can’t talk anything but servants and children.” (p. 131) Sarita recalls how Padma’s father forced him to marry a girl just for a better dowry from that girl’s parents. The dowry that they will be ultimately given to their daughter. Does the society construct a chain of exploitation, one exploiting the other to become eligible to be controlled and exploited by next one?

This element highlights many aspects which are linked with the ecofeminist perspective. A pure master-slave relationship between males and females can be witnessed in almost all married couples. The traditional women-nature connectedness portrayal to project them weaker hence, easily commanded. This is strongly criticised by Biehl and Gaard. Deshpande has also underlined it by narrating the story of a woman who is tied with animals and ultimately dies. This incident highlights the height of injustice and the treatment of animals and women in a patriarchal society. This women-nature connection is criticised by Biehl, 1991, p. 17-19, Gaard, 2018, p. 12, Warren & Erkal 1997, p.4-8), Plumwood, 2002, p. 45) and many other ecofeminists. One more factor linked with the material ecofeminism is economic inequality. Women are not allowed to work by their husbands and so that they remain dependent upon their men. It makes their exploitation easier and also lead to a lesser representation of women in the decision making. There are two married friends of Sarita who are not allowed to work and suffer because of their economic dependence upon their husbands.

4.4 Use of Religion to Exploit Women: Between the Religion and Culture

In her proverbial speech about the successful and happy life of women in the Indian society, Sarita mentions a story narrated by her friend Nalu. It was a story of Shakuntala whom her king husband had rejected. She was advised by her ascetics to submit herself as a slave to the king, because he was her husband. Humiliated, abandoned Shakuntala wanted to leave the Palace and return to her home, “what...wanton girl, do you desire independence?”

(p. 137) Such stories are a part of mythology to induce women to give up their own lives, happiness and individuality and submit to the men as their masters in the name of religion. The same aspect can be witnessed in Samita and Vidya's case. Even Sarita, a model of defiance against all the constructs of domination, is very committed to her marriage. She appeals to all young girls to stay a step behind their husbands. All-female mythological characters are worshipped and quoted to the female generations to prepare them for submission to their husbands, bow before them and never give preference to themselves or their choices. Sarita's mother herself had a strict upbringing at her grandfather's house, where she and her sisters lived. Sarita's father tells her that her mother grew up as an orphan in someone else's home. "You know she was not a very talkative person; it was the way they were brought up." (p. 194)

The story she had read , about a woman who did not interrupt her husband's sleep, even when her child was about to burn in fire, has been described already with the comment that such stories help indoctrinate females to acquiesce unquestioned obedience of men. (p. 205) She terms women as fools, believing and following the same teachings and becoming slaves in an urge to attain divinity. This slave mind-set induces women to consider man as their duty to wash his clothes, cook food for him, fetch water for him and his whole family, even change their identity and give up their independence too. The novel depicts cases like Samita and Kamala to elaborate that the women have voluntarily adopted this code of subjugation.

Sarita's mother was trying to become a heroic mother of Shiva when she was intentionally and very strictly making Dhruva sleep alone in the darkroom, as she was impressed by the courage of Shiva in the mythical story. Sarita's mother named her son after a mythological character Dhruva. It is said that King Uttanapada had two wives. He had a son from each of them. Once both ran to sit in the lap of father, but Dhruva's stepbrother pushed

him from the lap of the king on the pretext that he had to “redeem himself by praying to God Vishnu and get his blessings.” (Gajbhiye & Vaidhya, 2021, p.1692-1702) After that, in the story, Dhruva becomes the Pole Star. Sarita as a child, also does the same with her brother out of jealousy. She pushes her brother from her father’s lap. When her mother asks her why did she do that? She replies, “Because you named him Dhruva, I wanted to know if he would become the North Star if I push him off Baba’s lap.” (p. 169) However, ironically the boy who is named after a star is scared of the darkness. Saru criticises her mother for this useless practice commenting that the son she was training for developing into a courageous man drowned in a five feet deep pond of water. Through these depictions Deshpande has also attempted to highlight the religious exploitation of women in the society, adopting a mythological revisionist approach.

Her comments about her experience when her mother goes for *puja* every week are also very realistic. Being a child, she could just understand one reason for getting scared from *Devi* Mother, and that was about her wide-open angry eyes and her statue made up of brass. The female protagonist of “*The Dark Holds No Terrors*” complements Biehl’s ecofeminism. (Biehl, 1999, p. 3) Portrayed strong, the protagonist defies all religious and cultural exploitations. She questions and stands up against all constructed codes of the society. The language of the text becomes increasingly sarcastic when Sarita criticises the societal pressures on women. For instance, Sarita, feels resemblance with animals that humans tame for different purposes, “I suppose, like any other well-trained animal, I was capable of making the right noises, the right gestures automatically.” (p. 21) This observation by Sarita about herself also suggests the subjugation of women and nature by men. Biehl (1999, p. 149) and Gaard (2018, p. 12) complement the views on the collective responsibility to protect ecology.

The characters of the novel illustrate the fluctuating traits that strengthen this viewpoint. Biehl has criticised the mythological approach in which women are expected to sacrifice to win the status of goddesses. Deshpande has also criticised the exploitation of women on an imaginary basis. She raises questions about the resemblance between *Devi* and a living woman, "I didn't understand how a woman, who could smile and look so pleasant, could also fling herself about with an ugly wild abandon like that." (p. 104) Sarita rejects the idea of transforming a living woman into a *Devi* who is made up of stone and brass. Biehl also argues that ecofeminism demands much more from us than appreciating the beauty in myths and believing these. Another example was a cow made of metal that the people worshipped. So, she concludes that it would remain metallic and non-living, no matter how many flowers were garnered to honour the cow.

She realises why her father is not inclined towards religion, puja and gods, while other people of the same age become more religious. She thinks maybe he does not have worldly desires that are to be fulfilled. Through the example of her father Sarita, the author elaborates that people turn to religion when they are in dearth and distress. During the last days of life, her mother used to urge her father to recite *Mahabharata*. The motives of prayers could vary. Religion is a source of peace for some, guidance for others, a source to fulfil desires for few and can be a basis to exploit for some others. Deshpande has elaborated on almost all these dimensions in the novel. Biehl argues that ecofeminism demands more than appreciating the beauty of myths and believing in these. Deshpande magnifies and strongly projects the argument. (Biehl, 1999, p. 3) Through her protagonist, she raises many questions about following the religion blindly. Deshpande tells the story of a woman who lost her loved ones. She was sent by Buddha to visit people. He had asked, "Get me a handful of mustard seeds from a house that has not known death." (p. 75) The woman went around in the quest to find a house that had not experienced death of the dear ones. She was relieved of pain and distress

when she did not find any such house. Resultantly, author writes “suffering of multitudes mitigates” her sufferings. Puja of *Devi*, mythological stories about women’s sacrifices as means for the subjugation of women are questioned by Biehl.

4.5 Colonisation of Women and Nature: Understanding the Women and Material Ecofeminism Aspects

Colonisation refers to the occupation and exploitation of resources. Colonisers, who come to rule some state or area, control the resources, become masters of all livings and non-living beings and rule them. Shiva (1993, p. 24) terms seeds and women as “last colonies for the capitalists.” She maintains that the earth, bodies of women and all non-Europeans are just “raw materials” for the capitalists. Mies and Shiva (Year, p. 116) also highlighted the concept of colonisation of women and nature, and the way women pay the price of being colonised. Shiva (August 15, 2020) also argues that women are defined as a passive and inert reproductive machine that are identified with earth and nature. She terms it as colonisation of nature and women. She the urges younger generations to stand up for the decolonisation of nature, women, indigenous cultures and working people. Reuther (1995, p. 35-50), also elaborates the colonisation of women and nature in an identically.

The subcontinent remained a British colony till 1947. This novel was written in the 1980s. Colonisers came, exploited resources, destroyed ecology in the name of development, enslaved people, industrialised colonies regardless of any consideration for the environmental pollution due to industrial waste and toxic fuel fumes, dominated native men and exploited lands for cash crops and decolonised the colonies, taking along all the treasures that they possibly could. Other than the subcontinent African colonisation, that continues as neo colonisation for the control of precious metals and raw materials is a vivid example of an ecological destruction. That exploitation of land and nature and domination of women perpetuates, in various shapes and gradations, as a colonial tradition.

Post decolonisation, new values emerged; modernism was a new challenge for the postcolonial society. Women of the books under review, who are deemed to have been conquered, enslaved and subjugated by men misusing caste system, culture and mythological beliefs are described as trapped in the dilemma of modernism and ancient norms and prevailing societal constructs. The portrayed societal institutions persevere in a dominating and a colonising nature and women in the post-colonial cultures. This phenomenon is deeply rooted, and persists, perhaps even more when women outshine men in various professional fields and contribute to the community's well-being. In a patriarchal society, women like Sarita perceive marriage as an alternative to the parental family's controls that may help them attain freedom. In many cases the women are disappointed due to husbands' desire to control them even more than parents. This engenders a desire in them to be self-sufficient. Sarita therefore, resents being a wife who is seen as a competitor, but not as an equal partner. She works hard to become a good doctor, and hopes that career progression and her better societal status will help her in obtaining independence.

Women colonisation is explained by Reuther as, "In patriarchal law, possession of women, slaves, animals and land are all symbolically and socially linked together." (Reuther, 1995, p. 40) Women and earth, according to Reuther are associated since ancient times because of the similarity of being reproductive. As the place where plant and animal life arise, the earth becomes linked with women's bodies from which babies emerge. (p. 39) "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" vividly explains how men are deemed as masters of their houses and women serve them without any complaint. Men as masters control the decision making, economic affairs of the families and exploit women bodies as well. The most significant example of the colonisation of women is the protagonist's character in the novel. Deshpande has depicted her as a strong woman with the potential to defy the constructs of dominance, yet suffering through her husband's sadism.

Initially, Sarita's husband never struggles to change their social status. After she starts earning enough, he enjoys nice clothes, watches movies and lives in a posh neighbourhood. Even though he is enjoying his wife's earnings, he has developed a sadist attitude towards her. To dominate his wife, he becomes a rapist in the bed, cruel, over assertive and painful to the level that Sarita is scared all the time even to think about the approaching nights and being in bed with him. She cannot express her agony to anyone that her husband handles her painfully because her mindset has been shaped in a way that the men are masters of women and sole owners of their bodies. Even an empowered woman experiences such painful nights. Sarita draws circles on a paper while sitting in her clinic. She does the same on a plate at the dining table. This act reflects the rings a woman finds herself entrapped in, in a patriarchal society. One after the other, the societal rings around her, keep haunting her. If she breaks one by defying her parents, getting married to her lover, her husband follows the same patriarchal behaviour.

One can discuss many women characters of the novel from the same angle. Men treat women as their property. They force them to change their identities, take decisions on their behalf, do not allow them to take up jobs and even control their economic resources. If women, like Sarita become economically more empowered than their husbands, they become sadists. Sarita's father is portrayed free of tensions of managing house and taking care of children. His only duty is to go out for work and earn. He is the master of the house so he is not expected to do anything when home, but to be served by wife and children. Madhav's mother is another character of the story that is revealed undergoing suppression; she is disturbed because her master, the husband, is not accepting her services given to him by her role as a husband (like not eating food cooked by her). Working for men who are their colonisers, bearing their children, managing their house chores is not rewarding in any material terms. They are mostly not paid back even through love, compassion, empathic

behaviours and respect by the men. Deshpande has said unequivocally that the female body is a place of forced colonisation under the master's will and freedom to exploit and abuse it.

The feminine body is the ultimate reality for Deshpande. Bodily sensations, such as the pleasure and disgust of menstruation and the changing anatomy and attractiveness, are significant since they impact their appearance, self-elan and beauty.

Deshpande makes a notable point by establishing linkages between colonisation, women and nature. She indicates that the colonisation of women by the patriarchal society has also subdued women's passionate link with nature. Modernisation has induced women into making enhanced efforts for material gains. As a young girl the nature, greenery and gardens attracted Sarita. But as a mature working woman, she does not have time to look after plants grown in her own home. Thus, suppression of women has indirectly resulted in the suppression of nature as well.

4.6 Women's Material and Physical Potential to Defy Constructed Roles: Beyond their Limitations

The protagonist is portrayed as a determined woman who strives to achieve her ambitions. Her dreams of progression are vivid and well defined; she wants to prove that she is not less than anyone. As conveyed to the readers in this novel, Sarita's thoughts abhor the defined patriarchal roles that she dares defy ultimately. There are passages in the novel that suggest that if a woman realises her potential well, she can become more vibrant and stronger than men. Recalling her mother's remarks she reflects, "I had to make myself secure so that no one would ever say "why are you alive?" (p. 48) Sarita thinks about her father's domination by her mother and how her mother's strong personality dominated that man. The man who was now supportive, understanding, concerned and patient to listen to Sarita was just like a dummy when her mother was alive. Dhruva, dominated by two women, herself and her mother, was scared of them and the darkness.

She thinks that there is something in a woman, which stays even if the man dominates her. Saru's mother dominates her, but these pressures cannot force her to give up on her dreams. She stays determined. Deshpande projects her protagonist as a powerful character "She can be dominated; she can submit and yet hold something in her that preserves erosion and self-destruction." (p. 84) Sarita is portrayed as a strong character throughout the novel. The dilemma and fight within herself are artistically knitted in the novel's text to highlight different elements of female subjugation in a patriarchal society. Deshpande has created her female protagonist to elaborate on women's strength to liberate themselves from the forces of dominance. There is something in Sarita "that prevents erosion and self-destruction." (p. 85)

Sarita is depicted as a practical woman who can think better and plan well than her husband. She enjoys Keats poetry read by her husband, but she believes that only she can change their life, not her husband. Saru knows clearly what and why to do? She allows her teacher to be frank with her because she knows Boozie, despite being a homosexual, is a ladder to success and fame. She is strong and clear enough to retain her relationship with her husband and move around with Boozie at the same time. Her explanation about her relationship with Boozie and the impact of this relationship defines her clarity of thoughts. Her monologue with herself about Boozie reflects the importance of her marital relationship, "I told myself my relationship with this man couldn't, and wouldn't hurt Manu." (p. 90)

She allows Boozie to put his hands on her shoulders, hug her, tape her back and terms it as his 'excellent mannerism.' She does not even care about the gossips in the college corners about her relationship with Boozie. While teaching English literature, Professor Kulkarni termed Sarita Harriet, and Manohar as Shelley. She was happy to be Harriet of Shelley in the class but narrates that, "I also knew that it was I and not Manu who would get us out of the Morass we were in." (p. 91) This remarkable assertion by Deshpande can be taken as the soul

of ecofeminism. Women can bring changes in their lives because they are clear-minded and determined.

Deshpande has elevated her female protagonist to the level of an agent of change. It signifies that women could utilise their potential and available resources to bring a difference in their lives while keeping their marital relationship intact. Sarita is a good wife, and she tries to please her husband, even after doing long hours of duty. She is a caring mother who plans birthdays for their children, thinks about their concerns, and struggles to shape a prosperous life for them.

However, she is grieved and disheartened because of her sadist husband. She wants to share this pain with someone who could suggest a solution, but she decides to keep her problem to herself till her father is ready to listen to her. Deshpande, through her protagonist, has delivered a strong message by projecting psychological changes in her protagonist; by depicting her realisation that she is enough for herself. She is something much more than being a daughter, sister, wife and mother. She herself is her own strength. She should stop thinking continuously about others and their opinions as to what they think about her, impose upon her or demand from her. At the end of the novel, she is seen as a content woman. She decides to go back to her husband, not because of any social pressure, but as her own choice and preference. It is a message for today's women to overcome her worries and achieve freedom from overlapping rings of domination through identification and realisation of their innate potential, sheer determination, persevering struggle and attainment of self-sustenance; independent of men.

4.7 Women and Nature's Connectedness

The, ecofeminists argue that the ecology can be protected with empathy for other races, gender, species, and the earth. Gaard, for instance, argues that compassion is also connected to the socio-economic justice for all species. Gaard believes that feminism and

ecocriticism are grounded in a specific culture, economic relations, place, and history. She says that “We cannot expect ecofeminism to be the same in different eco-social respects.”

(Gaard, 2010, p. 50)

Deshpande has highlighted the way subjugation impacts the affinities of women to connect with the nature. Sarita, the protagonist, appears least interested in gardening as she says that Janakibi looks after these things. But when Sarita recounts her childhood fascination with mango gardens and grassy slopes, it is revealed that she also had great connectivity to nature. She narrates that one evening, she got late to return home from Samita and took a shortcut to reach early, and she discovered a mango orchard. The cool breeze from mango trees liberated her from all her fears. She was delighted and enjoyed her solitude with nature. That was the best time for her, and it was a discovery for her, a place where she could relax. Trees were grown on grassy slopes, and their branches spread parallel to the ground. “The darkness that enfolded me in an unusual solitude, the fragrance of the blossoms, and the sticky crunchiness of the leaves under my feet...I took it all in with delight.” (p. 185)

She becomes so much fascinated with the place that she visits it regularly. Dhruva, her brother, mostly joins her and so do her friends. Her mother also had a sacred plant at her home called *Tulsi*, which was grown and nurtured in the homes for *Puja* (worship). Kamala, Saru’s mother, is so much occupied with house chores and taking care of societal values that she is seldom inclined to pay attention to nature. Contrarily, Sarita relates well to nature and enjoys the solitude in greens to forget troubles and overcome her fears. As she grows up and gets busy in the family and professional life, she is so obsessed with job and her worries about painful marital relations that she cannot pay any attention to the flowers even those grown in flower pots at her home. One tends to infer that her linkage to the nature is severed because of her struggle to gain materialistic advantages to break the shackles of a patriarchal society by attaining financial emancipation. It can also be concluded that her mother’s

attitude in supporting patriarchal controls over her, her father's indifference, and her husband's sadist behaviour inspires her to take up this struggle.

Deshpande has portrayed Sarita's daughter Renu's connection with the nature through her paintings. She paints thick dark forests and smiling children. She portrays that children are happy when they are around nature. Following dialogue manifests, it well:

“What is this, Renu?”

“A forest- A thick forest”

“And this child, why is she laughing?”

“Because she feels like it, you see.” (p. 30)

She sends paintings of the ocean, beach, and sky in her letters to Sarita. Then, she also tells her mother that she had visited the beach with her father and felt very happy there. On the other hand, Saru's son Abhi is not interested in the nature and art.

If liberated from suppression, colonial mindset and patriarchal pressures of the society, women can remain more attached to the nature. The lives of Sarita's mother, Sarita and her daughter Renu are an example. Renu and Sarita are fascinated by the nature at the time of their ages. Dhruva and Abhi are least interested in the natural beauty. Deshpande presents a comparison between gender tendencies belonging to the similar age groups. The other comparison is between Sarita and Madhav. Madhav is also ambitious for his future. He is also facing family pressures, but those pressures do not make him insecure. He is not treated in the same way as Sarita's mother treats her in the same age bracket. Inner fears of both the genders are different when they are growing up. Shashi Deshpande highlights that it is not only women who are the custodians of nature and care for it. The males can also protect the environment. Ecofeminism's basic concept appeals to the liberation of all subjugated species, including men and women. In the novel, patriarchy is projected to have victimised men as well. The boy living with Sarita's father, Madhav, grows flowers in

Sarita's parental home courtyard as he is free to do so here. Though he might have desired to, but was not permitted to grow flowers in his parental home. However, he did not have courage to raise his voice against his father's orders in his own home.

The preceding discussion helps establish women-nature connectedness, which has been discussed by the theorists selected for this dissertation. It is pertinent to mention that the whole debate revolves around the equal contribution by men and women for the ecological protection. However, women in the novel are presented having better spiritual link with nature.

Sarita and her daughter see nature as a healer. They feel pleasure in spending time with the nature. Madhav, on the other side, likes growing flowers in the courtyard of Sarita's father's house. Rueckert thinks that environmental consciousness demands every individual to take the responsibility of environmental preservation and protection without discrimination of gender, race, sex or class to counter ecological degradation. (Rueckert, 1996, p. 105) Henning (2006, p.5) views the requirement of participation in the environmental issues by all the citizens. Henning also suggests that all citizens should be provided with information and education regarding environmental issues and the means and ways to address these issues. It also translates into giving equal rights and access to education for all, regardless of caste, creed and gender. When the patriarchal forces of suppression are removed from the society, it can become more suitable for human beings, all the species and the environment to grow, prosper and take care of each other.

4.8 Conclusion

Intersectionality of the ecological destruction and domination of women and nature by men and culture duo can be witnessed with clarity in this novel. The main focus of "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" is a spiritual journey and physical struggle of a female protagonist who dares to defy those constructed roles of a patriarchal society that strengthens the

institutions of women domination. The courage to withstand such pressures is one of the aspects of the “potentials” of women projected by Biehl as well. Sarita, the protagonist of the novel, is the narrator, and we are introduced to the characters and social values of the Indian patriarchal society through her narration. Through different characters, the story elaborates specific issues which lead to the domination of the women.

In addition to that, it is not only women; even men are describe as the victims of patriarchy. Madhav, his brother Satish, Saru’s brother Dhruva, Manohar and Boozie are all such males. But the point is that patriarchy is not the only reason for the subordination of women in the projected Indian society. Prevalent class differences, material and financial status of women, mythological, religious and cultural exploitation also contribute to it. Sarita marries a non-Brahman man and is punished with disinheritance by her parents. She is not even informed about her mother’s sickness and death. She is a doctor, but her mother does not want to get treated by her. One can explain these factors under intersectionality as well.

Analysing from material ecofeminist perspective, Deshpande has aptly included an economic factor that can lead to women empowerment. The financial independence of a woman makes a significant difference, as can be witnessed in the case of Sarita. She enjoys a better status in her in-laws, and her husband also supports her in her decisions. Her friend Samita, on the other hand is financially dependent on her husband and therefore, has to obey every decision of her husband.

Therefore, it can be aptly concluded that the novel suggests to empower women by making them aware of their capacities to withstand social injustice as well as attain financial independence in line with the spirit of material feminism. For a better life and becoming self-dependent, Sarita works very hard, “to work hard, to be a success.” (p. 41) Madhav’s sister also wants to “get away” from the suppression, “I don’t care how”, she says. (p. 123)

Sarita's father and Madhav are caring too. Therefore, the care is a trait, and a universal phenomenon that is not related to gender. Economic independence and education are two major factors that can help empower women in an absolute sense. Sarita discusses the idea of the individuality of women as well. Through Sarita, Deshpande suggests that women should have their own life, and their privacy as well. She has mentioned Virginia Woolf's idea of a woman's right for having a room of her own. The protagonist has also discussed how her mother never had a room that she could term as hers. The room shared by her parents is known to be the only her father's room. She also thinks that she has so much, which her mother could not have. One thing is common in both; none of them has a room that they can call theirs.

Misuse of the religion is also a factor that adds to the subordination of women. There is a satire in the novel that the goddesses are famous, celebrated, and revered because they had sacrificed and abandoned their lives for men, like goddesses Sita and Draupadi. However, Sarita's father and the priest's son Madhav have excluded gods and religion from their lives.

Patriarchal suppression hampers women's potentials and retards their progression. It also affects the environment by diverting women's attention from ecology towards patriarchal and mythological constructs. In her childhood, Sarita is shown linked with nature, but, after getting married, bearing children, becoming a doctor to struggle for her material independence, and confronting a sadist husband, she forgets her link to the nature. However, her daughter is connected with the nature more than her, perhaps because she is still away from the patriarchal pressures.

This analysis helps conclude that women, through the realisation of their inherent and hidden potential, can courageously challenge the societal pressures and overcome these challenges. As urged by the material ecofeminism, in this quest of the attainment of the

financial independence gains significance, as this empowerment greatly aids for them in the emancipation. Their liberation from the coercive societal environment and unhappy familial situation could help them achieve their embodiment as female. This liberation makes them happier, independent, and also animates their connection with nature. Due to their connectedness with the nature, they have more concerns for the environment, and environmental degradation. The ecological destruction in the name of the development by men for material gains, and consequent impact on the environment effects them the most. This effect is pronounced due to water scarcity, diseases causing ailments to them, their children and family, drought, ecological degradation triggered whether events like floods, and immigration inflicted by these events, or conflict have profound impact on the women. Hence, the ecological destruction impacts the humanity as whole, but more prominently the females in particular.

CHAPTER 5: AN ECOFEMINIST STUDY of BAPSI SIDHWA'S "*THE BRIDE*"

5.1 Introduction

"*The Bride*," has been written by Bapsi Sidhwa. The setting of the novel portrays the time of Subcontinent's partition in 1947. Her main focus remains on revealing the patriarchal nature of the *Pakistani* society of that time with particular reference to the suppression of women, and environmental degradation during colonisation in the name of development, and its perpetuation even in the post decolonisation period by native men and society that acquired the negative traits from colonisers. The man's use of culture to exploit women and nature alike is, termed as twin domination. It is also amply covered by the author. While introducing the main themes, characters, and their roles in the novel, Sidhwa amply highlights multifaceted features of the society. The novel can be said to have been written in three layers, as explained in ensuing part.

In the first layer, Sidhwa introduces the status of women in the society of Lahore in the backdrop of the post-independence religious fervour, the traditions and culture. She describes the dwellings that throng with women, men, children and very young married girls carrying the children in their laps and on their hips, playing hopscotch (p.56). She equates the environment with gigantic wombs put to the task of bearing children and nurturing them. She describes this phenomenon in these words, "the mindless velvet vortex of the womb." (p. 55) The womb of a mother carries one child. In the dwelling under discussion many men, women and children are living in an enclosed environment. The young, underaged and grown up mothers are expected to serve families, stay inside and keep producing children. The author has given resemblance of a gigantic womb to this place.

In the second layer, Sidhwa introduces Kohistani tribal culture (*Kohistan* means land of mountains. *Kohistan* is located in a very rugged North-Western mountainous region of Pakistan). In that culture of 1947-1948, women are considered just like commodities; married

and used for reproduction, maintenance of the household, even traded for repaying debts and settling blood feuds, yet beaten and even killed for satisfying the male ego. The third layer is the story of Carol, an educated American woman. She is married to a man named Farukh but she gets involved with Major Mushtaq, a Pakistan Army officer deployed in *Kohistan* area. She asks Major Mushtaq to “marry” her (p. 167) to which he replies, “of course I will marry you, sweetheart, if that’s what you want.” (p. 168) However, Carol faces and suffers through almost similar issues like a native woman in the *Pakistani* society, especially one belonging to *Kohistani* patriarchal society suffers.

“*The Bride*” opens with a marriage between a ten years old *Kohistani* boy Qasim and a young girl Afshan reaching fifteen. The marriage is to be contracted as a compensation to settle an old loan. After establishing the inferior status of women in *Kohistan*, Sidhwa introduces the Punjab of pre 1947 partition and post partition. Thereafter, she illustrates the gruesome realities of bloodshed, riots, mass migrations and rapes, destruction and burning of homes and crops that followed the division of the Subcontinent. Bapsi comments about the British colonisers that they “they were not deliberately mischievous - only cruelly negligent!” (p. 4)

Sikandar and Zohra, from the Indian Punjab side board a refugee train from Ludhiana for Lahore. Their two small children, a trunk of clothes with some jewellery and money are the only belongings they could take along. They are forced to part with their home, the crop, piece of agricultural land they own, and most painfully the pet baby-calf of their daughter that she carries till the railway station from where the refugee train has to depart. On the way to Lahore, the train is attacked by the Sikhs seeking the revenge of the blood of their loved ones, rumoured to have been killed by Muslims. The train is looted, plundered and the emigrants are brutally slaughtered. Unfortunately, along with many others Zohra, Sikandar and their son are killed too by the attacking mobs. Only their seven-year-old girl Zaitoon survives. Qasim,

who is migrating on the same train, finds this terrified, distressed and parentless girl. Qasim sees her daughter, Zaitoon, in that little lonely girl. He decides to take the girl along and names her Zaitoon in the memory of his daughter Zaitoon who had died a long time back because of the chicken pox. (p. 28-29)

Qasim meets Nikka Pehlwan (wrestler) in a refugee camp established for the migrants coming to Lahore. Qasim befriends him. Women in the newly established *Pakistani* society are described through Zaitoon's narration. The primary purpose of these women's life is to bear children, and obediently keep men happy; the men who are taken as their masters, protectors, and caretakers. The societal norms inhibit female's formal education too. Sidhwa also writes about the double standards of men who spend huge amounts of money on the dancing girls in the red light area of the city, but keep their females in the rooms where even the windows are not allowed to be opened to the street side. Carol, an American girl married to a *Pakistani* named Farrukh, is on a trip to a mountainous area of Kohistan with her husband; irritated by the jealousy and suspicious nature of her husband, she rebels and starts flirting with Major Mushtaq.

Zaitoon feels cheerful and anxious to enjoy a new life with her husband in an area explained as being so beautiful by her foster father. It becomes her fascination to be there. However, her wedding night in that area becomes a nightmare. Her groom Sakhi, tears her clothes off in rage and beat her savagely because of his doubtful nature for an imaginative act of disgrace she had committed by holding a soldier's hand who had helped her in crossing the river. Her ordeal increases due to her husband's savagery and violence over the time. She resists beating by her husband and runs away from the home to escape further misery. After a terrible run for ten nights, and having been raped by two tribal men, Zaitoon finally reaches Pakistan Army's Major Mushtaq in a military camp, and is saved by him. Sakhi, who is searching for her is told that she has died during her effort to escape. He feels proud and

relieved, hence he and his fellow tribesmen end their chase to find and kill her. Zaitoon finds real refuge when to save her from further harm, misery and agony of exploitation Carol decides to take her along to the USA.

Applying the lens of ecofeminism, and material feminism six main elements; Misuse of the Institution of Marriage, Colonisation of Women and Nature, Patriarchal Society, Exploitation of Women Based on Religion, Women Link with Nature (Spirituality) and Women Potential to Defy Constructed Roles will be analysed through selected texts in this chapter.

5.2 Misuse of the Institution of Marriage: An Extension of Domination

As discussed in the previous chapter, marriage is a social institution, yet it does not have a common definition. Terms and conditions of the marital relationships vary from culture to culture. Bethmann and Kvasnicka (2011) believe that marriage is historically linked with fertility. This view can be related to the women enclosed in houses in Lahore as housewives and used as reproductive machines only. Sidhwa expresses this phenomenon as “stepping into a gigantic womb, the fecund, fetid world of mothers and babies. The mindless, velvet vortex of the womb.” (p. 55-56) They are not expected to perform any other role in the society (p. 106). Biehl (1991) also criticises this aspect as an exploitation of women, that makes them just reproductive machines. She is of the view that argument about women and nature connection strengthens the patriarchal mindset by establishing that women and nature are for nurturing and reproducing only. It ignores the potentials and abilities that women possess. (Biehl, 1991, p. 15)

“*The Bride*” pictures the institution of marriage in the Islamic society of newly created Pakistan. This section will analyse how this institution is exploited to dominate women, to deny them a right to decide about themselves, trade them to settle disputes and pay off debts, and exploit their reproductive abilities. Debt is being settled among Resham and

Arbab, two *Kohistani* men at the start of the novel. Resham, who owes the debt, offers his daughter for marriage with him to settle the loan, because he cannot pay back to Arbab. The arbiters say, “Haven’t we settled enough scores? Resham Khan has promised us his daughter.” (p. 7) The deal is made. Afshan, the sixteen-year-old daughter of Resham, is handed over to Arbab. initially thinks to marry the girl but later bestows her upon his youngest son, who is just a ten years old boy. He doesn’t even understand what the marital relation is? This marriage is decided without getting the consent of the boy or the girl. Sidhwa narrates the whole incident in a very subtle way but raises the question about the misuse of the institution of marriage. Afshan, who was adult enough to be a woman, was disappointed to see a child as his groom on her wedding night. She asks the boy, out of astonishment, “are you, my husband?” (p. 9). Afshan feels disappointed, “the girl didn’t know whether to laugh or cry...she began to laugh while the tears of disappointment rolled down her cheeks” (p. 10). She instantly thought it was a joke, and her actual husband had sent his younger brother into her room to tease her, but was a reality standing in front of her. The reality of the exploitation of marriage as an institution is evident, a factual example of women's status in *Kohistani* patriarchal society.

She, however, accepts her fate cheerfully. She helps her mother-in-law feed and milk goats, chaff maize and do other tasks to kill her time. Their first child is born when Qasim turns sixteen. One after the other, Afshan gives birth to six children from Qasim. Living in the mountains, they only have maize bread to eat, dipping it in water, sometimes with goat milk or yogurt drink. Their assets include a few goats as well. The only source of income was to earn by helping some smugglers to cross the border. (p. 12) A fugitive Soviet Kirgiz visits them for a day. He leaves next day and they come to know after a month that he had died of smallpox. That Kirgiz guest leaves contagious and deadly diseases in their house too. They call it *Mata* in their language, and it is taken as the dreaded goddess by these people “Zaitoon

is not eating, *Mata* has honoured her with a visit.” (p. 12) The whole of Qasim’s family dies less him. (p.13) None of the men i.e. Qasim, his father Arbab, Resham, Sakhi and his brother work. It is only Afshan, Qasim’s mother and other ladies who take care of maize crop and goats.

Having a woman to settle debt is a smart deal because, like a slave, she is yours to serve for the whole of life. Decision for the marriage of Zaitoon is somewhat similar to Afshan’s. No consent of the girl is taken. She does not know who Sakhi is? After spending about two decades in the plains of Punjab, Qasim still carries the same tribal traits, instinct and the mind -set. He does not consider it important to take a woman’s consent for her marriage. He decides to marry Zaitoon with his *Kohistani* cousin’s son and leaves her there. He just informs her that “Misri khan, is my cousin. I have promised you in marriage to his son Sakhi.” (p. 96) Contrarily, the culture of Punjab is relatively better. Miriam, Nikka *Peהלwan*’s wife opposes Qasim’s decision of Zaitoon’s marriage with Sakhi, and accuses him of arranging this marriage with his cousin without taking Zaitoon’s consent. She tells Qasim, “It is because that *Pathan* offered you five hundred rupees, some measly maize and a few goats is that way you are selling her like a greedy merchant.” (p. 94).

Qasim refutes this allegation citing tribal norms. However, it is possible that his childhood memories of his wife coming as a debt settlement might have inspired his decision for Zaitoon’s marriage, without her consent, as a normal practice of the tribal culture. Zaitoon initially accepts her foster father’s decision for her marriage with Sakhi, whom she had not seen even. However, she soon realises her doubly inferior place in that society; firstly, as women, secondly as an alien being a non-*Kohistani*. Foreseeing the looming troubles, she requests her father to take her back to Lahore and marry her to someone like her, “If I must marry, marry me to someone from the plains, like that *Jawan* (young soldier) at the camp Abba.” (p. 157). This bold gesture from Zaitoon is not at all acceptable for Qasim. Qasim

becomes furious at her demand and threatens to kill her if she dared refuse, because it is a matter of his honour now. Qasim asserts citing societal codes set for women and tells her to accept his decision. “A decent girl doesn’t tell her father to whom he should marry her.” (p. 158)

The first night of her marriage is horrible. It dismantles her romanticism of married life and destroys her fascinations of man-woman relationship. Sidhwa writes, “Corroding jealousy of the past few days suddenly surged up in him in a murderous fusion of hate and fever. He tore the ‘*ghoongat*’ (the veil that covers bride’s face) from her head.” (p. 160) Then Sakhi tore the whole of Zaitoon’s dress out of anger, imagining Ashiq Hussain’s hand on her arm. It was only the second day of her marriage when she faced investigation about Ashiq Hussain and Major Mushtaq from her *Kohistani* husband. Sakhi throws stones at her and beat her up, but no one stops him. As a norm it was his personal family matter. Women in Sakhi’s society are considered the possession of men. On the first night of their marriage, a comment, “it is my cunt” (p. 162) by Sakhi pronounced in sexual emotions, highlights the mentality of men about the ownership of women’s bodies.

Carol, married to a *Pakistani* man named Farukh, whom she liked and loved, comes to Pakistan. Carol experiences a different kind of Farukh in Pakistan. He behaves like a sadist at one moment torturing her to accept the blame of cheating on him, even if some man had seen her closely, “You opened your arms wide thrusting out your pink tits...you widened your legs like this.” (p. 111) The next moment he becomes loving and wants her in bed, “But I love you so much, you see, come on now, be nice to me.” (p. 111) She is already irritated by his jealousy and ultra-possessiveness and wants to get rid of him, “To hell with your madness, your sadistic, possessive, screwed up love.” (p. 111)

Farukh wants to maintain complete control over her. Whenever he comes back, he has a long list of questions to ask about what she had been doing in his absence. Dialogue

between Major Mushtaq and Carol about the killing of women if they cheat on their husbands also reveals the mentality of men of the society towards their wives. Farrukh's comments about Zaitoon that she would be killed if found in those mountains and a women could meet the same destiny in Punjab too (p. 223) frightens Carol. She is scared to know that men consider killing women in doubt of infidelity, as a matter of honour. A married woman has no option but to die if she does not want to live with her husband for any reason, like Zaitoon. If I were Zaitoon, would you kill me? She asks Mushtaq. He replies "Who knows? I might if you were my wife." (p. 224)

Sidhwa has skilfully presented characters and their lives to ensure that they strengthen the central theme of her book. The dialogues between Carol and Farukh, a US educated man of Lahore, is identical to that between Sakhi and Zaitoon in their mud hut, in a backward area of *Kohistan*. Both men are of similar nature. Accusing, suspecting and investigating husbands. Farukh blames Carol and asks her to accept the responsibility for another man's touching her in a dance party. He is so enraged that he loses composure. Sidhwa writes that "he was upon her, shaking her, his pale brown face flushed with ugly red blotches, his eyes insanely wide...who are you trying to fool? (p. 112) Similarly, on first night of their marriage, "Sakhi was seething with jealousy. Why did you let him touch you?" (p. 165) These instances support that marriage as an institution is misused to abuse and subjugate women.

5.3 Colonisation of Nature and Women: Beyond the Character

The ordeal of partition was not restricted to the humans and their belongings only. The author's more striking revelation is the extinction of animals, trees, and crops due to chaos created by the hasty partition. The crops were burnt, earth and atmosphere were ruined with fire, smoke and blood. Even the animals got burnt. The domestic animals were left to starve behind because people had to save their own lives on priority. Young Zaitoon's cries

echoed in the atmosphere, “Get the calf, Abba. Don’t leave it, and she’s a baby. She’ll die!” “Shush! her mother scolded. We do not have room for ourselves, and you want to take that beast!” (p. 18)

Sidhwa has depicted even the facial expression of the calf that was looking at the family it was living with. She writes, “it tottered below them on spindly, unsteady legs, its face raised, mute and trusting.” (p. 18) It was a time when humans and nature suffered due to the fallout of the unwise political decisions. Sidhwa mentions that the division of the subcontinent needed a careful approach and wise political handling but was messed up by the colonisers’ hasty and unjust decisions. She expresses clearly that the division of the land that warranted a careful surgery, was brutally shredded into pieces. (p. 14)

Explicit and gruesome details of women being dragged and youth murdered are given in the novel. She writes about the brutal treatment of women by the miscreants, “They are herding and dragging the young women away.” (p. 29) Even the trains carrying migrants were the targets of vengeance “The trains were ambushed and looted, and their fleeing occupants slaughtered.” (p. 15) Sidhwa paints a detailed picture of the minute details of human miseries and injuries to people. She writes about “the earth soiled with blood, environs littered with the unattended dead bodies” in such a manner that the reader find themselves part of the time and the happenings. (p. 31-32) The colonisers did not pay heed to one million killings during partition because they were busy collecting their assets before leaving. Sidhwa comments that they were “only cruelly negligent.” (p. 14) People lost so much as price for an incorrect political decision. It was not only humans who suffered. The nature and earth suffered too; “Hysteria mounted when the fertile hot lands of Punjab were suddenly ripped into two territories, and the earth is not easy to carve.” (p. 14) The sky was red and black because of smoke from arson, and the blood spilt on the soil. The crops were burnt too. The humid weather and scorching heat added to the agony of refugees. The storm

which is narrated in the novel is symbolic of the prevalent gloom, “Thunder grew insistent, exploding louder and quicker. The wind worked up into a heightened frenzy, every one screamed, Allah! Allah! Allah!” (p. 34) The storm that uprooted huge trees, symbolises the anger of nature that had suffered too. The migrants in that refugee camp were also uprooted from their temporary shelter homes due to strong winds gusting in the camps.

On the other side, a serene topography of Kohistan with rivers, mighty mountains and lush green jungles is portrayed. Though the doctors advise people to go to those areas for the cure of their ailments and recuperating, however the dwellers of that area are untameable men, who are self-acclaimed masters of women and nature. They own and dominate land, women and animals alike. Sidhwa explains the norms of *Kohistani* culture at the start of the novel explicitly. Afshan is traded like a commodity to pay off the debt. To ensure that the deal is most profitable, guarantee for her being an ‘able-bodied’ girl is taken too. (p. 7)

Bapsi sarcastically reveals the realities of that culture. Men dealt with the females, the way coloniser dealt with men, land and resources of their colonies. Men in the *Kohistani* patriarchal society exploit women's bodies for their sexual desires and for undertaking all the physical work needed for their household in those harsh mountains. When necessary, they did not hesitate to barter women for settling debts and feuds. Biehl argues that the women are exploited and dominated by men considering them identical to nature, and that they are treated like beasts of burden and reproductive machines. Women are colonised in a manner in which invaders colonised the conquered territories. One can infer that women in such societies are treated like men’s colony and are dealt with mercilessly like a colonised territory.

Sidhwa has explicitly narrated the colonisation of nature in the novel. It is evident throughout the narration of the novel that nature is presented as a link with humans. Mountains, rivers, trees, wind, birds, even the mood of wind, sun and moonlight are

beautifully narrated in the novel by Sidhwa. She thinks that the land was divided brutally by the colonisers. Through Zaitoon's eyes, Sidhwa presents the picture of the destruction of nature in the mountains. Zaitoon looking at the barren place where once trees and mountains existed thinks, the "ancient settlers"; mountains were sold to rich merchandise. (p. 182) And the "logs floated down the River Indus to the plains until no tree was left." (p. 182) Due to that barrenness, death of species, and decay of nature, the only bird that Zaitoon sees is a sick vulture. (p. 207) Nature had been destroyed by the colonisers, as well as the colonised people in the name of development.

Women too are mutilated by the men of that area in an identical manner. The brutal acts against women and pollution of the River Indus and streams are a symbolic eruption. Carol and Farukh are standing by the river side. They had come here to seek mental peace and enjoy the nature. Suddenly, a woman's head, freshly severed from her body, comes floating in the river. Sidhwa paints the picture as follows, "Darkness swayed on the ripples and completing its rotation beneath the surface, and the face bobbed up... a young, tribal woman's face." (p. 225) This shocking scene becomes a deciding moment for Carol. She is terrified to imagine her head floating in the river, in the similar manner. She decides to leave that area as soon as possible, and return to the USA. Zaitoon, during her quest to lighten her mood and gain some peace, goes to the river side. There she sees a huge mass of litter in the river, which has polluted the water. Birds are diseased due to the absence of trees and because of water pollution, indicating that the humans have ruined the natural habitat of the wildlife. The big vulture Zaitoon sees in the mountains was sick too. "The bird appeared to be diseased, its matted wings abominably maimed." (p. 217)

Sidhwa's narration reminds us about Rachel Carson, who for the first time in history, raised her voice against the assaults by man on the environment. In her book "*The Silent Spring*," published in 1962, she warned the American farmers about the gradual suicide they

were attempting by using pesticides. (Carson, 1962, p. 10) Sidhwa describes the ruined ecology of *Kohistan* in a similar manner. The unwise activities of the exploitation of nature in the shape of deforestation, use of fertilisers and pesticides for getting better yield of various crops, expanding houses, construction of roads and increased emissions from cars etc have impacted nature and beauty.

5.4 The Dualistic Concept of Men and Cultural Confluence: Patriarchal Society and Women

Birkeland believes that the concept of duality protects the men and culture confluence for the dominance of women and strengthens the patriarchy. Thus, changing this patriarchal approach in the society is central to solving the issue of women domination. He advocates not to lump women with nature as a weaker entity, rather as strong persons who can shun the subordination and suppression. (Birkeland, 1993, p. 57) In "*The Bride*," Sidhwa has explained the existing status of women in a patriarchal society of that time, as daughters, mothers and wives. The novel presents the status of women in the tribal culture of *Kohistan* and in a comparatively modernised urban culture of Lahore alike due to the patriarchal mind set, violent and uncouth behaviour of men. During a discussion with Carol, answering her question about possible infidelity by a wife, Major Mushtaq, an educated person from Punjab comments that in Kohistan, they kill them, and in Punjab they chop noses of women, even for suspected adultery:

“Women get killed for one reason or the other...imagined insults, family honour, and infidelity.”

“Imagined infidelity?”

“Mostly.” (p. 223).

That is all what women mean to men in the society under discussion. It is a society having double standards; women are kept in *burqa* (veils) in homes without being allowed to

open windows to avoid any man having even a glimpse of them. On the other hand, women are raped, molested, bought and sold by the same men. Zaitoon, while running for her life in the rugged mountains and enduring rape by the tribal men, recollects the memory of an insane woman she had seen in the Lawrence Garden of Lahore. At that time, Zaitoon could not perceive that woman's condition. She wore torn clothes and had stiff wiggly hair. When Zaitoon was raped, her torn clothes and tangled hair made her think about that woman, who was feeding herself on the charity of the same men who had perhaps raped her. She thought might be that women had been raped in Lahore, and Zaitoon, who was being searched for killing, was raped in the mountains of *Kohistan*, "For a moment, Zaitoon saw herself rushing wild and wanton over the mountains. She now knew for sure that the woman had been rapped." (p. 231)

Gaard argues that the feeling and pain of raped women is incomparable with the ecological destruction. She criticises the usage of poor metaphors of "rape," "mother nature" and "virgin forests" for environmental degradation. She believes that removed mountain tops or chopped trees cannot be compared with the pain of a raped woman, mistreated children, or humiliated queer person. "The shame and self-loathing, the acute sense of violation that accompanies rape is experienced by humans, not mountains, much as we know." (Gaard, 2018, p. 15) From Sidhwa's point of view, during partition women of the Subcontinent on both sides suffered due to this phenomenon.

Biehl's criticism strengthens Greta Gaard's argument of disapproving traditional women-nature link concept. (Biehl, 1991) Biehl criticises the notion of "Mother Earth" linked with women and argues that women face more suppression due to this construct. Women treated like nature and land are exploited and dominated by men. Biehl also criticises the metaphoric links between earth and women, that is used to establish that both are nurturing agents. She argues that this will not help women liberate from domination, instead

this will strengthen patriarchy. (Biehl, 1991, p. 17-19) “*The Bride*” portrays dejection, hatred and animosity as a consequence of the division of land and country. These emotions led to the ruining of women and living things alike.

Carol was impressed by Major Mushtaq’s civilised behaviour. Their physical closeness attracted her to marry him. Yet, despite their intimacy when she asked him about his family and Farukh’s friendship etc, he declined to share his back ground with her. Contrarily, he wanted to have an affair with her and know each and every thing about her. This reflects the double standard of men. These men would do anything to please themselves, but would not allow the slightest of liberty to their wives. When the tribal men were organising the hunt for Zaitoon, Sidhwa writes, “There was only one punishment for the runaway wife; death. It was lethal like poison for them to exist in disgrace unless they found and killed the girl.” (p. 190)

Zaitoon was initially enthusiastic about marrying Sakhi chosen as her bridegroom, but she realises after going in that area that she would not be able to survive in those mountains. She expresses that fear to her foster father Qasim, and requests him to take her back and marry her to a man like her, to marry her with someone like Ashiq Hussain, the soldier from plains she had encountered. Qasim becomes furious and threatens to kill Zaitoon, if she refused to marry Sakhi, “I have given my words. On it depends my honour. It is dearer to me than life. If you besmirch it, I will kill you with my bare hands...” (p. 158)

From the possession of one man Zaitoon is given into the possession of another arrogant tribal youth, Sakhi. Sakhi is very possessive about her. On the very next day of marriage, she had to endure strict investigation about Major and his *Jawans* (soldiers) who had helped her and Qasim. Major Mushtaq offers a job to Zaitoon’s future husband during her and Qasim’s initial meeting at the military camp. When Sakhi comes to know of the job offer, he becomes furious and suspicious. He retorts in jealousy and anger during his first

breakfast with his bride. “Do you think your major is quite something?” (p. 165). The society is possessive about women and has skewed values to an extent that Sakhi’s brother has kept an eye on Zaitoon and follows her when she goes to the river side. This was conveyed to Sakhi before he went to his wife at night. Investigation about this matter was initiated waking her up from a deep sleep. “You went to the river? Don’t go there again!” (p. 184)

The next day she goes out to wander along the road and the river to get some mental relaxation and get to know the area. She is delighted to hear the roar of the river and see the mountains. A military jeep passes by her. She waves her hand in mere courtesy, which even the ones sitting in the jeep hardly notice. Sakhi, who is spying on her throws a stone at her. She feels excruciating pain in her spine when that stone hits her. One after the other, Sakhi hit her with multiple stone throws. When he comes closer to get hold of her, Zaitoon retaliates with a blow of her head between his legs, he becomes furious. “He aimed a swift kick between her legs, and she fell back. Sakhi kicked her again and again.” (p. 186) He was beating Zaitoon on her knuckles, head, breast, and everywhere for her mistake of going alone on the riverside. He was swearing to teach her a lesson for disobeying him because she was his woman. He calls Zaitoon a slut, whore, black bitch and spits on her face. “You wanted them to stop and fuck you,” (p. 185) “I will kill you, you lying slut” (p. 186). He beats her to an extent that she gets unconscious. Sakhi puts her lump on his shoulder like a sack and brings her back to the house.

Consequently, she decides to run away from the man and his home. The tribesmen who never intervened when Sakhi was beating the innocent girl, get together to search for her. Even Sakhi’s mother and his brother’s wife, who are themselves the victims of the suppression, join the hunt for her, because now it has become the matter of their family honour. Stemming from prevalent colonial mind set, this master-slave relationship is not confined to the husband and wife relationship only. Sakhi’s behaviour with his mother and

domestic animals is not different either. A bull in his ownership, his mother and his wife has the same status for him. To show his anger and establish his manly pride, he once starts beating the bull. When his mother Hamida comes rushing to stop him, Sakhi starts beating his mother too with the same stick with that he is using to beat the bull. Sakhi utters similar words for his mother while beating her. “You are my woman! I will teach you to obey me!” (p. 172). He scolds her. He spits out, “You old hag.” (p. 171)

Hamida’s character is to show the pain a woman of that area could suffer in the name of brutal customs and traditions. When her husband and sons along with their clansmen are on a hunt to search for Zaitoon and kill her, Hamida painfully recalls carrying her every son in her womb for nine months while doing hard chores of mountainous life, and the labour pains at their birth. She brought them up and then one after the other, she received their dead bodies in the name of revenge for the honour. She is depicted as an embodiment of pain and a symbol of misery. When her only son beats her, she prays for death. She is worried for Zaitoon too. She has known those men for decades as perfect hunters, therefore, she now apprehends one more death; killing of Zaitoon in the name of honour. (p. 190)

It is apt to mention here that both the incidents of beating of Zaitoon by Sakhi are linked to his brother Younus Khan who was spying on Zaitoon, and complaining about her behaviour that to him is contrary to the tribal norms and expectations. He asks sarcastically, “How is your wife from the plains? You know she requires a man to control her.” (p. 170) The cruel taunt wounded Sakhi’s manly pride. He decided to establish his manhood by beating the bull and his mother too. Ironically, the people are dumb and deaf when women are beaten by their husbands. However, they get united and become active when a girl runs for her life. When Zaitoon flees, they all gather around Sakhi’s hut. “The crowd of tribal men dispersed in a hushed understanding, each to get his gun and prepare for the hunt... collectively, they meant to salvage the honour of the clan.” (p. 190)

The novel highlights another aspect. The patriarchy is not only followed by men, but is owned and supported by women as well. After Zaitoon's escape from home, when the tribesmen were out for her hunt, the neighbourhood women sitting around Hamida consoled her by saying that soon her son would be back with Zaitoon's dead body. They abuse Zaitoon for running away and remarked, "they will be back soon with that bitch's corpse, your son's honour vindicated." (p.191) Bapsi Sidhwa reveals another aspect of the society of that time. Carol had left the American society for Farukh and had come with him to live in Pakistan. During their socialising she met various men and women. According to the American cultural norms she would frankly interact with men and women alike. She was astonished when one day her husband Farrukh comments that he felt ashamed on her social behaviour, "I am so ashamed of you, displaying your honky-tonk pedigree, you touch men, if you only look at a man in the eye, it means he can have you." (p. 108) When someone from those men would touch her, Farukh would later accuse her "you devoured him, you opened your arms wide thrusting out your pink tits. (p. 109) The next moment he would behave nicely and ask her to be good "come on now, be nice to me. I can't bear it." (p. 110)

Carol, worked as a salesgirl in some store in the USA. Whenever she would share this fact with someone, she would receive strange looks and responses. She concludes that the people here do not like women to go out of home and work, therefore she starts omitting that fact from her introductions in Pakistan, "Having experienced a bewildering snobbishness towards working girls since her arrival in Pakistan, she had learnt to keep that information to herself." (p. 106) Therefore, she omits the details of her previous job, while introducing herself to Major Mushtaq. Farrukh's attitude and remarks reveal various connotations of social conduct and men's attitudes in the portrayed society. He is seen always insisting that Carol was breaking the norms of the society. When Carol taunts on the shyness of Zaitoon in Major Mushtaq's office, Farrukh taunts back at her that 'women in Pakistan are not like you'.

They are expected to be reserved. He also asks her to cover her body well so that the men cannot have closer look of her figure. Angered at his remarks, Carol retorts with a harsh remark and say that *Pakistani* women have the highest reproduction rate in the world.

On the other hand, Zaitoon, covered in a Shawl, is stared at, raped by the same men of honour who kill each other for presumed dishonouring of their women. The novel highlights the fact that religion is followed according to the whims and wishes of the people, especially the *Kohistani* tribesmen. Despite being Muslim, people can kill, rape, go to prostitutes, spy on others, be nosy in others' personal issues, stare at a woman or treat her like something owned by them. Carol expresses her uneasiness to Major Mushtaq and tells him that she felt that they were staring so intensely at her as if they were undressing her. "I felt they were undressing me. Any women whether from Punjab or America evokes the same attention." (p. 113) On the contrary Major Mushtaq narrates an incident of a man killing two men of another tribe who had molested a girl from their clan. (p. 116)

Pakistani men of a gender segregated and sexually repressed society of that time eagerly welcome Carol in parties. They try to impress her by lighting her cigarettes and offering her drinks. This aspect has some similarities with the evening that Nikka and Qasim experienced in the '*Hira Mandi*' (brothel) of Lahore. They spent two thousand rupees on a woman to see her dance and enjoy her looks. They were so eager to touch that dancer woman. They were so drunk that they almost passed out and slept in the same performance room of *Hira Mandi* (pp.75-79). These men would not like their women to indulge such things at all. From this discussion, it is concluded that in the patriarchal society women cannot exercise their choices. Women are expected to follow the decisions made by men for them, in the name of family and their men's honour. They can be killed for disobedience or a disagreement or even for resisting the oppression. Her pen, Sidhwa amply establishes how

patriarchal society pressurises even men to behave in a certain way. The structured societal codes force men not to accord importance to their own wives, sisters and daughters.

5.5 Women's Potential to Defy the Constructed Roles: Mental and Physical Courage

Characters of Zaitoon and Carol are different from the other female characters of the novel. Carol is brought up in the American society, and she is different from other women. Zaitoon, on the other hand, was brought up by Miriam and kept in the world of women where they are only the household women, busy in cooking, eating, and breeding. In those closed and purely women gatherings, Zaitoon remains happy and jolly. She lost her parents at the time of partition and was brought up by Qasim as her foster father. Miriam, the wife of Nikka, took care of her too. Miriam boldly stands up against Zaitoon's acceptance of Qasim's decision of her marriage. Miriam advises Zaitoon to refuse this marriage. She insists, "Tell your father you don't want to marry a tribal." (p.96) However, young and innocent Zaitoon is content to be married and tells Miriam that she is happy with the decision.

Zaitoon's father accidentally fires at an army truck; no one is hurt and the truck is not damaged too. However, the soldiers stop the truck, come out of and want to arrest the man who had fired on their truck. It is astonishing for the soldiers to see Zaitoon dealing with them. She stands up in front of her father. Soldiers see the tribal man standing behind her and they tighten their grips on their guns. She is portrayed as brave, confident and daring. She snubs her father Qasim when he interferes in her conversation with the soldiers. She says, "It's a mistake. Forgive us. ...It's a mistake." (p. 101) She elaborates that she and her father are travelling to their village. The soldiers were of a darker complexion like her. Displaying good instinct, Zaitoon makes a smart move to tackle the situation. She starts speaking *Punjabi* with them, and tells them that she insisted on her father to show her gun fire and he fired. The soldiers soften their attitude and let them go. (p. 102)

When she realises that the place where she is about to be married is far different than her dreams, she openly objects to her marriage, which astonishes Qasim. His response is furious, though. Instead of getting scared when Sakhi beats the bull and his own mother, she comes out to help her mother-in-law and tries to snatch the stick from her husband's hands. It is considered to be a daring gesture that is not expected from the females of that area. Her response to Sakhi, when he starts beating her on the riverside, is surprising for him. She reacts physically by hitting her head hard in between his legs "In the wild lunge, she blindly butted her head between the man's legs...The cord of Sakhi's trouser came undone." (p. 186) It made his trouser fall to his ankles, and he felt humiliated.

Zaitoon's attempt to run away from that place is a very daring act, the climax point of the novel. Through that courageous decision, Sidhwa wants to educate women to be brave, to stand up, and to escape harm, to resist against humiliation and torture and save their lives in trying circumstances. There are many testing moments in her run of nine days and nights in those inhospitable mountains when she derives strength from her inner self and seeks help only from Allah:

Her eyes shut, Zaitoon began to pray; concentrating on the cryptic Arabic incantation, she extracted from them a faith that once had transformed her childhood nightmares into peaceful dreams. (p. 193)

Her decisions to take the most difficult routes are incredible. "Tracing her direction from the sun, Zaitoon picks up the most difficult routes. She knew the easiest passages would be the first to be searched for by the tribal men." (p. 194) Crossing those steep mountains, fighting icy cold winds, quenching her thirst from ponds and setting up for an arduous journey present a brave picture of a girl who is all alone in that unknown area. She was determined. She was not bothering for the pains, strains and cuts of her body. The only thing she cared about at that time was the destination she had set out for. It is the same Zaitoon who

was just raised in the giant metaphoric womb to marry and bear children. Though she was one of the girls who had never been exposed to the outer world and whose schooling had been discontinued at a very early age, yet she takes a bold decision, judging her directions from the sun. She measures the altitude by difficulty or the ease of breathing, and decides to spend the night comparatively at a lower height because lower altitudes are less cold. She has full control over her nerves, “Her body was to serve only one purpose: to convey her to the bridge at Dubair.” (p. 195) During her toilsome journey, she derives strength from the pains she suffers.

Initially, Zaitoon is not a rebel. Despite her husband’s cruel treatment on the first night, she welcomes him to invade her body. Later, she avoids him as much as possible. She keeps herself busy in the duties a woman is expected to perform in the tribal areas. It includes feeding animals, tending crops, bringing water, collecting fire wood and taking care of her mother-in-law. When at night, they were alone, she lets him quench his sexual urge without any feelings and warmth for him or the act. Along with all these things, she has to face Sakhi’s beating on one pretext or the other. In the end, she uses all her pains and deprivation to make use of her innate strength to defy the suppression and sets out for *Dubair* Bridge to save her life. “That night Zaitoon resolves to run away...” (186) In the early morning, she leaves the house with an empty water container in hand to pose that she was going to fetch water. Covering herself with a blanket and carrying a bundle of maize bread for her journey, she quietly runs away to save her life.

When she is raped by two tribal men who keep her hostage for two hours, she dresses up after gaining consciousness and resumes her run. The pain coming from her breasts and her raped body does not shatter her resolve. Her mind fluctuating between the past and the present continuously reminds her that she needs to get rid of this place; she needs to cross that bridge which will end her sufferings, “Every now and then, she would re-enter the

present enough to know I must find the bridge I must get out of here.” (p. 232) She is determined and has gained full control of her body. She is depicted as ordering and consoling her body to keep going, “Oh, stop moaning, she told her stumbling legs in exasperation. Come on. Move. Don’t growl. Every time you feel thirsty, Allah provides!” (p. 209) She displays courage and boldness in saving herself from a vulture. When she sees a wild snow leopard attacking and killing a man, she is holding a stone in her hand to scare the leopard away. She keeps her shrieks controlled, without even letting a single pebble slip, she displays strong nerves, which is unprecedented, “caring not to dislodge the pebbles ...she wanted to scream, but lay immobile and mute on her stomach.” (p. 209-210)

The most prominent thing throughout Zaitoon’s struggle is her courage to take a bold decision to escape, determination and will to survive, which cannot be conquered by darkness, icy cold winds, loneliness, hunger, rape, pain, wild beasts, mental stress and physical exertion. It is the same unconquered will Carol discusses with Farukh termed as *Khudi*. As Farukh explains the meaning of *Khudi* for Carol, “It is the strength of nature, a force, perhaps of God, within oneself.” (p. 229) God blesses this supreme inner power to someone whose determination is strong like Zaitoon, unshakable by any worldly force. It is the level of self-actualisation, when one decides his destiny instead of leaving it on fate. Zaitoon exercised the power that Allah has given to the humans. Zaitoon shapes her destiny, and her will gives her strength, as Farukh mentions. “You know the girl who ran away? I think she forced her destiny, exercised her *Khudi*. I am sure she will make it.” (p. 229) Through Zaitoon’s character, Sidhwa attempts to infuse strength in women, which can make them realise that *Khudi* is not some gender-based entity. Any human being can possess and exercise it.

5.6 The Exploitation of Women based on Religion: Blurring the lines between Culture and Religion

Sidhwa highlights the killing and exploitation of people based on religion at the time of partition. Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims all were slaughtered by each other for the sake of revenge as a consequence of partition that was made to get freedom. As long as exploitation of women on the basis of religion is concerned, women are depicted as being exploited because of their poor belief. Nikka narrates how he was called every year to Banaras for the puja of the Holy Spring, where childless women would come to make god Shiva merciful to them. He is a Muslim but has learnt verses of Hindu religion to show himself as a follower of the god Shiva, “Nikka affected the mien of a Brahmin priest and chanted; Hey Bhagwan-Harey Ram, Harey Ram.” (p. 37) Nikka is called every year to serve there. “There is much chanting of mantras..., distribution of sanctified sweets and drink; until women get stupefied, quite stupefied. You can do with them what you like.” (p. 37)

In an Islamic culture after partition, women in Lahore are described as living in the closed houses, mainly in those parts of homes where no fresh air is available, as already mentioned. Women are not expected to go to school. The only education they are supposed to have is of Holy Quran. Miriam objects to Qasim’s decision to send Zaitoon to school. “Now that she’s learned to read the Holy Quran, what will she do with more reading and writing - boil and drink it?” (p. 52) The society of 1940s is illustrated as a restrictive society which inhibits women’s economic independence. Despite the freedom of country from colonisation, women are still not completely independent. They have no role and contribution to the society other than being household women. Men still enslave them. Rehman stresses the need to work on the ecofeminist approach in the *Pakistani* literature and highlights the importance of criticising the biases of discussing every subject under radical Islamism. Women rights activists of Pakistan write on the ecological and feminist activism, but it remains in oblivion.

There is a need to highlight their work and encourage more work in this field (2019, p. 4). Bapsi writes that “Iqbal’s dynamic vision of Muslim brotherhood reaching beyond the confines of nationality, a mystic poet’s vision became the property of bureaucrats and even more petty religious fanatics, those who continue to misuse religion for exploitation of women.” (p.85)

5.7 Women’s Link with Nature: The Spirituality

In “*The Bride*,” women and nature link is the most obvious. This is an intricate and passionate work woven around history, geography, nature and feminism. Throughout the narration, Sidhwa has included the details of nature that surround the characters and locale. She has used adjectives to amplify the description of the nature. Words like mountains, streams, savage gusts of wind, rippling wheat, swells of breeze, colours of stones and sound of water, animals, crops, and many other such expressions are repetitively used by her, to make the narration more effective for hearts and minds of the readers. For instance, she describes a weather change in the following words, “A soft breeze from the foothills of the Himalayas gently nudged the merciless summer away.” (p.50) The water flow in Kohistan is explained as “The raucous stream hurtled headlong in a spray of foam into the main waters of the Indus.” (p. 115) She expresses the pain that she feels about the division of the land. Her use of language elaborating the partition of India and Pakistan is self-explicit to establish her link with nature. “The earth is not easy to carve up; India required a deft and sensitive surgeon.” (p. 14) While reading such lines in her narration, one feels that earth is like a living thing for Sidhwa. She felt earth carelessly “butchered.” She explains the dawn as “creeping on the land,” (p. 31) as if it is some living creature.

There are metaphors in the text suggesting Sidhwa’s approach towards nature as something living. ... “The girl, perched on Qasim’s shoulder, gazed excitedly at all the people grinding together like wheat kernels in a mill.” (p. 33) Her protagonist and other

women are linked with nature. Carol, Afshan, Zaitoon, Hamida are expressed to be linked with nature more than their men. Sidhwa strengthens Gaard's view of women's intimate relationship with nature. She thinks that they can bring ecological change because of their intimate relationship with nature. (Gaard, 2010, p. 47) Contrarily, the male characters of "*The Bride*" are least linked to nature physically or spiritually. Through her narration, Sidhwa has proven that nature helped a woman escape from an unknown hostile mountainous region, which was a habitat of violent men.

The protagonist, Zaitoon, displays a spiritual connection with nature. During her travel, while passing by the river, she dips her hands in the river and feels horrified as if someone from within the river was pulling her hand. She immediately pulls her hands out of the water, screaming. That could be interpreted a spiritual warning about the forthcoming ordeal, and threat to her life. Zaitoon's fascination with the mountainous region and her groom start fading away gradually. After her marriage, she finds a refuge in the river side. The road by the river helps her live in the past, and track her life back to Lahore. During her ten days of runaway, she is depicted to have a strong spiritual ability to perceive threats, get help from Allah, strengthens her determination by the recitation of verses from the Holy Quran, control her body needs and take critical decisions. Through the dark moonless nights, she can see objects and movements of living beings, while hiding her presence. Roaring waters of the River infuses strength in her. "The comforting roar of the river throbbed in her ears and once more her instinct for life came to the surface." (p. 232)

When Zaitoon could see the lights of *Dubair* from its bridge, despite being tired, frightened and hazy her mind alerts her against making even a smallest error. Standing pressed against the rocks near the bridge, she hallucinates of Sakhi slitting her throat. "She knew that what she had experienced was not a dream, "then what was that? ... a premonition? She was suddenly aware that she had been given an unexpected insight." (p. 235) Or perhaps

a guidance to be careful in changing her destiny. Controlling the urge to reach any passer-by for help, she stayed calm and waited for the sunrise; till she could recognise someone whom she could trust to save her life. Ultimately, she gets a chance to meet major Mushtaq. Major Mushtaq is astonished to see the girl safe. He felt relieved, and wondered why the tribal men had not been able to find her in her hiding? Later from the shape of the rocks, he could guess that this inverted cradle had hid the girl perfectly from the sight of lethal men. (p. 239)

Rehman is of the view that “*Pakistani* women’s attachment to their environment and their environmental concerns and issues are often ignored because patriarchal discourses taking support of religion are dominant in multiple realms.” (Rehman, 2019, p. 4) Bapsi Sidhwa has however, presented the solution. Her protagonist draws strength from the nature. Gaard also elaborates it through ecofeminism, which has its theoretical base in the sense of “self-connected with all life, this connected self is mostly depicted by women and non-dominant groups on the bases of class, gender, religion and technology.” Sidhwa’s protagonist Zaitoon also exemplifies France’s views, who draws focus on the dichotomy of body and mind. France highlights that the body is mortal, and the mind can help bring souls out of suppression. (2011, p. 40)

5.8 Conclusion

The novel is considered to be an eco-feminist piece showing strong links of the women with nature and a meaningful effort by Sidhwa to offer Zaitoon as a role model for women to liberate themselves using their innate qualities, strengths and potential, exhibiting the spirit of material ecofeminism. Sidhwa has related her female protagonist to an intellectual level too. Her protagonist, Zaitoon, is someone who knows how to preserve her individuality. She is a daring character. She travels with Qasim to fulfil her teen dreams about a bridegroom from the mountains. When she faces the harsh realities, her fantasies and body needs do not make her hostage to these unrealistic dreams. She loses interest in her husband when

she experiences his abusive and rude behaviour. Thereafter, she becomes cold and non-responsive to him in the bed. When he beats her very hard on the riverbank, she reacts physically by kicking him and throwing stones at him. There on, she decides to run away to overcome all the problems and sufferings. Sidhwa has included the concept of *Khudi* in this novel; a concept from the poet of East Allama Muhammad Iqbal. *Khudi* is that mental and spiritual state which makes man bold and courageous, more importantly self-dependent. When an individual's decisions become his or her destiny. The idea of connecting the concept of *Khudi* with Zaitoon is that it is not a gendered quality, anyone can possess this trait and capitalise upon it.

The novel highlights many aspects of the *Pakistani* society of 1940s that is strongly dominated by men misusing culture, traditions and religious thought. In this society, women are considered as beasts of burden and reproductive machines. *Burqa* (veil) is also a status symbol, and only those women wear *burqa* who are considered well off in the society. As Miriam starts wearing a *burqa* like other women around her only when she feels that *Nikka* had become a wealthy man. Education is not considered important for girls. Similarly, working women are looked at suspiciously. Men who are ready to flirt with their friends' wives are ready to kill their own wives even if they suspect them to be guilty of similar act. Tribesmen, who do not intervene when a husband beats his wife savagely, instantaneously get united to kill a girl if she dares to run from their repressive system, in the name of religion and tribal honour. Many men and women lose their lives in the name of honour; however, these double standards impact women more. The novel also highlights the destruction of ecology by humans in the name of development. Issues like deforestation and destruction of nature for the construction and development, water pollution, the spread of disease are included in this novel.

Ecofeminism suggests that women nature link can be profitably used for the preservation of ecology, and that the strong relationship of women with nature can be a source of the liberation of women and nature. Few writers opine that the portrayal of nature and women as weaker and subjugated strengthen patriarchal domination. Women are exchanged for debts like commodity. Like a barren land, women who cannot bear children are also termed as “barren.” Linkage of women with nature as established by Sidhwa in the novel supports Gaard’s argument. Through her own narrative technique, Bapsi Sidhwa connects ecological preservation with the liberation of women.

Material ecofeminism believes in the empowerment of women, their material value and potential not lesser than men. Aspects of material ecofeminism can be very aptly applied to the character of Zaitoon. She displays physical courage and will to defy the societal based shackles despite all odds. She physically reacts to her husband’s violence. Notwithstanding trauma of rape and viciousness of those men, she recollects herself with determination, over comes all the fears and attains emancipation.

Women in “*The Bride*” are depicted being victimised due to the brutalities of partition consequent to inconsiderate decisions of the colonisers. Analysis of this novel, using the theoretical lens of ecofeminism, specifically material eco feminism, also helps focus on a unique angle to the exploitation of women and nature of former colonies. The men, who were colonised along with land experienced merciless exploitation for centuries. Drawing inspiration from the colonial masters, they wish to exercise identical mastery over women and nature. In the area of Pakistan under review, the serene and untouched lands of Pakistan’s northern areas experienced the exploitation too. This exploitation primarily perpetuates for the material gains only. These gains make men stronger and consequently the patriarchy. In a natural manner the women must also benefit from the material gains that their men make, but in the society under review it doesn’t happen so. The women keep suffering. Despite the

increase in resources their lives remain miserable. Fetching water, cutting wood, sowing crops tending animals, without domestic help remains their responsibility. The women, unfortunately, are not the beneficiary of prosperity, development and consequent modernity.

CHAPTER 6: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF “*THE BRIDE*” AND “*THE DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS*” FROM AN ECOFEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

6.1 Introduction

The comparison of the selected novels is being undertaken using the lens of eco-criticism, ecofeminism along with their various shades, especially the material ecofeminism. These selected works have been analysed against six major elements that have been chosen sequel to the literature review, finalisation of the conceptual framework, the research approach and the methodology being used for this thesis. To meet the research objectives and find answers to the research questions, an exhaustive examination of the selected novels; “*The Bride*” by Bapsi Sidhwa and “*The Dark Holds No Terrors*” by Shashi Deshpande has been conducted in Chapters 4 and 5. Comparison of the portrayed societies of Pakistan and India, having differences and similarities on women subordination and exploitation of nature, have been the main focus. To establish the position of this research, the findings of the study have been compared with the previous studies undertaken on both the authors and their books. At the end of this chapter, some recommendations are included for future researchers.

6.2 Domination of Women in Pakistan and India: A Comparison of Both Societies

The times and settings of both the novels are different. “*The Bride*” depicts 1947, the time of partition of the Indian subcontinent that resulted in the creation of two countries; Pakistan and India. Tragedies and plight of people at the time of partition are well highlighted in this novel. It portrays the society of newly born Pakistan that was in the process of adjusting with the newer identity, and was to take the path to modernity and development.

“*The Dark Holds No Terrors,*” on the other hand, is written about the Indian society of the 1980s, a time when values were changing, new vistas of job opportunities and education were opening to the people of India. Despite religious and cultural differences and the time differential of 23 years, one can find many commonalities between both the

societies, especially from the patriarchal perspective. This novel comprises many female characters to depict the predicament of women in the Indian patriarchal society. According to the novel, sons are preferred over daughters. During her growing years, Sarita the protagonist, and eldest child of Kamala, faces criticism for one thing or the other. Her mother is presumed as a very strict woman who is a staunch supporter and promotor of patriarchy. She keeps instructing Sarita to understand and follow the patriarchal codes. Sarita's mother often blames her for her brother's death and harshly asks Sarita why did she not die instead of her brother? In the Indian religious customs, the sons are expected to light the pyre when parents die, the girls cannot. That is why boys are brought up with extra care and are given more love and preference over the girls. Deshpande highlights this aspect when she writes about Sarita's parents, particularly her mother, who gives preferential treatment to her brother Dhruva. He is seldom refused for anything, while Sarita seldom gets what she desires for.

Similarly, in "*The Bride*", sons are portrayed to be more valuable, as well as dominating over women, even mothers. Though there is no comparison presented by Sidhwa between any two children of the same family, Sakhi, son of Hamida in *Kohistani* patriarchal society of Pakistan, frequently displays a violent behaviour and mistreats house women and animals too. Instead of respecting, he abuses and beats his mother even. His mother, who has raised Sakhi with lots of love through multiple troubles, is considered inferior to her son. She is not expected to interfere in his decisions, nor is she allowed to give a suggestion. Not even out of love, care and passion for Sakhi. In *Kohistan*, women are treated just like a commodity by men. They are not considered as living beings who possess feelings and intellect. They can be traded or bartered for financial or blood feuds.

Bapsi and Deshpande identify the biological, mental and psychological changes occurring in girls during their growing ages. Menstruation is a major physical change of a female body. Both the writers elaborate the first menstruation of their protagonists, Zaitoon

and Sarita. During their menstrual days, Sarita is treated as untouchable. She is not allowed to enter the kitchen. She is served food in separate crockery. Contrary to Sarita's mother, Miriam, the foster mother of Zaitoon, is defined as an understanding, helpful and kind lady during these times. Miriam consoles the girl, guides her to manage mensuration, and educates her about her puberty and reproductive system. Zaitoon is, therefore, not under stress at this point of her life.

Intra-female bondage exists in both the depicted societies. In Pakistan, women gatherings, moving around collectively and sharing personal issue are common. Same is seen in the depicted Indian society. Sarita and her friends are quite close to each other. Women have a life of their own as well. They spend plenteous time together. However, in the illustrated societies, the girls are portrayed as suppressed and kind of harassed and under scrutiny for their dressing up, and appearance. They are under continuous pressure to cover their bodies. The extra stress to cover their bodies and their mistreatment creates hatred in their minds about their being females.

Women in the tribal society, as depicted by Bapsi, are taken and treated as beasts of burdens and treated almost like non-living entities. In "*The Bride*," Sakhi, just to show his manhood and prove his superiority abuses and beats a bull brutally. When her mother tries to stop him from his savageness for the poor bull, he beats and abuses his mother in the similar manner. Likewise, he is arrogant and cruel with his wife. The bull, mother and wife; all three of them fall in the same category for him. Women perform all household tasks in *Kohistan*, including tending of animals, fetching water, bringing firewood, growing crops and cooking food. But they are not allowed to speak a single word against men's choice or even to enjoy by going to the river side. "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" presents a story of a female who had been tied to a peg with animals by her in laws and fed with them like dogs. Consequent to

this inhuman treatment, she ultimately dies. These incidences indicate that sometimes women are treated like animals in both the societies.

Women are exploited in the name of religion and mythological beliefs. In "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*," many mythological characters are cited by Deshpande. She has criticised the typical imaginary constructs that are meant to persuade women to be servile and obedient to their husbands, even if they are brutally violent to them. Sarita, the protagonist of the novel, criticises the cultural constructs of the Indian society. She mentions how in a marital relation men and women are never considered as equals? Her speech in a girl's college is written like a satire on the portrayed Indian society. She commences her speech by narrating a mythological story in which a woman was cursed just because she refused to submit herself as a servant to her husband, who had married someone else. In a very powerful fictional writing style, Deshpande inscribes how men have crafted these mythological stories to stress upon women that their prime duty is to serve and sacrifice for their husband. No matter what? Regardless of their happiness or sorrow.

There is another such story in which a woman does not wake her husband up from sleep, even when their child is about to get a burnt from a spreading fire. It is conveyed that due to her this act of utmost submission of not disturbing her husband's sleep, as a reward for her act the fire cools off divinely. Through these mythical examples women are induced to remain subservient and obedient to men. Their dominance prevails and is strengthened by these religious and mythical trappings. A husband in the illustrated society is expected to be always superior in education, longer in height, better in profession and economically more empowered than the wife. Whenever and where ever this equation tilts in favour of a wife, it impacts the marital relationship negatively, drawing ire and sometimes sadist behaviour from husbands.

Similarly, in the depicted *Pakistani* society, women are kept in a separate world; a world of *burqas* (veils), enclosed living, restricted to household and reproduction. They are shown living in dingy rooms where mattresses smell of baby's urine. Generation after generation babies keep coming, making that smell permanent, poignant and persistent. Sidhwa has described how women are expected to just cook, feed babies and serve the masters of their houses when they visit them. The girls can be educated in schools till the attainment of puberty. Thereafter, they can get only the religious education, training in the household like cooking, knitting and stitching etc. Learning the prevalent societal norms and adopting these, is like icing on the cake for them. Islam as a religion, does not stop women from going to schools and universities for getting education, have a job or do a business for earning. The best example is the first wife of The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Hazrat Khadija (RA), who was a rich business woman, 15 years elder to Him (PBUH) and above all she herself proposed the marriage. The man created the restrictions in the *Pakistani* society are to keep women dependent and subordinated to men. All aimed at strengthening their dominance.

Patriarchal society thrives on, and promotes twin domination. In the environs portrayed in the selected novels; to keep women subjugated, the marriage is promoted as the primary purpose of the lives of the women. Their attempts at the emancipation through women embodiment to include education, earning and living a life of their choice are hence discouraged strongly. Sarita's mother objects her desire of admission in the medical college, because they will have to spend money on her marriage too. Either that money can be used for her marriage, or she can utilise that for her studies. Other female characters like Samita and Vidya in "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" are educated, but their ultimate priority is marriage and having kids. Vidya is not allowed to pursue her career as an actress by her husband after marriage. Economic dependence of the women on the men is one of the major

factors depicted by Deshpande that strengthen the patriarchy. At times women are not allowed to take up jobs, even after attaining higher qualifications. To highlight the plight of educated, but unemployed women in a patriarchal society, Deshpande depicts Samita, a friend of the protagonist as an example. She remains dependent upon her husband for her minor needs even. Whole life of such women is spent planning to secretly save some money from the little amount given to them for basic needs by their husbands. The fate can be different if they are economically independent. The way material feminism advocates.

Sarita is explained as the strongest of the females in "*The Dark Holds No Terrors.*" Economic independence, as espoused by material ecofeminism, is one of the core reasons for that strength. She does not have to rely upon her parents, husband or in-laws for her basic needs and her children's needs. In the depicted *Pakistani* society of 1947/48 as presented by Sidhwa in "*The Bride,*" women career-making is a rare phenomenon. Women in that society are marginalised, and they are conditioned to perform their defined constructed roles that they are seldom found thinking about economic independence or having jobs. Carol, an American woman, gradually becomes reluctant to share her job details when she realises that taking up a job by woman is like a taboo in the portrayed *Pakistani* society.

Culture and Society's role in complementing the domination of women is apparent in both the works. Sarita, who is having a lavish life style and has achieved professional excellence with economic independence, has married a man of her own choice and has kids. Yet, she becomes victim of patriarchy when her husband feels insecure because of her better social and economic position. Their life is disturbed due to the societal pressures. People in that society keep questioning and commenting about Sarita being 'bread and butter earner' of the family instead of her husband Manohar. Resultantly, because of his inferiority complex and to express his dominance over his wife, he turns sadist. He becomes cruel in the bed.

Sarita's speech in the girls' college exudes the pain she is going through because of imbalance in husband-wife relationship equation due to her better status in the society.

Sakhi, a man of *Kohistan*, had been raised with the falsely constructed tribal values of honour and prestige in the typical sense. He cares for Zaitoon initially, brings her food and consoles her in her grief. Due to blames and taunts of his brother, his male ego and pride are hurt. Resultantly, he beats the bull and his mother to scare Zaitoon and establish his dominance over the females and animals alike. No one comes to rescue Zaitoon when Sakhi beats her. That society supports him to kill her when Zaitoon runs away from home to save her life. Both novelists have highlighted the society's role in obliging men and women to follow the defined roles. Linked to the institution of marriage, dowry is described as another tool of exploitation by Deshpande. In the portrayed society, people demand dowry from parents of the bride. "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" presents as to how the exploitation of one family is linked with the other family through dowry. People demand dowry from the parents of their daughter in laws to fulfil demands of in laws of their daughters. Sidhwa has not highlighted the dowry system in the *Pakistani* society though, but she has amply projected the way women are traded as commodity in the monetary deals. Women are handed over to others in the form of marriage to settle the debts.

6.3 Nature – Women Link, and Ecological Destruction in the Works of Sidhwa and Deshpande

"*The Dark Holds No Terrors*," is more of a socioecological work. However, Shashi Deshpande's protagonist Sarita, her daughter and the priest's son Mahadev are shown having some empathy for the nature. However, In "*The Bride*," throughout her narration, Sidhwa has added minor details of the green fields, animals, shades of mountains, water, trees, orchards and breeze. She presents the impact of humans on ecology and women simultaneously, linked enough to make a reader realise that ecology and women are both being destroyed. In the

setting of the partition of the subcontinent, human migration is presented along with the destruction of land and animals to depict an ecological damage. She has presented a vivid picture of the partition of one country into two whose borders are drawn with the blood of one million humans. Along with ruthless hunting of animals and environmental and water pollution, she has presented honour killing of men and women too. A run-away protagonist of Sidhwa's story is described standing in a place where hills are sold out as merchandise and trees are cut for material benefits too, leaving the place barren and unattractive. The spirit of the post-colonial ecocriticism, post-colonial ecofeminism and ecofeminism for earth can be seen in these aspects throughout "*The Bride*."

Women are connected with the nature also due to their devised roles in the society. They fetch water, take care of household and animals, and collect wood to make fire to cook, produce and raise the children too. They are more attached to nature. They love animals more than men. Zaitoon at a very early age, at the time of partition, requests her father to take her pet calf along. Hamida, in her old age, runs to save a bull from her son. Sidhwa has explicitly presented that traditional women nature link, which men exploit to strengthen their domination. Women are used as beasts of burden and to settle debts like property. They are termed to be barren, like land, if they cannot bear children.

"*The Bride*" is full of arguments supporting what the ecofeminists say about domination of women by men, based on women nature link. Moreover, it also presents the ecofeminists argument of women's spiritual link with nature. Sidhwa's protagonist utilises the power of nature to respond to all threats to her life. She derives strength from nature and nature is presented to be helping her in running away and save her life. She is portrayed as a symbol for all women in the society who are under permanent pressure of honour killing and subjugation. Zaitoon feels someone pulling her into the river. She interprets it as a divine message of impending threats. When she sees a woman's head severed from body floating in

the river, it scares her further. These incidents give her inspiration to run away to save her life and avoid meeting an end like those women. It makes her visualise that her head could be floating in the same river soon, if she does not escape.

However, Sidhwa has presented her female protagonist Zaitoon as an agent of change with the potential to defy these exploitative codes. Through a strong female protagonist, she delivers a message to all suppressed women to change their destiny through courage and their innate material and physical abilities. She has presented a woman with the potential to utilise her spiritual link with nature to protect her life and seek freedom. In the backdrop of postcolonial ecocriticism and material ecofeminism, the novel is structured around the story of partition. The pain, agony, loss of lives, death of animals, burning of crops and properties suffered for the partition and independence, could not bless women with independence. The protagonist of the story, Zaitoon, is also a victim of the partition. She lost her parents and is brought up by a Kohistani man Qasim who had come to the plains of Punjab for a job. The girl is taken care of by a Muslim woman Miriam who is a staunch believer of typical constructed code of society for women. Despite all, Zaitoon possesses extraordinary potentials to defy the prevalent norms and rules. Though Miriam opposes Zaitoon's marriage without consent, yet she believes that women are only there to marry, cook and bear children. Therefore, she opposes girls' education.

Through this novel, Sidhwa has attempted to convey the message to women of the suppressed patriarchal society of Pakistan that any woman can exhibit traits like Zaitoon. Zaitoon is a common girl of the depicted society. She exhibits unusual traits despite having grown up in the same patriarchal set up. Carol, coming from a developed country, having white skin and speaking English eloquently does not possess these qualities. She is portrayed as suppressed too, but she tries to find other solutions for her life. She is not portrayed to possess *Khudi*. Instead of resisting the suppression, she decides to quietly go back to her

home in the USA. However, Sidhwa presents a girl of darker complexion, from a humble background, with minimum education, as role model, possessing *Khudi* to stand against savagery and men domination. She decides to save her life with such a strength that she conquers all fears and pains including hunger and some nostalgic feelings of love of initial few days from her husband. Even her rape does not diminish her resolve to change her destiny. She gathers strength from the pains emanating from her breast and other body parts. She could not be colonised by the ones who are termed untameable in the novel. Women like Zaitoon, who can dare to take decision of their choice, are sensitive to nature, can control their fears, can sense and foresee looming troubles, are better equipped to protect themselves and ecology. This novel portrays liberation of women and women's spiritual connection with nature explicitly.

Another aspect is pertinent to mention. The depicted society also has men like Ashiq Hussain and Nikka, who have positive attitude and humane demeanour. Nikka is faithful to Miriam and has no problem with her being "barren." He has never been depicted as a dominating or abusive husband. In their argument, Warren and Erkal (1997, p. 4-8) extend discussion on ecofeminism by explaining connections between women and nature. They are of the view that women suffer first-hand because of the environmental degradation. Therefore, women are likely to be more concerned about ecological degradation. More women and children die of water-related diseases worldwide because they cannot migrate or travel easily for different reasons, especially being physically fragile and vulnerable. Hence, "*The Bride*" supports Warren and Erkal's views by explaining women closer to nature.

"*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" does not contain too much of ecological details of the setting. It does not touch upon ecological issues, including water pollution, deforestation, and mistreatment of the animals in that society. The novel is mostly focused on the treatment of

women in the Indian society that is divided in societal strata, and is predominantly patriarchal.

However, this novel does highlight spiritual connection of women with nature. The female protagonist of the novel derives peace and strength from nature. The best moment from her past is, her times spent in the orchard. She takes refuge in that place, and forgets about all her fears and worries originating from her mother's attitude. Sarita's daughter is also fascinated by thick forests and sea beaches. Her paintings are expressive of her link with the environment. In the novels under study, the novelists have linked women liberation from the dominating forces by exploring the unexplored inner potentials of the women. Sidhwa presents Zaitoon discovering her inner potentials and utilising her strong spiritual link with nature for her freedom.

In Deshpande's "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*," it is a woman, Sarita, who is presented as an empowered and independent female. Despite this she makes all her efforts for preserving her marriage, and family moorings against all odds and pressures. Deshpande's protagonist, therefore, is not a rebel but a redeemed wife. She honours relationships and accepts the responsibilities. She does not do this because of the societal pressures, but it is her own choice and decision. Her strong personality and ability to make important decisions for her life, according to her desires remain her strengths. She is a promising doctor, a responsible mother, a good wife, and a caring daughter. She, however, gives preference to herself when it's a matter of choice between her and others.

Deshpande's protagonist is a woman who presents an entirely different picture of a female compared to the protagonists presented by most of the contemporary novelists of her time. Deshpande has established living realities of her female characters and their material needs, including money, food, health, individual identity, privacy and equality. Deshpande quotes "*The Dhammapada*," a famous Buddhist text. It has 423 verses and is known to be

written in the 3rd century BC. *Dhamma* means teachings, and the word *pada* is used for “path.” The quote says, “You are your refuge: there is no other refuge. This refuge is hard to achieve.” (p.7) The novelists focussed on the inner strengths of the protagonists to fight against the problems they are suffering from. In Sidhwa’s case, her protagonist is struggling to save her life. Deshpande presents her protagonist fighting against all odds of the society.

Another difference between both novelists’ approaches towards ecofeminism is that, Deshpande has highlighted problems faced by the male characters of the society and their positive traits as well. Deshpande’s male characters are also seen as victims of the society. They also transform their behaviour when the societal pressure is removed from them or when they stop bothering about those pressures. However, the noticeable point is that despite their weakness, none of the men is forced to change his identity, the way wives in that society have to. None of the males is financially dependent the way women are. Manohar earns lesser than Sarita, but he is not dependent upon her the way Samita suffers from being dependent upon her husband. Her male characters are presented as caring. Male characters in both novels have not been projected to possess spiritual connection with the nature. That signifies that both novelists intend to project female characters, their abilities and problems.

6.4 Similarities and Differences between Female Protagonists of Sidhwa and Deshpande

Female protagonists of both novelists are strong, daring, and possess abilities to express their desires and use their potential to defy constructed norms of the society. The protagonist of “*The Bride*” grows up without parents. She learns the norms and values from the society she grows in. Miriam and Sikandar are the main characters in her life before she gets married. She is depicted as a lively girl participating in marriage ceremonies and throwing jolly comments on Miriam. Her character is uncomplicated till she is asked about her marriage by Miriam. She has a choice to fight, but she prefers to follow her father’s

decision until she feels problems associated with it after reaching in that area. She decides not to marry Sakhi, a man from those mountains. She is daring enough to convey this disagreement to her foster father. She demands her father to marry her with the soldier Ashiq Hussain, a man from plains instead of Sakhi. She is bold enough to confront soldiers and tackle an untoward situation created by her father. She convinces soldiers successfully that it was an accidental fire, not aimed at the army truck.

After the forced marriage, she tries her best to live and settle down with Sakhi. She does all the work women are expected to perform in that mountainous area. She takes care of her mother-in-law, and tolerates Sakhi's stubborn behaviour even when he beats her for trivial things. But she has a limit for tolerance. When she feels that Sakhi can even kill her, she runs for her life. Her resolve to run away, to escape the miseries and sufferings, and her courage to overcome all hurdles in the route are indicative of her innate strength. She is presented as an epitome of courage and wisdom.

Sarita, the protagonist of "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" from the very first days of her childhood. She is presented as a defiant who resents her mothers' discriminatory attitude and undue pressures. She reacts to everything which suppresses her. Deshpande has written about her inner thoughts of a girl child from the very start. Sidhwa has not written about the inner feelings of Zaitoon when she loses her parents, or is forced to quit school after attaining puberty. Deshpande has highlighted the feelings and the thought process of her protagonist. Sarita is jealous of her brother. She avoids to sleep with him in the same room and teases him by pinching. She hates her mother's snubbing and criticising behaviour towards her. She fights for the attainment of higher education, decides for marriage of her choice, and despite all odds chooses to preserve her marriage. When she experiences a perpetuating nerves wrecking relationship, she leaves her house and goes to her father. She represents the middle-class women of 1980s Indian society, but she is portrayed as a strong character from

the very start of the novel. She is a dutiful doctor, a caring mother, an understanding wife till her husband becomes unreasonable. She struggles more than her husband to make their life prosperous. Still, she does not believe in sacrificing her individuality and personal happiness.

6.5 Positioning of the Research

In the backdrop of the theme of study, framed questions, theoretical underpinnings, methodological design. and analysis carried out already, the positioning of this research, evidencing the empirics, is discussed in following part.

6.5.1 “The Dark Holds No Terrors”

This research that is being conducted to achieve defined objectives for it, also supplements few other researches already done on this novel. In her work, Nair (2010, p. 175) highlights the rootedness of Deshpande’s novels in the Indian daily life, ancestral homes, traditions, family bonds and the relationships that always play important roles in the Indian society under discussion. This thesis also supplements her findings. Priscilla emphasises “a balance between the traditional respect for the family as an institution and the Western idea of self-identity and expression as a working philosophy for the Indian woman.” (Priscilla B, 2018, p. 385) Asha (2012, p. 159), in her research on Deshpande’s “*The Dark Holds No Terrors*,” has focused on ecofeminism, but she has explored the parallels between the western ecofeminism and postcolonial Indian ecofeminism. This research additionally focuses on the material strains of ecofeminism, hence contributes to the already existing research on the novel. However, woman as an agent of change is not highlighted in Asha’s research. Neither has she discussed the possibilities for women to surmount the boundaries and barriers erected by culture and tradition, which could be a way forward for women’s contribution to the ecological preservation or their spiritual and material emancipation.

Asha (2012, p.159) terms Sarita’s confidence and her daring trait of being a professional as an attempt to adopt a “masculine” identity. This research finds out how Sarita

guards and preserves her privacy and individual identity. She is nowhere found over awed and dominated by men. Sowmya (2016), in her research titled “*Man in Shashi Deshpande’s The Dark Holds No Terrors: A Study*,” further explains how Shashi Deshpande portrays her male characters as victims of patriarchal society. This research discusses these characters in detail. Sometime they are the victims of patriarchal values too, but are not subjugated the way women are. Their names and identities are not changed. Their enduring sufferings to prove their loyalty, and eating family’s leftover food has however not been discussed as such. They run away from home if they find themselves under pressure. Sometimes their mothers, wives and daughters suffer because of their unreasonable attitude and violent behaviour.

Rajakumari (2018, p. 809) highlights how women is exploited but by a women. In Chapter Four, this research has analysed the character of Kamala Tai in detail. In addition to her role as women in charge of the house, she acts as a custodian of patriarchal values, and she is also found to be the victim of patriarchy. The research complements Manohar’s claims about Shashi Deshpande (2015, p. 310-311), who believes that she is the first rank novelist of the contemporary times. She has projected women’s emotional predicament due to the prevalent social issues of the Indian society. She has used the stream of consciousness as a technique to narrate Sarita’s emotional commotion. Her reactions towards the societal injustice can be seen through her stream of thoughts. The research also complements Singh’s (2019) observation about Deshpande’s female characters. She uses her characters to convey hidden, mythical and symbolic messages.

6.5.2 “The Bride”

This thesis complements Alvi, Baseer, Zahoor (2012, p. 87-92), who believe that Bapsi Sidhwa, while portraying the gender-based patriarchal society of Pakistan, has presented an alternative to the Pakistani literature that depicts women being weak, and

dominated. Her protagonist breaks these myths, This research, therefore, can be considered as an extension of their work with a difference of the application of ecofeminist and material ecofeminism. Ahmad (2013, p. 1-5) has also elaborated on the aspects of the misuse of the institution of marriage as discussed in this research. Ahmad's review concludes that Sidhwa had raised a question on the institution of marriage in the patriarchal society of Pakistan by depicting three marriages in the novel. The marriage is considered a religious obligation in the subcontinent, but sometimes women are treated like transactional objects in marriages. Ahmad explains how Bapsi's heroines are married to men for balancing the feuds, financial debts and keeping generational relationships intact. In addition to Ahmed's research, this research aims to bring out those aspects of Sidhwa's work that can help liberate women from the patriarchal constructs of the *Pakistani* society. Another study conducted to compare the status of females in the African and *Pakistani* societies concluded that females are subjugated in both the societies. The research brings examples from an African Novel, "*The Joys of Motherhood* and *The Pakistani Bride*," to elaborate the similarities of the treatment of women in the Indian and African societies. (Salman et al., 2015, pp 6395-6401) Even the similarities like "barrenness" of the land and women are seen in the African, Indian and the *Pakistani* societies. Men exploit marital bond misusing religion to keep women subordinated.

Mazhar, Jamil and Aslam (2015, p. 35-39) also highlight the subjugation of women in the *Pakistani* society. They have underlined the plight of women with a special focus on patriarchy, but have not focused on the misuse of religion and exploitation of the institution of marriage. They overlooked the innate strength of women that can help them defy exploitation. They have also not included the ecological perspective in their review of "*The Bride*" that not only highlights the feminist issues, but also proposes the solutions to these dilemmas. This research views "*The Bride*" as an ecological novel as well. Ross (1991) terms the act of Zaitoon to run away from home to save her life as a challenge to patriarchy.

Ross even calls it a victory against the dominating male characters. Ross sees Zaitoon as a symbol of human spirit, who struggles and exists with integrity. She not only raises her voice against the male dominated society and its oppression, but stands up to it. She tries to stop the domestic violence by reacting to Sakhi's vicious behaviour. She dares fight a society in which a man is judged as a man only if he can control a woman effectively. For men of "*The Bride*" it does not matter whether a woman belongs to the western society or a *Pakistani* society, she is just a woman; like Zaitoon, Afshan and Carol. Women not belonging to some *Kohistani* tribe are considered inferior, hence doubly suppressed.

Zaitoon, however, demonstrates bravery and courage. Ross believes that her this act "endorses a challenge to the structure of patriarchy." (Ross, 1991) This thesis has given a considerable space to discuss the human spirit mentioned by Ross in her research. The determination of Zaitoon is elaborated and analysed with the textual references. It is the tenacity and determination of Zaitoon's that induces nature's support in attainment of the desired ends of her quest. She hence starts to control and steer her destiny to achieve victory. In addition to being a support to Ross's research, this thesis has analysed all the elements described in the novel linked with ecofeminism and material feminism. The research suggests that women's resolve can be helpful for not only liberating them from the forces of domination, rather it can contribute towards the protection of ecology as well. The higher level of determination presented by Sidhwa in Zaitoon's personality is also required to address the ecological issues.

Jabeen elaborates the idea of the colonisation of women by men in the *Pakistani* society. She is of the view that "*The Bride*" also encompasses the events preceding the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Her work encompasses women's virtual enslavement in the postcolonial patriarchal society, which augments women's oppression due to the colonial mindset and attitudes inherited by the men of the subcontinent. In "*The Bride*," Sidhwa

elaborates that women do not get free even after the freedom of the people of the subcontinent from the colonial masters. (Jabeen, 2017, p. 144) Her idea of the colonisation of women and nature is also complementary to the postcolonial ecofeminism and postcolonial ecocriticism as covered in this research. Nair (2018) also delves on the issues concerning women in the colonised India and Pakistan due to the partition. During the pre and immediate post-Independence era, the society was mostly patriarchal, dominated by male superiority and religiosity.

Mishra (2018, p. 289) has also critically analysed the feminist aspects in “*The Bride.*” She has attempted to explain the division of the urban and tribal culture as described in the novel. This novel portrays the marginalised, colonised and subjugated women who are victims of the patriarchal society. Mishra’s research does not include ecological aspects though. Kavitha and Usha (2019, p. 256-259) have also analysed women’s struggle and survival in the *Pakistani* patriarchal society. They have delved on the similarities of the *Pakistani* and the Indian cultures as well.

Maseeh (January 5, 2017, para 1) has observed that in many ways women are suppressed and mistreated alike, regardless the countries they belong to. The findings of Maseeh complement this research as she argues in her research that other minor characters of women are presented in the novel to complement the main themes of the novel. “*The Bride*” revolves around three brides and many women characters are presented in “*The Dark Holds No Terrors.*” Despite the fact that both the novels have been written by different authors, in different years and settings, most of their characters and their life stories are akin to each other. The intrinsic strength of women, their spiritual ability to connect with the nature explained by both novelists, and economic independence are the key to finding the solution to women and nature’s exploitation. In addition, there is a need to find out the ways in which weaker men could stand up and defy their suppressiveness. This research and a few other

researches have concluded that the men who exhibit patriarchal behaviours, were sometimes encouraged and even pressurized by women to do so. Perhaps, these women do so to use the shield of patriarchy to control their children. Example of Sarita's father's behaviour before and after the death of his wife is a good manifestation of this argument.

6.6 Intersectionality: Evidencing Realities of the Life

Both the novels show the glimpses of intersectionality, related to the colour of the skin as well. In the subcontinent, or perhaps in the whole of global south, the fairness of skin is considered to be an important factor for all genders, but more specifically for the females. In "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" Kamala, appears to be overly worried about the complexion of Sarita. She always advises her not to expose her skin to heat and sun, as that could turn her skin darker. She thinks that her darker complexion may affect the possibilities of a better match for her marriage in comparison to the girls who are fairer in looks. Sarita's husband Manohar, being from lower cast becomes a cause of Sarita's declared as an outcast by the family. She is disinherited for the reason that she marries a man from a lower cast.

"*The Bride,*" presents somewhat identical picture. Zaitoon is a nice young and pretty girl. When she reaches the *Kohistani* mountains, she is distinctly different in appearance from the women of that area. She is frail, not stout like the females of that area. She has a darker complexion and is considered to be from an inferior race. She is, therefore, portrayed as doubly suppressed. Her sin of running away from the miserable treatment draws extra sever wrath as she doesn't have her family moorings in that society.

Though both the countries and their founding fathers vehemently claimed as well as pleaded to their people that there would be no discrimination based on cast, creed and religion, but in practice these discriminations are unfortunate ground realities. In certain ways, religiosity and nationalism are increasing in the Pakistani and the Indian societies. At times the contemporary leaders foment and exploit the rising tide of these negative

sentiments as a political currency. Such developments are impacting not only the regional milieu, but are fuelling the internal dissensions; God forbid which may lead to the implosion of the consequent aggression. Humans have a free soul and should be allowed to grow and discover themselves.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The research has been conducted to explore the ways women are suppressed in the patriarchal societies of Pakistan and India and to explore the links between the ecological destruction and women's exploitation in the discussed societies. It is also aimed at exploring women's potential to challenge the dominating forces by applying the lens of material ecofeminism along. Feminism is a women's emancipatory movement to gain equality for women and rid them of men's domination woven around cultural, societal, and religious constructs. Material ecofeminism provides a fresh context and possibility to view the objective of ridding women from the oppression by empowering them for their emancipation from the patriarchal shackles and also play a role in addressing the issue of ecological degradation. Six elements, as mentioned already, were identified to analyse selected novels written by Bapsi Sidhwa and Shashi Deshpande. Twin domination that is engendered by the dualism, women connectedness to nature, their empowerment through education and economic independence have received due attention during and through this thesis.

After the analysis of the selected novels; "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" by Shashi Deshpande and "*The Bride*" by Bapsi Sidhwa, the research concludes that both the authors have explained a journey to self-discovery by their female protagonists. The protagonists discover their potential and capabilities and make use of these to challenge societal norms constructed to subjugate them. Their innate strengths help them defy oppression and escape body harm, emotional trauma and mental torture. Sarita, the protagonist of "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" is portrayed as a woman who is determined to achieve her life ambitions. She knows that she is the one who will help in social mobilisation of her family from the status they were living in. This remarkable assertion by Deshpande can be taken as the soul of material ecofeminism. Women due to their biological make and type, their role as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers, endowed empathy for others and for roles as housewives are more

connected with the nature, hence they can play a vital role in the ecological protection as well.

Zaitoon's strength to take a bold decision to escape from the brutal environment, her determination, endurance and will to survive, that cannot be defeated by darkness, icy cold winds, loneliness, hunger, rape, pain, wild beasts, physical and mental exertion are vividly visible to a keen reader. It is the same unconquered will that Carol discusses with Farukh with reference to the philosophy of *Khudi* (self-esteem and self-reliance). Through Zaitoon's character, Sidhwa attempts to infuse a strength in women, which can help them realise that *Khudi* is not exclusive attribute of men, but a trait that can be acquired by any gender.

Patriarchy strengthens the domination of women, as well as domination and consequent degradation of nature by men. Many characters portrayed by Deshpande in "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" reveal the victimisation of both men and women by patriarchal norms that prevail in the Indian society. Madhav's brother, Sarita's father, Manohar, Boozie and Dhruva are victims of patriarchy too that can be supported, promoted and even practiced by women. Women are also portrayed as treated like animals and objects.

In these societies, sons are preferred and are more privileged than daughters. Women, at times, are treated as untouchables during menstrual days. Fathers maintain a distance from their daughters. A girl child is mother's responsibility in the Indian patriarchal society. Women are not consulted in the decision making for their marriages. If they decide to marry of their own choice, they could be unfortunately disowned and disinherited. As family heads, men are expected to earn for the whole family and also earn more than women. Sarita faces problems for the reason that she is earning more than her husband.

In "*The Bride*," Sidhwa has presented the status of women in a patriarchal society as daughters, mothers, and wives. The novel uncovers the status of women in the tribal culture of Kohistan and a comparatively modernised urban culture of Lahore alike due to the

patriarchal mind set. A double standard society is depicted, where women are kept in *burqa* (veil) and in closed rooms. Where even windows are not allowed to avoid any man having a glimpse of them. On the other hand, women are raped, molested, bought, and sold by the same men who also visit brothels. Major Mushtaq, an educated person from Punjab, comments that in Punjab they chop the noses of women for infidelity while in *Kohistan*, they kill them.

Religion and mythological beliefs are also misused to perpetuate and strengthen women domination. Stories of women's sacrifices for family, husbands, and children are part of the Indian mythology. They are narrated to indoctrinate women to sacrifice their individuality, identity, health, hunger and the children. "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" highlights all these mythological links which subjugate women. Sidhwa highlights the persecution based on the religion at the time of partition. Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims were killed by each other. Women are depicted being exploited because of their poor beliefs. Nikka narrates how he was called every year to Banaras for the puja of Holy Spring, where childless women would come to make god Shiva merciful to them and Nikka was employed to impregnate them.

Colonisation had profound impact on the society in multiple ways. The colonised men acquired the traits of colonisers. They supported the colonial power for material gains in the shape of respectable titles being facilitator and loyal subjects, got special privileges, lands and access to the high offices. They become ideals to emulate by the common people. After the colonisers left, the men used the learned tactics to develop a behaviour like them. This complemented the patriarchy. The men and women suffer through this neo colonisation that expands to the exploitation of resources, land, and more importantly women. "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" vividly explains this phenomenon; how men crown themselves as masters of their houses and families, wherein women are expected to be subservient to them and serve

with unquestioned obedience. The most significant example of the colonisation of women is the protagonist, Sarita. She is exploited like land, or a gold mine. Her body and hard earned money are being used, as well as misused, as a right by her husband. She is reluctant to express her husband's sadist behaviour to anyone because society does not consider Manohar's attitude as something bad or even unusual. It also found that women support patriarchy too. Sarita's mother is described as a staunch believer of patriarchy. She has herself spent her whole life serving kids, husband and his family, managing the household and taking care of children without complaining even during severe sickness, yet eating after every one has finished and eating lesser than them too.

In "*The Bride*", Shashi Deshpande writes about the brutal treatment of women by the miscreants during partition "They are herding and dragging the young women away." She also says that the colonisation of women by the patriarchal society has downcast women's passionate linkage with the nature. She highlights the aspect of the extinction of animals, destruction of trees, and damage to the crops following the chaos created by the hasty partition of the subcontinent.

The situation and expectation of the Pakistani society are no different. Women are not free to make a choice for their marriage, or choose professions they like to. They are not even allowed to visit their parents without the permission of husbands and in laws. Their health, hunger and education are not a priority. Parents in law and husbands change women's identities too. "*The Bride*" portrays the institution of marriage in the Islamic society of newly created Pakistan, wherein this institution is misused to dominate women and to deny their right to decide about themselves. They are considered like lands and commodity to be bartered to settle disputes, pay debts, to be like the beast of burden, and only reproductive machines.

The novels under study also reflect on the spiritual link of women with nature. Sarita relives her childhood fascination with mango gardens and grassy slopes. Her daughter has a spiritual link with the nature too, as she mostly paints natural scenes. The most obvious and noticeable thing about the link of women with nature in "*The Bride*." is a link of the protagonist with nature. Sidhwa has proven that nature helped her run from an unknown mountainous region, which was a habitat for those men who were out for hunting her. During her ten days of runaway, Zaitoon is characterised to have a strong spiritual ability to perceive threats, get help from Allah, gain strength from pains, strengthen her determination, recite verses from the Holy Quran, control her body needs and make critical decisions well in time. Misuse of the institution of marriage is highlighted in both the selected novels. "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" explains that in the Indian patriarchal society the girls are kept under societal pressure to be good in manners, stay good looking and be obedient so that they get the best match for marrying.

Sidhwa's women are connected with the nature due to their prescribed roles in the society. "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*" does not touch upon the ecological issues, including water pollution, deforestation, and mistreatment of the animals in the depicted society. The novel is purely focused on the mistreatment of women in that society-the society that is divided into classes and is quite patriarchal in its character too. However, this novel highlights the spiritual connection between women and nature.

Both the novelists have linked women's liberation from the dominating forces with self-discovery of the women. This amply proves the assertions of the material ecofeminism. Sidhwa presents Zaitoon discovering her physical embodiment and by utilising her strong spiritual link with the nature for her freedom from oppression, abuse and threat to her life. In Deshpande's "*The Dark Holds No Terrors*," it is a woman, Sarita, who is presented as an empowered female. Both the novels critically highlight the forces of domination that are

subjugating nature and women. Dominating forces harm nature, victimise women, men and all weaker species in the world. By presenting strong women both the novelists try to urge women to liberate themselves by empowering themselves through education, economic independence and using their abilities in line with the material feminism. When women are economically independent, they can easily resist the unfair attitude of the society. In case where the women have better qualification and better earning than their husbands, the husbands, their own family and the in laws family, all are induced to respect them for material benefits. Even the children turn more obedient when they are financially dependent upon their mothers. The empowered women can therefore, not only protect themselves and live a happier life. They can also play a meaningful role in the protection of ecology by their innate association with the nature.

Patriarchy engenders ruthless and uncanny exploitation of the nature by men. Their role is more mercantile in character and have material gains, development and progression by the insensitive use of the Mother Nature and sometimes without remorse. They very seldom hold the regard for the preservation of the nature. For instance, the environmental degradation has already become a reality. The global temperature has risen by 1-1.5 degrees. This has triggered the global warming. Glacier melt and unexpected weather events. Unprecedented flooding has become a regular feature of South Asia. Pakistan and India suffer through this phenomenon the most. The flooding and other such event causes the migration that impacts women the most. The children are no exception. Unpredictable weather has impacted the crops yield too. Water scarcity is yet another environmental phenomenon. Drought, lesser produce, water scarcity, damage to property and crops, death of domestic animal all impact the family but women the most. They have to fetch water, collect fire wood, cook, wash and serve. In the refugee camps post partition, or in the setting of novels under review or now, the women also have to perform all these functions. Bearing and

raring children and taking care of the extended families also falls in considered their duty. It can hence be safely concluded that consequences of the environmental degradation complement patriarchy and exacerbate women oppression and subjugation.

Colonised subcontinent was treated as a periphery. Its resources, natural as well as human, were taken to Europe going through the industrial revolution. In the name of the industrial revolution and development, exploitation of nature has multiplied. The expansion of the empire was done by the use of the military instrument. Wars, skirmishes lead to the expansion of roads and railways to support logistics. Use of explosive, machinery producing harmful fumes, the pollution that resulted from it, spoiled the environment also. Even today in the name of the development the forests, greens and fertile lands are being converted into residential, commercial and industrial projects. This desertion needs extra water. The toxic pollutants of the industry pollute rivers, seas, atmosphere and the under surface water.

7.1 Recommendations for the Future Researchers

This research has been conducted applying the lens of eco-criticism, ecofeminism, and material feminism. It presents a detailed study about the art of characterisation by Bapsi Sidhwa and Shashi Deshpande. Commonalities and differences of the patriarchal societies of Pakistan and India have been discussed in detail. The thesis is primarily a comparison of two different societies portrayed in the different times by the novelists. One suggested area for research could be the comparison of the *Pakistani* and the Indian societies, as illustrated in the novels under review, and as these exist today after the evolution of over past 76 years. A research can be written on these books and both societies applying ‘Intersectionality.’

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