

## POSTCOLONIAL SPACES: AN ECO-CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF QURATUL AIN HAIDER'S FIREFLIES IN THE MIST

Bushra Tufail<sup>1</sup>, Syeda Yasira Batool<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Wajid Riaz<sup>\*3</sup>, Dr. Kaiping Wang<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> M. Phil Students (English), The University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus

<sup>\*3</sup> Assistant Professor (English) The University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus

<sup>4</sup> Quid-e-Azam University, Islamabad

<sup>1</sup>bushiazhar84@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>yasirashah24@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup>wijisami@gmail.com,

<sup>4</sup>ayobwang1980@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: \*

Dr. Wajid Riaz

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15448460>

Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
25 March, 2025	25 April, 2025	09 May, 2025	17 May, 2025

### ABSTRACT

The relationship between man and his surrounding in literary criticism is a newly emerged field. The importance of environment and surroundings in literary works has been identified separately by the critics and it has been coined as a new term Ecocriticism. Post-colonialism is a term which is used on a broad scale in literary theory as a response to colonization. Post-colonialism brings to surface the social, economical and cultural exploitation of the subjugated people by the colonial powers. It led towards postcolonial issues like identity loss, diasporas, marginalization, binaries of Us and Other of the natives. In literary criticism both theories i.e. Ecocriticism and Postcolonialism in their combine approach have emerged a new theory as Postcolonial Ecocriticism. The consolidate approach of these poles apart theories in a literary work studies the environment and physical settings as a composite body based on humans, place, landscapes in a colonized land of Sub-continent by the colonizers. It brings to consciousness about the relationship of human and non-human that influence each other. It has been examined through the current study that the colonial tenure has affected not only the human but also non-human, controlling over land and its resources, leaving unrecoverable environmental issues even after colonization. The novel *Fireflies in the Mist* by Quratul Ain Haider exhibits the entire milieu controlled by the British as colonizers exploiting the human and non-human. The current study investigates the novel Ecocritically in the perspective of Postcolonialism, resulted the subjective interests and ecocritical channels emancipate the marginalized characters from objective position.

**Keywords:** Postcolonialism, Postcolonial spaces, ecocriticism, colonialism, Quratul Ain Haider, *Fireflies in the Mist*.

### INTRODUCTION

All the colonized nations especially the Asian and African write on the issues of colonialism because they were once colonized. Ashcroft highlights about the colonized countries which "Emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power and by emphasizing their

differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre. It is about to make them distinctively post-colonial" (Ashcroft et al., 1989, p. 2). The British placed themselves in the Centre referring them as Us and took the rest of the world as Others moving around the Centre. Said writes in *Orientalism* (1978) about the binaries the West

constructs for the East, marginalizes itself superior and the other world as inferior.

The colonized not only stroked the human but also non-human because for them the subjugated were non-human. Both the literary theories are taken into the same thread of consideration in literary criticism in which postcolonial text is treated on the basis of Ecocriticism. "Postcolonial studies has come to understand environmental issues not only as central to the projects of Europeans conquest and global domination but also inherent in the ideologies of imperialism and racism" (Huggan & Tiffin, 2005, p. 6).

The surroundings and the physical milieu put their impact upon the lives of man and they are influenced by them in all the aspects of their lives. Glotfelty (1996) also defines Ecocriticism as the physical scenario, that is non-human and has great intervention in the lives of human. According to her it includes all the things which are not human but they are in alliance with man and they exhibit strong compatibility with each other. In literary texts nature and the environmental framework is not something new to encapsulate the whole situation but to identify it separately a new literary theory is a great attempt made by the Ecocritics.

Glotfelty writes in *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996) about the link between literature and environment that "the relationship of humans to nature about the ethical and aesthetic dilemmas posed by environmental crises and about how language and literature transmit values with profound ecological implication" (p. xxv). Hence to trace the environmental issues in literary texts has become an integral and separate literary theory which supports various ideas of Ecocritics on the basis of ecology.

The selected novel *Fireflies in the Mist* (1994) by Haider is a postcolonial novel with countless issues of colonialism and its effects on the lives of people. Haider is a South Asian writer who has written this novel according to the environment of Sub-continent which is agrarian full of natural resources with its sublimity in culture. The British not only exploited the human culture of the land but also the non-human world including land and animals. The deterioration of the land was actually the demolition of culture of the colonized people and dislocation of the natives from their wrecked land to another land which left a question mark for their identities and they

were marginalized not in their own land as Others but also in the whole world because the colonial claws uprooted them from their own land.

In South Asian literature the literary texts are based on the issues of colonialism and postcolonialism that focuses on the exploitation of the ecological system. "What the postcolonial/ecocritical alliance brings out, above all is the need for broadly materialistic understanding of the changing relationship between people, animals and environment" (Huggan, 2005, P. 12). So the cumulative theories Ecocriticism that is "earth-centered" (Glotfelty, 1996, p. xviii) and Postcolonialism that is "anthropocentric, human-centered" (Huggan & Tiffin, 2005, p. 3) work parallel in the South Asian novel *The Fireflies in the Mist* (1994) by Haider. The novel is a postcolonial text in which the novelist has presented the issues of the subjugated people. She is regarded one of the best Urdu writers in South Asian literature because of her idiosyncratic style of writing. She occupies a quirky place among her contemporaries. Her way of expression exhibits her eccentric skills in literature. She is at the pinnacle of narration in her literary writings that no one can compete her. She was mostly known by her nickname Ainee. She was born on 20 January 1927 in Indian city Aligarh. Her parents were also literary figures. Her father was a renowned writer Syed Sajjad Haider Yaldrim and her mother was also a writer. So the skills she bore as a unique writer were from her inheritance. She got education from Indraprastha College and afterwards from Luknow university but she continued her literary journey from her childhood. After partition in 1947 she moved to Pakistan with her family but after spending some time she went to England and ultimately she came back to India. Her migration and self-exile caused her face countless issues related to fluctuating identity. Her writings presents the same dilemma of diaspora as she faced being in exile.

Haider wrote several short stories and superb matchless twelve novels in the history of South Asian Literature which are still considered the most spectacular pieces of literature ever written in the history of Urdu literature. She worked as a journalist and a Managing Editor of several magazines. She also remained Lecturer at the universities of Arizona, Chicago and California

which shows her brilliance and mastery in Literature. Every piece of literature by Haider seems to be magnum opus in South Asian literature. She wrote on multi-dimensional themes after the partition of Sub-continent like pangs of exile, identity questions, cultural amalgamation, social and political rift, racism and marginalization in the society. Narang (1977) writes about Haider in the given lines, Inspired as she is by a keen love for the beautiful in what is past and dying, she very ably succeeds in recreating and reliving that atmosphere. Her fiction, to borrow a term from E.M. Foster, is a study of "life in values" rather than "life in time" (P. 123).

Haider's command over history of sub-continent of various cultures and religions makes her distinguished among other Urdu writers. Her skills to narrate historical myths, command over languages of different cultures and keen interest in history mark her writings the most influential pieces of Urdu Literature.

### Literature Review

Blunt (2003) states about the term *Diaspora* that is directly related to geography of a land. According to him the people even living on the different part of the world have strong affiliation and intimacy with their place. According to him geography and diaspora are closely related to each other as geography is found within the center of diaspora specially in the case of spending life in an alien land and its basic vision being in diaspora. He describes the inter-connected relation among the living abode, home, identity and culture while in exile and diaspora (Blunt, p. 282).

Bhabha (1990) goes against the homogenous identity for the colonized who are in the process of hybridization and lose their actual identity. Bhabha highlights the most sensitive issues faced by the colonized like hybridity, ambivalence, otherness, identity and diasporic dilemma.

According to him colonialism is a blunt and direct violence and oppression for the colonized nation who are inferior to the West that does not justify its identity without explaining the *others*. Bhabha is a prominent figure to highlight the most sensitive issues faced by the colonized like hybridity, ambivalence, otherness, identity and diasporic problems.

Bhabha stresses on this fact that there is a communicating factor through culture where he identifies the both East and West to interact with each other that clearly exhibits that both the colonized and the colonizer depend upon each other for the benefits of their economical integrity.

Bhabha uses the term of hybridity which will make the position clear for the both colonized and the colonizer. According to him identity is structured in third space which shows the *in-betweenness* for the both. It is a sort of chaotic and ambiguous identity which includes different kind of identity modes.

Bhabha explains the identity trauma for the colonized which lacks stability and leads the colonized towards multidimensional and multicultural fluctuating identity. Bhabha's concept of *others* also occupies a significant place in literary studies. This term shows a number of meaning for the colonized and the colonizers. Bhabha takes this term for postcolonial studies from Lacan and Fanon's concept of *Otherness* which reflects the marginalization between the East and West, binaries of being superior and inferior and between *Black* and *White* which ultimately lead towards identity issues for the marginalized.

Bhabha further says that cultural identity is marked with this term *Otherness* which is quite a complicated term so far as postcolonial studies are concerned. According to him narratives in colonialism is only possible because of the ideological construction of *Otherness*.

Bonnici (2004) believes that the origin of post-colonialism in Indian, African and Caribbean literature is the main focus in literary criticism. His main concern is to have brief discussion on the Postcolonial writers who are mostly in Diasporas and deal this issue blended with their own experience. He describes that the historical background of South Asia and Africa arouses curiosity after decolonization as the people suffered a lot during colonial tenure. Bonnici describes the definition of Diaspora which tells the state of displaced people from one land to another in pursuit of work and also they are dislocated as slaves and labor.

Asghar (2017) states about the identity of the colonized people of South Asia which is still in chaos even after so many years. Asghar observes countless challenges through which identity is

investigated on historical, psychological, cultural sociological level and the way how the writers belonging to these countries deal with identity crises faced by the people. This challenge has been also mainly dealt by the diasporic writer to highlight the trauma of identity living in diaspora. He further states that identity is particularly based on geographically, culturally and historically and new challenges are faced by the formation of identity in the perspective of globalization. And in this respect the writers belonging to throughout the world deal identity in various ways to formulate a particular articulation for its quest in literature.

Hall (1990) states about the trauma of being in diaspora away from his own homeland whose memories haunts him in the alien land. He feels even the music of his land with its particular rhythms while his stay in other country. According to him this all led him towards nostalgia and it was all because of the consequences of his disconnection with his root country (P. 231).

Bonnici (2004) makes it clear that the *Place* is actually the central entity in human life which provides the association of all kind throughout life including, history, religion, culture, politics, culture environment and geography but colonization deteriorates the whole set pattern of one's *Place* in the colonized country where the colonized can't remain aloof from their home.

### Postcolonialism Ecocriticism in South Asian Literature

Huggan and Tiffin (2015) write about the two important theories in newly emerging and currently discussed in literary studies *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* which is the combination of two different theories Postcolonialism and Ecocriticism. They argue that the colonized nations after decolonization are still suffering numberless issues related to cultural and identity. Garrard (2012) describes the relationship between Postcolonialism and Ecocriticism. According to Garrard *Things Fall Apart* is the best example where the *Holy Trinity* comprising of the Postcolonial towering theorists Said's *Orientalism*, Bhabha's *Hybridity* and Spivak's *Subaltern* find their theories working at the same time in the novel. Garrard further explains the theories of Holy Trinity exercising fully within the essence of the novel where hybridity and *liminal spaces* find

their ways with Ecocriticism as in the case of Yams and the women of Igbo culture as Subaltern because yam is considered in the novel as a male crop. So the society in *The Things Fall Apart* is dominating where the women are marginalized and then the *cultural constructions* in the Igbo society refers to Said's *Orientalism*. Furthermore describing the definition of Glosfelty of Ecocriticism he relates the association between Postcolonialism and Ecocriticism (p. 62).

Deloughrey and Handley (2011) state about the history of imperialism which comes up with a new dimension in which Post-colonialism makes bond with natural perspective to demonstrate the discourse of the colonizer about the colonized with the perception of the West. According to them the relationship between the *human and non-human* and nature and environment needs specific attention with particular reference to Post-colonialism. They emphasize on the need to amalgamate both theories in equilibrium to study the literature regarding ecology and postcolonialism because nature, culture, human and non-human can not persist separately rather they define one another's position with particular reference to Postcolonialism.

According to Huggan and Tiffin (2010) the association with land which was after colonization put into question destroyed economically the colonized people till now. According to them the aspects of Postcolonialism in the framework of nature and environment are currently the focus of literary criticism. They come up with the opinion that there is compatibility between *Post colonialism and Ecocriticism, ecology and zoocriticism* which exhibit an unrooted association between the natural settings in the perspective of Postcolonialism. According to them nature always remains a conspicuous part of literature. So they have not only taken fiction to make their point of view but also poetry and drama to contribute and evaluate Postcolonial Ecocriticism in strong harmony.

Kar (2014) states in his article about combined approach of Postcolonial-Ecocriticism in literature to explore the exploitation done through colonization in the colonized land. He uses the term *Nature Colonized* in his article in which he explains the position of the colonized people which was no more than as animals for the colonial powers. He says that the colonizers



controlled the whole environment of the colonized country considering them as inferior and exploiting the whole natural resources of the land (p. 87).

Yaqoob (2011) investigates the novel by Hamid *Moth Smoke* (2000) in the framework of Ecocriticism. The pollution of environment in the city of Lahore and the internal polluted soul of man mutually contaminate the physical environment and the lives of human being respectively. According to her all the people belonging to the to this polluted atmosphere inhale poisonous air into their bodies but in return they exhale the polluted inner emotions towards all the people with whom they interact. Their polluted soul responses to the psyches of human by behaving fake behind the screen of smoky roles. She comes up with the opinion that the sick environment influences the internal of man and in response to this sickness everything related to man loses its original identity because the ecology of surrounding terrain puts its utmost impact on the people.

Shamsi (2011) writes about the literature of Pakistan which is brimmed with so many aspects based on religion, sects and the most important colonial issues. She states that all these aspects are the fundamental issues in South Asian literature. According to Shamsi the geographical location of Pakistan matters a lot to deal with various aspects of colonialism.

Gamal (2012) is of the opinion about the contents of literature after colonization to describe the conditions of the people who were once subjugated. He describes the novels of Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and Shamsie's *Burnt Shadow* (2009) with identity issues. According to him both these novel describe the colonial effects and the crucial issues regarding identity.

Asghar (2017) observes the articulation of identity in the literary works of South Asian writers which varies in different modes regarding gender, history, narratives, language and genesis as it is a ground reality that literature is authentic cannon to construct the identity issues. He says that Post colonial literature especially South Asian focuses on identity crises on the bases of social, cultural, political, psychological and historical perspectives of the colonized land. It includes various aspects of quest for identity like ethnicity, language, race, and gender and religion

as in the case of sub-continent Pakistani and Indian writers. The colonial experiences took their specific vision and the literary works were based on issues on identity according to their respective thoughts. Asghar further states, that the identity oriented literary works by the South Asian writers including Bapsi Sidhwa, Bhabba, Ghous, Shuja Nawaz focus on dislocated themes because most of them are themselves in diaspora who highlight the issues of identity.

Kiran (2013) writes about the South Asian writers' novels *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2008) by Mohsin Hamid and *the Black Album* by Kureishi (2013) in which she traces the issues of marginalized Pakistani Muslims people who are considered terrorist after 9/11. She states, the people of Pakistan divided into different sects is the basic reason of problem where they are others not only in their own country but also in other countries. She observes that Mohsin and Hanif focus on the dilemma of the alienated scenario and in this condition their identity is always at stake. The novel by Hamid makes it clear through his character Changez who is fascinated by the life of the West and its culture allures him.

Kiran states that the dilemma of being inferior gets clear after 9/11 when the Pakistanis are declared as terrorist and they are treated *Inferior* and *Other* and the disillusioned world throws him out of the circle of *Occident* and pushes him away towards Orient which is the inferior East for the West. Kiran describes the character of Changez who before 9/11 thinks himself a part of the Western culture forgetting his original identity living in diaspora. He veils Pakistani identity because the sense of being inferior as Pakistani and once colonized forces him to be a part of western life style and living in America the identity chaos is nothing for him. Kiran states that the problems faced by the Muslims Pakistani after 9/11 is put into suspicion even his beard is symbol of terrorism for the West who thinks of itself in the center and the whole world is revolving around the center. Changez's identity is put into question he feels himself alien there with no identity as Americans think of him a terrorist and inferior.

Sahu (2014) finds in the novel of South Asian writer *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) by Markandaya, the Ecocritical elements which surround the whole life of the Rukminis and her family. Sahu states that the association of Rukminis with her natural

rural life identifies the destiny of her whole life because she symbolizes the association of land's love with the love of her husband. She loves passionately her husband and her land and believes in the purity of both. She finds out from the novel that Rukminis life structure gets destroyed when the village is destroyed by the industrialists, who wrecked the natural environment and ultimately the life of villagers. He explores the relationship between science of environment and man living in criss-cross with each other. She comes up with the opinion that Ecocriticism being a young theory emerged properly in 1990 to relate a close alliance between set ecology and literature. According to her Ecocriticism as a literary theory explores the response of human towards nature. She further says that Ecocriticism has become a conspicuous literary criticism to support the role of environment in the world of man.

Shamsi (2011) explores the basic themes in Pakistani literature of different writers as identity issues presented by Uzma in *The geometry of God* in the geographical location and religion were focused. She further states about the novel of Amir *Mother Tongue, Father Tongue* in which the writers' experience of being exiled in different countries is vivid.

Shah, Riaz and Khan (2020) explore the eco-critical perspective in their research paper, in which they researched different phases of feminism and how different phases reflect multiple thematic concerns. Shah, Riaz and Khan (2020) selected poetry of poetesses who wrote about different issues of women's lives. The most important part of Shah, Riaz and Khan (2020) research paper focuses on eco-critical perspective of Maya Angelou's *Women Work*. They focus on eco-feminist perspective further to eliminate women's marginalization and oppression, moving to the nature. The research also opens way for postcolonial perspective of Angelou's *Women work* to be researched from different perspective.

Similarly, Riaz and Hussain (2015) find the postcolonial spaces, suitable for eco-critical context as the research has been conducted in the locus of Afghanistan whereas the postcolonial lens is operational and the context of different literary genres which have been written are very closely operational to the environmental asylum,

helping the marginalized and oppressed to seek asylum.

### Research Methodology:

The research is related to a postcolonial novel *Fireflies in the Mist* (1994) to point out issues during and after colonization. The land with its environment physical settings and nature was affected by the colonized. To control and put its long lasting influence on the colonizers was not easy. So the colonized were exploited not only on the basis of religion but also socially, culturally, economically and their fanatical association with their land was put in doubt which compelled them to migrate to another country where they were marginalized as inferior and other.

The hovering situation of the colonial issues would influence the whole environment and surrounding which would also affect the lives of the main characters of the novel. The somber effect of colonization and the mirth scattered in the environment before colonization will add the luster of the study. The dual approach of ecological elements and Postcolonial issues like identity issues, difference between superior and inferior will highlight the sufferings of the Bangladeshi people in particular and of Sub-continent in general. The colonizer's identity becomes a question not only in diaspora but in their own country which marginalizes them as *Other* and *Inferior*. Postcolonial South Asian Literature highlights the same issues of the sub-continent people.

Haider being a diasporic female writer intertwines the *Postcolonialism and Ecocriticism* to point out the problems in her novel involving all the natural elements, land and environment and affecting them throughout the course of colonialism and after colonialism. The lines of superiority drawn by the West to see the East inferior can not be removed even after colonization.

### Theoretical Framework

A combined approach of *Postcolonialism* and *Ecocriticism* has been selected for reading of the novel *Fireflies in the Mist* (1994) to study the relationship between characters and the environment in the Postcolonial perspective. The research is qualitative and text will be analyzed through Cheryll Glotfelty's concept on

*Ecocriticism* (1994) and Scott Slovic's concept of *Ecocriticism* (2000).

In the novel *Fireflies in the Mist* (1994) by Quratul Ain Haider, the Postcolonial issues will be analyzed through the concept of *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said and Stuart Hall's essay on *Identity and Diaspora* (1996). The theory of Ecocriticism will be applied as the main theoretical frame work while the postcolonial theory will support the text to be a postcolonial literary work.

The researcher has used the theory of Ecocriticism in a postcolonial novel to seek out the relationship of physical setting with the text within the hovering situation of colonialism.

Post colonialism is a widely used term to refer the cultures suffered and affected during the colonial period. Postcolonialism is related to ongoing issues during imperial process. Under Postcolonialism the relation of the colonizer, the West and the colonized, the East is analysed through different dimensions and the aftermath circumstances which question countless issues of colonized people.

In response to the environmental crises Ecocriticism investigates environmental consciousness in literary theory especially with reference to Postcolonialism because the imperial intervention in the colonized lands not only exploits the land and environment but also the disintegration in the culture and lives of the people creating issues in their identity.

Said and Spivak are the towering theorist on postcolonialism. Said's concept on *Orientalism* (1978) occupies a pivotal position for post colonial literature. Spivak concept on *Subaltern* (1998) leaves remarkable impact to trace the identity and culture crises in postcolonial literature. In *Orientalism* (1978) by Said the term *Orient* was used by the Europeans for the colonized people to marginalize them by *Other* and to themselves by *Us*. *Orientalism* explains the binaries between the East and the West where Occident, the West observes the East in terms of , in, on, and at, drawing a line of superiority and inferiority between *Orient* and Occident. According to Said the East had charm for the West through stories, fables and tales. And it shaped and reshaped the East according to its own perception and took it as exotic, mysterious, wonderful and immoral.

Said's description about the *Orient* is based on the dreams and fancies of the West not on the reality which exists on the Oriental lands. For Occident, *Orient* is nothing and its inferiority lies within its roots of culture and civilization which are unpolished. *Orientalism* claims the East to be appropriately ruled by the West to handle the chaotic socio-political norms. Said states that *Orient* is considered as irrational, strange, and savage but the Occident is opposite to it. "But *Orientalism* is a field with considerable geography ambition" (Said, 1978, p. 50)

The British took the East quite opposite in all the aspects from geography to civilization. The wall of superiority and inferiority drawn between them separates the both in their outlook for each other "The two aspects of the orient that set is off from the west in this pair of play will remain essentials motif of European imaginative geography. A line is drawn between two continents. Europe is powerful and articulates; Asia is defeated and distant" (*Orientalism*, 1978, p. 57).

Said (1978) concept of the division between the East and the West the suppressed and the suppressor, the oppressed and the oppressor, the colonized and the colonizer and the upper and the lower explain the core issue of postcolonialism.

Spivak is regarded the most influential critic related to Postcolonialism. Her concept on Feminism, Marxism and the most influential Deconstruction make her an adept critic. Her basic concept on Subaltern in *Can the subaltern speak* (1998) diverts the postcolonial issues into a new dimension.

She criticizes the western concept of Eurocentric and Other as the Europe is in the center where every other country revolves around Europe taking Europe as the center of civilization and values. Spivak and Said go parallel in their theories on colonialism and of boundaries and binaries drawn by the Europeans for the third world countries.

Subaltern by Spivak irks a military term by Gramsci which means the people who remain unrepresented, unheard and less privileged. Spivak being an Indian can better understand the oppressed colonized people with their culture, religion and identity after colonization that threw the colonized nations into the ditches of chaotic identity.

In his essay *Identity and diaspora* (1996) Stuart Hall states that colonization produced baseless and hollow subject's disruption between the same words in a chaotic space. Such kind of reminiscence is produced due to the outcome of colonization which raises the question of cultural identity. Identity not only looks back to the past but also predicts future. "Putting the issue of cultural identity in question" (Hall, p. 222). The colonized can not maintain their proper culture because they fluctuate like a pendulum to find their lost identity and to acquire new identity but in vain.

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematizes the very authority and authenticity to which the term, 'cultural identity', lays claim (Hall, p. 222).

Hall (1996) describes two different dimensions of identity to sketch the subjugated struggling hard for liberty and to maintain it but for him identity is something which is not in constant fixation but it is in constant flux. The first aspect clarifies identity of the same people belonging to the same group. In the second category it is related to the imagined group of people sharing the similarities and differences among them "what we really are"; or rather - since history has intervened - 'what we have become'" (Hall, p. 225).

In this essay Hall (1996) states that the west sees them as *Other*. So the colonized face the identity crises while in diaspora. Like pendulum the colonized fluctuate between the positions of identity crises and constantly shaping and reshaping identities "We are very much 'the same'. We belong to the marginal, the underdeveloped, and the periphery, the 'Other'. We are at the outer edge, the 'rim', of the metropolitan world - always 'South' to someone else's El Norte" (Hall, p. 228).

Identity according to Hall is the combination of socially and culturally changing framework of time and specific space. This position which is subjected to time and place is "the positions of enunciation (Hall, 1996, p. 222). The colonizers were compelled to live in their own country like slaves and were forced to migrate whether they

were African colonized people or the South Asian people. The West treated them inferior according to their own point of view.

The peoples dragged into slavery, transportation, colonization, migration, came predominantly from Africa - and when that supply ended, it was temporarily refreshed by indentured labour from the Asian subcontinent. This neglected fact explains why, when you visit Guyana or Trinidad, you see, symbolically inscribed in the faces of their peoples, the paradoxical 'truth' of Christopher Columbus's mistake: you can find 'Asia' by sailing west (Hall, 1996, p. 227).

Hall (1996) discusses the condition of the colonized during colonization and comes up with the conclusion of postcolonial effects on the subjugated people "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall, p. 235).

The selected theoretical framework, to summarize, the above discussion would support to analyze the textual analysis in an appropriate way.

### Postcolonial spaces and eco-critical whim in Quratul Ain Haider's *Fireflies in the Mist*

The ecology in a postcolonial settings defines the characters' life. Yasmeen's daughter who is a Christian also suffers identity issues like her mother. Her mother a Muslim and father an English man both did not accept her. She is brought up by her Christian grand-mother. Her identity is also a question for her existence. She herself explains her identity like a straw that has no roots in this vast universe. "You can not cope today. I can not cope either, but I have no pretensions and make no claims. All of you, including my mother, had a lot of pretensions. I know that I am like a straw floating on water, a broken feather adrift in the air, I am worthless as an insect or a worm; a cipher in the cosmos" (Haider, 1994, p. 340).

The west made boundaries with the East not only on the basis of geography but also the boundaries of being inferior and superior. The colonized background of the subjugated people could not bring them up to the level of the English man even living in the West. This conflict made them sick and rootless. It happened with Yasmeen who met her tragic end with multiple undefined identity.



The tragedy with my Mummy was, she came from a two-faced civilization. As Bengali-Pakistani-Muslim, she also tried to adopt western attitudes. The inner collision shattered her. I'll tell you the reason why she died. For the last twenty years she had been living in poverty. She had failed to make the international scene as a dancer. Time was against her. A dancer's career does not last longer than ten years. Her personal tragedies and hardships aged her prematurely (Haider, 1994, p. 341).

Deepali's departure to a foreign land from her motherland evinces the journey from endless trail to endless evocative past. Yasmeen's diary and her own reminiscence among remotes, she does not find any claimant of both the in the logion space. Her own land becomes uncanny for her.

Her childhood, indelible youth time, her family, her adored companion Rehan, nothing is now in her possession in this country. She is an expatriate with no homeland of her own. Its a physical and spiritual cruise from one land to and other. Haider's lucidity to incriminate nature with surrounding manifests the equilibrium with ecology. Both Deepali and Yasmin have lost identity in their own country.

The Beoing jet shot through the night like a giant's arrow. Soon its bright lights were swallowed by the midnight sky. Shut inside a capsule of steel, surrounded by many hundred strangers, an unimportant, meaningless Deepali Sen groped in her handbag for the unimportant Yasmin Belmont's meaningless diary. Her fingers touched the notebook with satisfaction. I have brought it back. Who shall I give it to? Nobody is its claimant (Haider, p.392).

The outward settings elucidate the whole scensrio. The landscape enclosing the earth, sky water, wind artistically enterwine the situation. The new horizons with the breaking of dawn symbolically refer to the new life as an expatriate for Deepali. The gloomy notes of exiled life ring her. Haider's distinctive narrative style equipped with nature makes it a flamboyant ecological creation in the postcolonial perspective. She was going back to another land but she can not concentrate upon any thing because of her dual identity and being exiled.

Dawn was breaking. The conch -bowing pure Bhairav Raga was the whole universe. She began humming the notes of the various modes of

Bhairav...Shiva, Bangala, Anand. She dozed, floating on the waves of the early morning melody. Then she looked out at the milky horizon. I ought to worship Shiva, Cosmic Time, and Through Bhairav Raga. She began to hum a Bengali hymn to Shankar and looked out at the sparking expanse of sky and water. Closeed her eyes again. What should Imeditate on? (Haider, p. 393).

Her own land now accepts Yasmeen after a miserable death. The land of Bengal after independence became alien for the dead Yasmin and the living Deepali. The natural environment which was once her own now haunting Deepali like phantoms of grief. Haider's collaboration of the environment and their identity issues being Pakistani, Indian and Bengali depicts the postcolonial problems for the colonizers.

A black moon dashed against the mountains and broke into splinters. Yasmin, you were a ketaki flower which attracted serpents. They killed you. Conversation raged around her. They were talking of Pakistan and Bengladesh. We did this we did that. Suddenly she heard herself saying aloud, "If Mr.Jinnah had not created Pakistan, there would have been no Bengladesh today. Actually he is the founder of this new country as well (Haider, p. 375).

In this multi-dimentional with multi-perspective novel of Haider, the dejected ending leads the character to fall in the world of repentance. Deepali's mind littered with the confusion of contradict situation makes her out of mind. The somber landscape supports her feelings to be expressed in a pensive manner. She wants to be remembered as a good singer but no one offers her to sing a song because she faces identity crises here. The increasing suffocation dulls her thinking. On the demand of Yasmin's diary by a stranger forces her to burst out.

Deeapli reddened with pent up anger. She glared at the stranger got up and went out. As she stood under last arch of the colonial building a full moon emerged from behind the rose-apple trees. Like her the moon also looked contrite. Secretly Rehan was ashamed, too: and Yasmin had been so sorry that she simply removed herself from this earth (Haider, P. 377).

The people of India changed their identity by embracing Christianity, specially the Hindus. But they were not given due regard after that. Their outlook used to be clumsy because of adopting

the living style of the White man, being a black. It looked ridiculous. They even lost their original identity. They were neither now the habitants of India nor of England.

They had trained the "black preacher." Socially, he was not admitted to their fraternity. In fact, he belonged neither here nor there, as he stood, Bible in hand, in between two milieus, European and Indian, fully accepted by neither. Undaunted, he carried on like the black parson of America (Haider, p. 69).

Deepali is going back leaving behind her country, culture, love and she grieves. She thinks about every relation once she had in the past. All these things are a source of dejection for her. Bengal's independence brings tremendous change in the lives of the female characters of the Haider's novel. Jehan Ara and Yasmin's tragic death Rosie and Deepali's twist towards typical house wives divert the settings and entire environment of the novel. The scenario of shallowness is prevailing around the country for Deepali who has come from Trinidad as a celeberriti. She finds no one around her own. Being diasporic she feels gloomy.

Tokyo-Honolulu-Los Angeles- Port of Spain. Its long journey. The inner and outer journey of time. And beyond that voyage of ashes and bones floating down the Ganga. And the Underground trail of the graves worms. Rehan was so bloody right, I am thankful that so many in the world have died, but I am still living weary and tired like old Ganga at Narayan Gunj, but not dead. Living (Haider, p. 392).

Haider's involving the landscape as a living characters sometimes solacing the characters sometimes in wrath and sometimes friendly is strikingly collaborate with the postcolonial settings. Deepali's travelling is not from the East to West but from pain to relief from internal darkness to outer bright spiritual world. The inner darkness is shedding down in the infinite space substituting the despondency. "I hope these are not my last moments. She pressed her nose against the window -pane and looked out into the pitch dark night. After a few minutes the darkness lessened. The jet black sea became visible, and the dark sky above" (Haider, p. 393). Deepali an expatriate after partition now feels despondent and the increasing melonchloy of her inner world makes the surrounding harrowing. The gloomy landscape shadows the world

sorrowfully. Deepali explains the fate of wretched human being being exiled referring to the Hindu myth. The concoction of the dejected backdrop with the sorrowfull characters presents the ecology of the settings.

The sun will grow cold, too. I immersed my father's and my aunts's ashes in the young Ganga at Hardwar. That is the end of the road. Listen, Uma Debi, to what the sanyasins of Belur Math sing.....Mother sits in the marketplace of the world, flying her kites. She cuts off one of the millions of her strings and when the unattached kites floats up, it reaches cosmic space. Mother claps her hands and laughs (Haider, p. 391).

The sky, rivers, mountains, earth and wind all contribute to make a landscape brimming with the entities of nature. The ecology casts its alluring spell on the condition of the characters. To unfold the esoteric psychic of the characters, the surrounding and settings entangle the intuition of diasporic Deepali. Nature in postcolonial perspective goes hand in hand to picturesque the ecological milieu. The suffocated phantoms of the past mentally perturb the exiled Deepali but only the pleasant natural world drives her towards refreshing atmosphere which used to be once her own.

She thought fondly of Mistress Sarswati and Mistress Khai-run. They too had become crotchety old women. Her loyal servants and her faithful, dependable uninteresting husband. Lalit Mohan Sen. Her comfortable world. Good food. Music. Holidays in the States. She grew frightened again. "Wind, my father. Earth, my mother, Fire, my friend. Water, my cousins. Sky, my brother. One is born through you. In the last moment of my life I send you my greetings," Bengal's Sanskrit Yogeshwar said a thousand years ago (Haider, pp. 392-393).

Deepali's sojourn at Bangladesh after the independence of Bengal is like heart-rendering nostalgia because of the reorientation in Bengal and its people. The transmutation in the thinking of the Bengali people after freedom just for their own benefits makes Deepali breath taking. The piteous death of Yasmin but the monumental tribute after her death blows Deepali. The exiled people suffer a lot in their lives. It is of no use to celebrate her day.

A flower-decked portrait of the late Mrs. Yasmin Belmont stood on a side board in the Banquet hall of Dacca club. Dinner was being served to

the intellectual elite, ministers and new tycoons of Bangladesh and their ladies. "History is another name for humanity's inability to learn its lesson". Sea hawks continue to swoop down on the fish (Haider, P. 374).

The connection of history with the land of sub-continent in the perspective of British colonial who are like the beasts ready to pounce upon the weak animals, the subjugated people of Sub-Continent is the core content of Haider's narration marginalized by the natural terrain of Sub continent. The female characters in Haider's novel choose roadless destination with chaotic ending. Yasmin's remorseful life and heart-touching death can be seen through Deepali's eyes. After Yasmin's death the tribute ceremony depicts the hypocrisy of the people. "Deepali wondered again how much they must have spent on the Yasmin's Belmont festival. She lived for decades as a penniless exile in the West (Haider, P. 375).

Deepali like an observer goes to Bolpur "for wanted to see India's common people after thirty years of independence. The train came out of suburban Calcutta, leaving behind gray shaluite Monas trees and mossy Johan Company bungalows" (Haider, P. 381). The sight of starving Hindustani people with their endless misery makes her astounding. Sitting in the train the passing by land seems to her alien. All the things and people are unknown to her. Haider's identifying the Landscape to create association with the Characters is at the height of her narration sketching the Ecocentral ambient mixed with the shades of Postcolonialism.

There were paddy fields on either side. Canes stood meditating in the watery furrows. Flat, uninteresting landscape, so different from the gorgeous scenery of her own Bangladesh. That used to be my homeland she thought with a pang that used to be my country. East Bangal, which has no duplicate in the world. The most beautiful country on the earth and I am an exile" (Haider, P. 382).

At the Bolpur, the sight of Baluch Saris makes her remind the traditions of Bangal. The Muslim name of rikshaw driver, the miserable settings, the indifferent milieu, nothing changes except Deepali's exile to an alien land. The gloomy terrain holds her in the constricted atmosphere and she looks contrite on all the prevailing circumstances. She is in exile now. Like an outer

she observes the plight of her country. The deserted milieu increases the inner desolation of Deepali.

She reached the guest house and inquired about her old professor. Many had died including Professor Murtaza Hussain, on whose insistence she had joined Tagore's University. She booked a room, went in and threw herself on a spring-bed. Mosquitoes buzzed around her head. Desolate. All was so desolate. Cut out and Delhi and rush back home. She visualized her fancy, luxurious bedroom. What must old Lalit be doing at this moment? What would be the time there? Oh, why should I tax my brain working out the time difference between India and Trinidad? (Haider, pp. 382- 383).

Yasmeen and Deepali's interaction after Partition unlayers their hidden past. Yasmeen as a famous dancer and Deepali as a typical house wife in diaspora spend unrooted life. The enclosure of landscape for the both expatriate creates a strange scenario.

If I had received your letter about Jehan Ara's wedding just a day earlier, we wouldn't have been here today!" Deepali said conversationally to Yasmin. Mistress Saraswati arrived with coffee she placed the tray on a wicker table and left. A bird of paradise flew down from rain tree and began strutting on the grass. Yasmin looked up. Dark Caribbean clouds had spread over the sky. A stream rippled through the greenery (Haider, p. 294).

### Conclusion:

The colonial intervention in Sub continent was quite paradoxical. Their treatment with the native was cruel when they were in subcontinent. Infact, it was their arrogant attitude towards the natives because of the binaries they had made between us and others. For the British, the Indians were uncivilized and they considered them their subject and outcast. So, they treated them like the people who had to be civilized. Deepali and Rehan both belong to communist party and Rehan tells her about the dealings of the British in the East and West which were opposite just because of the boundaries of the geographically divided place. "Are English people left wing too?" A few all Englishmen are not arrogant imperialist of the kind you see out here in India. Infact, most of them are very nice people. But they become a different breed the

moment they cross the Suez” (Haider 1994, P.143).

Kamal, the son of Rosie from Indian army and Jehan Ara's son Akmal from Pakistan Air force now fight for their countries India and Pakistan respectively. Before the arrival of British in Sub-continent both were friends but after decolonization they were divided into Us and Other and became enemies of each other. Even after colonization Rosie calls Jehan Ara her enemy who used to be close friends when living in the same country sharing same environment of diversified creeds. The news of Jehan Ara's son makes Rosie dejected but the binaries drawn by the aftermaths of colonization do not let her condole with her in a proper way.

The situation is so wonky that I can't write a letter of condolence to my enemy. Jehan Ara and she is singularly luckless girl of your review her entire life. “My son is looking forward to the next round of fun and games to teach them a lesson again, he say and grits his teeth. His counterparts across the border must be saying the same thing and with the same intensity (Haider 1994, P.328).

Rosie, Deepali and Jehan Ara are close friends with strong family relation. The imperial tenure separates them on the basis of their different ideology related to religion. Rosie a Christian, Deepali a Hindu and Jehan Ara a Muslim living in the same country. They had no idea that they will become enemies and the division of the countries would make them *others* for each other.

The binaries which were not apparently clear when Rosie's mother used to work at Jehan Ara's house living in the same country and environment were got obvious after partition. Rosie writes a letter to Deepali and tells about the intentions of his sons as a soldier in Indian Army who wanted to crush the people on other side of the border.

Whereupon he informed us that he was going to be a soldier, when the Motherland needed him, he would die in the field of honor. I said Kamal, think of us, your parents. You are our only son. He answered, did you think of your parents when you went off to fight in August? You were their only child. I said that was different. He asked how? Then it was Britain, now it is China and Pakistan (Haider, p. 327).

The British instilled a sense of Us and Other among the natives also. They were marginalized into the boundaries of US and other, superior

and inferior. The division of the land also made them separate in their opinions of each other. They went against each other. The imperial powers made them enemy of one another. Nasira, the niece of Rehan also dislike the double face of her uncle Rehan towards his country, just for the sake of political leadership.

## References

- Ashcroft, B., et al. (1989). *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post colonial Literatures*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Asghar, J. (2014). Postcolonial South Asian Literature and the Quest for Identity. *Journal of Critical Inquiry*, 57.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Blunt, A. (2003). Geographies of diaspora and mixed descent: Anglo-Indians in India and Britain. *International Journal of Population Geography* 9(1), 281-294.
- Blunt, A. (2005). Cultural geography: cultural geographies of home. *Progress in Human Geography* 29(4), 505-515.
- Blunt, A. (2007). Cultural geographies of migration: mobility, transnationality and diaspora. *Progress in Human Geography* 31(5): 684-694.
- Blunt, A., & Dowling, R. (2006). *Home*. London: Routledge.
- Bonnici, T. (2004). The contemporary post-colonial novel in English. *Acta Scientiarum. Human and Social Sciences*, 1-22.
- DeLoughrey, E., et. al. (Eds.). (2011). *Postcolonial ecologies: Literatures of the environment*. OUP USA.
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Said, E. (1994). *Culture and imperialism*. London: Vintage Books.
- Gamal, A. (2013). The global and the postcolonial in post-migratory literature. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 49(5), 596-608.
- Garrard, G. (2011). *Ecocriticism*. Routledge.
- Garrard, G. (2012). *Teaching Ecocriticism and Green Cultural Studies*.
- Ghosh, A. (2011). *The Hungry Tide*. London: Harper Collins.



- Glotfelty, C., & Fromm, H. (Eds.). (1996). *The ecocriticism reader: Landmarks in literary ecology*. University of Georgia Press.
- Kar, A. (2014). Nature Colonized: A Postcolonial Ecocritical Reading of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. *New Man International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*. 1, 12, 2348-1390
- Kiran, S. (2013). Identity Crisis as Reflected in Selected Works: The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid and the Black Album by Hanif Kureishi. *International Journal of Linguistics and Communication*, 1(2).
- Haider, D. S. (2009). *Qaidi Parindon Ka Iztaaab*. (N. Durrani, Ed.) Seep(77), 226-231.
- Haider, Q. A. (2010). *Fireflies In Mist*. Rupa.Co Publishers
- Haider, Q. U. (2010). *Aag Ka Darya*. Lahore: Sange-Meel Publishers.
- Haider, Q. U. (n.d.). *Aakhir e Shab k Ham Safar*. Lahore: Ch Academy. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/126237/colonialism-Western>. (n.d.). Retrieved February 22, 2025, from britannica.com.
- Hall, S. (1996). *Minimal Selves*. In Houston A. Baker, Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindborg Ed. *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Huggan, G., & Tiffin, H. (2015). *Postcolonial ecocriticism: Literature, animals, environment*. Routledge.
- Narang, G.C. (1977). Major Trends in the Urdu Short Story (an article), *Indian Literature, Sahitya Akademi's Bimonthly magazine*, vol. xx, No.4, New Delhi.
- Riaz, W. & Hussain, T. (2015). The Representation of Pashtuns in Alexander Burns' *Cabool* Being a Personal Narrative of a journey to, and Residence in that city in the years 1836, 7, 8. *Asian Journal of Education Research & Technology*. Vol. 5 (2), July 2015: 124-142. ISSN (Print): 2249-7374. ISSN (Online): 2347-4947.
- Sahu, G. (2014). Ecocriticism-Understanding the relationship between literature and the Environment in Indian English novels. *Journal of Arts & Education. A Peer Reviewed International Journal*, 1(1), 14.
- Shah, M., Riaz, W., & Khan, R. (2020). Three Waves of Feminism: A Critical Textual Analysis of the Selected Poems from Greek to Present. *The Discourse*. Volume 06 Number 02. PP: 127-138.
- Shamsie, M. (2011). Duality and diversity in Pakistani English literature. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 47(2), 119-121.
- Yaqoob, M. (2010). Human Perversion and Environmental Space: An Ecocritical reading of Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*. *International Research Journal of Arts & Humanities (IRJAH)*, 38(38).