

CRITICAL ECOFEMINIST AND ECOLINGUISTIC READINGS OF CLIMATE CRISIS DISCOURSE IN PAKISTANI ANGLOPHONE FICTION

DR. SHAMSA MALIK

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, LAHORE CAMPUS, LAHORE, PAKISTAN

DR. ZAFAR IQBAL BHATTI

PROFESSOR OF LINGUISTICS MINHAJ UNIVERSITY LAHORE, PAKISTAN

DR. AYESHA JUNAID

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF LINGUISTICS DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH. COLLEGE OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES, PRINCE SATTAM BIN ABDUL AZIZ UNIVERSITY, AL-KHARJ 11942, KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Abstract

Pakistan is consistently ranked among the world's most climate-vulnerable countries, with intensified monsoon floods, accelerated glacial melt and toxic urban water infrastructures disproportionately affecting women and low-income communities. Yet Anglophone Pakistani fiction has only recently begun to be read through a combined ecofeminist and ecolinguistic lens. This article examines Uzma Aslam Khan's *Thinner than Skin* (2012), Sorayya Khan's *Noor* (2003) and Mohsin Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013) to argue that these texts figure climate change and environmental degradation as gendered, linguistic and infrastructural processes rather than atmospheric "background." Drawing on ecofeminism (Shiva, 1989; Gaard, 2015), postcolonial ecofeminism (Rahman, 2019) and Stibbe's ecolinguistic concept of "the stories we live by" (2015), the article shows how the novels dismantle dominant stories of development, security and entrepreneurial self-help that normalise the exploitation of both women and ecosystems. Methodologically, the study combines close, ecofeminist readings of bodies, labour and care with ecolinguistic analysis of metaphor, pronoun, tense, erasure and evaluative lexis. It traces how *Thinner than Skin* links glacial bodies and nomadic women's labour in Pakistan's northern highlands, how *Noor* stages haunted floodplains and disabled bodies as ecological memory of the 1971 war, and how *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* exposes toxic water infrastructures and neoliberal masculinities in an unnamed megacity. Across these novels, women's bodies, speech and everyday labours are aligned with threatened ecologies in ways that resist sentimental "woman-as-nature" clichés and foreground dispossession, care and agency. The conclusion sketches an ecofeminist-ecolinguistic agenda for future work on Pakistani literature, advocating attention to climate justice, local languages and metaphors, and the global circulation of South Asian climate narratives.

Keywords: ecofeminism; ecolinguistics; Pakistani Anglophone fiction; climate change; gender; water; glaciers

INTRODUCTION: PAKISTAN, CLIMATE CRISIS AND LITERARY IMAGINATION

Over the last two decades Pakistan has become emblematic of climate injustice. Germanwatch's Global Climate Risk Index and related assessments repeatedly place the country among the states most affected by extreme weather, even though it contributes less than one per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. The 2022 floods alone affected around 33 million people, left roughly a third of the country under water, and caused damage estimated at tens of billions of dollars. Attribution studies show that human-induced climate change made the season's extreme monsoon rainfall significantly more likely and more intense. These impacts are unevenly distributed: rural women, the urban poor, informal workers and marginalised ethnic communities face intensified risks to livelihood, health and bodily safety.

In global literary studies, climate change has emerged as a dominant concern, giving rise to the categories of "climate change fiction" (cli-fi), climate change theatre and climate-oriented poetry, as well as to new critical approaches gathered under the label "climate change criticism" (Johns-Putra, 2016). Researchers ask how narrative, genre and form can register diffuse, slow and large-scale transformations. Yet Amitav Ghosh (2016) famously argues that mainstream realist fiction has often failed to register climate crisis at scale, resulting in what he terms "the great derangement" of modern literary imagination. That charge has particular bite in South Asia,

where colonial water management, postcolonial dam-building, urbanisation and militarisation have all shaped the conditions under which climate change is now experienced.

Pakistani Anglophone fiction, especially by women, offers a powerful rejoinder to this supposed imaginative failure. In *Place and Postcolonial Ecofeminism*, Shazia Rahman (2019) demonstrates how Pakistani women's literary and cinematic works yoke questions of gender, class, nationalism and environmental justice, tracing "alternative, environmental modes of belonging" that exceed statist and security-centred narratives. Building on this insight, the present article brings together three novels rarely read in concert as climate texts: Uzma Aslam Khan's *Thinner than Skin*, Sorayya Khan's *Noor*, and Mohsin Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*. Each text is written in English but is anchored in specific Pakistani places: the glacial landscapes and nomadic routes of the north in *Thinner than Skin*; the floodplains and mass graves of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War in *Noor*; and a rapidly expanding, polluted megacity recognisable as a composite of Pakistani urban centres in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*. They depict phenomena now firmly associated with climate crisis accelerated glacial melt, recurring floods, water contamination and infrastructural toxicity as inseparable from histories of Partition, militarisation, capital accumulation and gendered violence.

Existing scholarship has begun to map these connections. Hussaini (2018) reads *Thinner than Skin* as a critique of urbanisation, consumerism and ecological degradation in Pakistan, highlighting the environmental consciousness in Khan's fiction. Mir (2021) interprets *Noor* as an ecofeminist narrative in which the exploitation of women's bodies runs parallel to the exploitation of land and water. Ecocritical and environmental-justice readings of *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* foreground its satirical treatment of water commodification, sewerage collapse and the Capitalocene the era defined by capitalist extraction rather than undifferentiated "humanity" (Bose, 2023).

Yet these important contributions leave a notable gap. We still lack a study that (a) reads these three novels together as climate narratives spanning glacial, fluvial and urban ecologies; and (b) integrates ecofeminist analysis with ecolinguistics that is, with close attention to how metaphors, pronouns, narrative voice, erasures and lexical choices construct what Arran Stibbe (2015) calls the "stories we live by." This article addresses that gap by arguing that *Thinner than Skin*, *Noor* and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* not only depict environmental injustice but also rework destructive stories of development, security and entrepreneurial self-help that underpin Pakistan's climate vulnerabilities.

FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Ecofeminism and Postcolonial Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism emerged in the late twentieth century to theorise the linked domination of women and nature under patriarchal, capitalist orders. Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive* (1989) famously argues that development paradigms and reductionist science treat both land and women as expendable resources, erasing subsistence labour and ecological knowledges in the Global South. Greta Gaard's work on ecofeminism and climate change extends this critique, insisting that masculinist techno-fixes cannot address a crisis rooted in militarism, colonialism, heteropatriarchy and fossil capitalism (Gaard, 2015).

Postcolonial ecofeminism situates these insights within histories of empire and decolonisation. In the Pakistani context, Rahman (2019) shows how women's texts link militarised nationalisms, mega-infrastructure and religious politics to everyday practices of cooking, drawing water, farming and caregiving, thereby revealing alternative modes of belonging and environmental stewardship. Ecofeminist scholarship in Pakistan including Jabeen's (2018) work on ecofeminist narratives argues that Anglophone fiction reimagines women not as symbolic mothers of the nation but as agents negotiating environmental dispossession, care work and resistance. This article adopts a postcolonial ecofeminist lens attentive to how gender, class, ethnicity and disability shape who is exposed to environmental harm, who is imagined as responsible for managing it, and whose knowledge counts in debates about climate adaptation and justice.

Ecolinguistics and "Stories We Live By"

Ecolinguistics, as developed by Arran Stibbe, examines language as an ecological force that can either reinforce or challenge unsustainable systems. For Stibbe (2015), cultures are organised around "stories we live by" recurrent patterns of metaphor, narrative, evaluation and erasure that shape how people think, feel and act towards each other, other species and the land. Stories of unlimited economic growth, consumerist success and human mastery over nature, for instance, can legitimise environmental destruction while obscuring its social costs.

Ecolinguistic analysis typically focuses on:

- **Framing and metaphor** (e.g. nature as "resource," water as "product"),
- **Ideologies and identities** (e.g. entrepreneurial subjectivities, securitised states),
- **Erasure and salience** (what is foregrounded or backgrounded), and
- **Grammatical choices** (e.g. pronouns, active vs passive voice, tense).

By reading Pakistani novels through this framework, we can see how they reproduce, contest or invent stories about development, security, gender and nature. Previously, an ecolinguistic lens have been applied to Pakistani English-language textbooks, showing how ostensibly neutral pedagogical materials embed particular stories of

development, nationalism and the environment (Zia, Amjad and Bhatti, 2023). The present analysis extends that work from curricular discourse to fictional narratives, asking how Pakistani novels likewise disseminate or disrupt such stories in the context of climate crisis.

Climate-Change Literature

Adeline Johns-Putra (2016) argues that climate change has become a central theme in contemporary literature and literary studies, giving rise not only to cli-fi but to broader debates about how fiction can represent diffuse, slow and large-scale environmental transformations. Researchers now ask how narrative perspective, temporality and genre conventions enable or hinder the representation of climate crisis, and how regional literatures contribute to global climate imaginaries. Pakistani writing, however, still appears only sporadically in this scholarship, often as an example rather than a shaping force. The ecocritical reading of Mirza Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves* has already suggested that South Asian war novels can register "ecocidal" forms of environmental violence and their psychological afterlives (Bhatti et al., 2023); the present article situates Pakistani Anglophone fiction more explicitly within climate-justice debates by combining ecofeminist and ecolinguistic analysis.

Methodological Approach

Methodologically, this article combines:

1. **Close ecofeminist reading** of bodies, labour, care and violence, focusing on how women and marginalised communities inhabit specific ecologies (glacial pastures, floodplains, informal settlements).
2. **Ecolinguistic analysis** of key passages where environmental processes intersect with gendered, classed and national narratives. This involves examining metaphor clusters, evaluative adjectives, pronoun systems (especially Hamid's second person), narrative gaps and patterns of erasure.
3. **Comparative synthesis** across the three novels, identifying recurring "stories we live by" about development, security, entrepreneurial self-help and relational care that structure Pakistani climate vulnerability.

Quotations from the novels are used sparingly, within copyright limits, and are accompanied by interpretive commentary rather than treated as self-explanatory evidence. Secondary criticism is engaged dialogically: I build on but also extend and occasionally reframe the insights of Hussaini, Mir, Shafique et al., and others. This conceptual and methodological design is summarised in Figure 1.

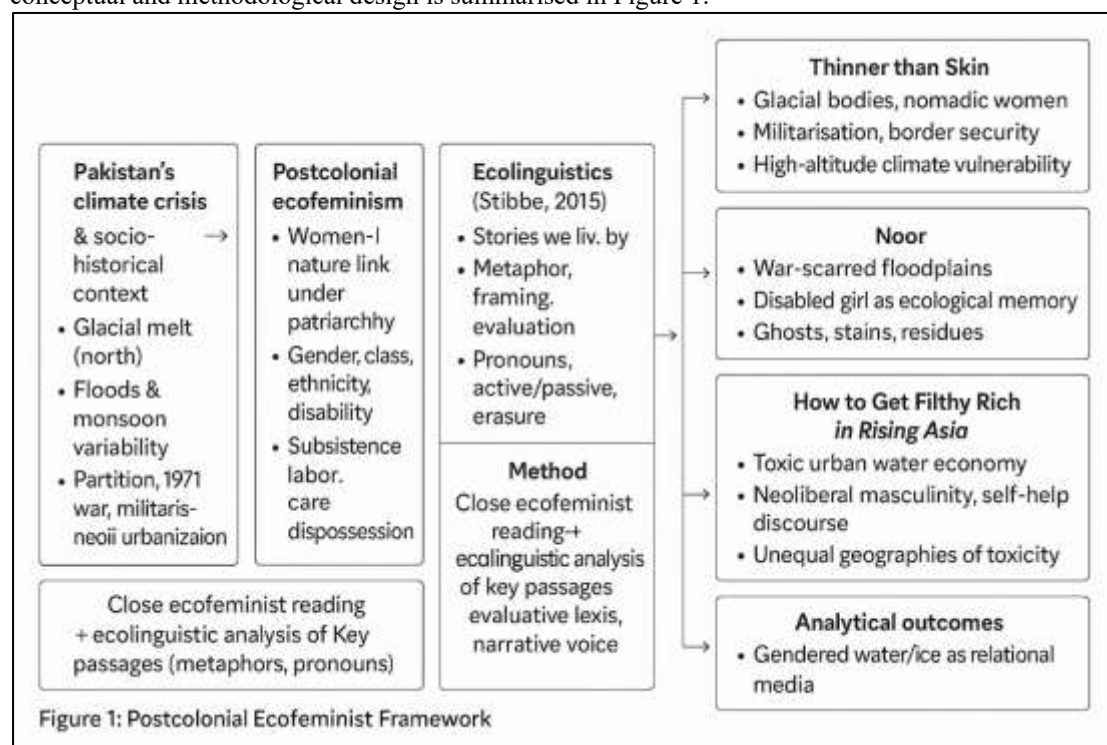


Figure 1. Conceptual framework linking postcolonial ecofeminism, ecolinguistics and Pakistan's climate crisis to readings of *Thinner than Skin*, *Noor* and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, and to the study's analytical outcomes.

Research Gap and Aims

Ecofeminist criticism has illuminated important dimensions of *Thinner than Skin*. Hussaini (2018) shows how the novel exposes the environmental and social costs of urbanisation, tourism and consumerism in Pakistan, highlighting the "deleterious impact" of these processes on indigenous communities and ecosystems. Shafique, Hafeez and Syed (2024) read the novel as a study of women's instrumentalisation and environmental deterioration in Pakistan's northern highlands, arguing that Maryam's body is treated as an expendable resource, much like the mountains she inhabits. More recent work interprets *Thinner than Skin* as a climate-change narrative that dramatizes glacial retreat, altered river flows and the displacement of herding communities. In earlier work the study of *Thinner than Skin* made it as a site where multiculturalist ideology and the discursive construction of

Pakistani culture are negotiated and contested (Bhatti, 2023), a perspective that this article extends by foregrounding climate crisis, gender and ecolinguistic form.

Similarly, Mir's (2021) ecofeminist reading of Noor demonstrates how the controlled, exploited lives of women characters "run parallel with the exploitation of land," as military campaigns scar both landscapes and bodies. Rahman's (2019) broader project includes Noor among Pakistani women's texts that use water, food and land to articulate non-nationalist forms of belonging and to expose the entanglements of gendered violence and environmental damage.

Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* has attracted ecocritical and socio-economic attention for its portrayal of water commodification, urban pollution and neoliberal subjectivity. Critics show how the novel's second-person self-help frame satirises both globalisation and local corruption while mapping unequal access to clean water and safe housing (Bose, 2023).

Across this scholarship, three gaps become clear:

- **Comparative scope:** Studies typically focus on a single novel or on pairs of texts, rarely bringing together *Thinner than Skin*, *Noor* and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* as climate narratives that span rural highlands, war-scarred floodplains and toxic megacities.
- **Linguistic attention:** While critics note the importance of imagery, metaphor and narrative voice, few explicitly mobilise ecolinguistics to analyse how these linguistic choices enact or challenge stories of growth, security and gendered sacrifice.
- **Climate-justice framing:** Despite Pakistan's prominence in climate-risk discussions, literary criticism has only begun to link recent disasters (e.g. the 2010 and 2022 floods, recurrent heatwaves) to earlier fictional depictions of glaciers, floods and water crisis.

In response, this article pursues three interrelated aims:

- To read *Thinner than Skin*, *Noor* and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* as interconnected climate narratives that trace different yet overlapping temporalities of environmental degradation rapid glacial change, war-time devastation and slow urban toxicity.
- To show how these novels construct or contest dominant stories of development, security and entrepreneurial self-making through their linguistic choices, especially metaphors, pronouns, evaluative lexis and patterns of erasure.
- To argue that ecofeminist-ecolinguistic readings reposition Pakistani Anglophone fiction as central, rather than peripheral, to global debates on climate justice and climate-change literature.

Glacial Bodies and Nomadic Women: Ecofeminism in *Thinner than Skin*

Thinner than Skin follows Nadir, a Pakistani photographer based in the United States, and Farhana, a Pakistani-German glaciologist, as they travel to northern Pakistan to study glaciers and salvage their relationship. Their narrative intersects with that of Maryam, a Gujjar nomad whose family's migration routes, grazing grounds and intimate ties to the land are threatened by militarisation, tourism and climatic instability (Khan, 2012).

Ecofeminist readings foreground Maryam as the novel's ethical centre. Her labour herding goats, negotiating with soldiers, caring for an ailing husband and children is both materially indispensable and socially devalued. She is doubly marginalised: as a nomad in a state that privileges settled, property-owning citizens, and as a woman within a patriarchal community. Shafique et al. (2024) argue that Maryam's body is treated as "instrumentalised," her suffering rendered acceptable collateral damage for national security and development projects.

At the level of language, the novel repeatedly fuses glacial and human corporeality. Glaciers are described as having "skins" and "veins" through which meltwater flows; local rituals of "ice mating" enact glaciers as fertile, relational beings rather than inert masses. Conversely, Maryam's body is marked as "weathered" and "pitted" by years of migration across high pastures. Through this shared lexis of skin, veins and weathering, the text draws an implicit parallel between the erosion of glacial bodies and the erosion of Maryam's health, security and mobility a paradigmatic ecofeminist alignment of women and nature, but one that emphasises labour and exposure rather than mystical unity.

These metaphors are ecological challenges to the traditional mechanistic discourse making nature a passive resource. The glacial terrain is thus not created as a stage upon which human action is acted out or to provide repository of extractable reservoirs of water storage; rather glacial terrain is brought forth as relative and interlocutor. There is a scene where Maryam, looking out of the window, sees the creation of steam in the parenterous manure on the glacier: the onset of an embodied (or inter-species) occupation where the instrumentality of the visiting scientifically minded soldier-visitor is invoked in griculous oppositions both to. The narrative voice gives preference to sensory verbs, to smell, listen, touch, which makes Maryam an epistemic subject of the moods of the glacier, at the same time her knowledge is refuted by the state and scientific authorities. At the same time, the discourse of security that justifies militarisation as well as climate inaction is problematised in the title, *Thinner Than Skin*. The nomads and glaciers are explained by the soldiers as the surveillance lexicon of routes, targets, and borders and as such that removes the ecological and cultural meaning of such phenomena. Within the framework of Stibbe (2015), the given securitising discourse is a deadly narrative that makes certain individuals and locations killable by hiding their value in relationships. Her official language is contrasted with the sensual and spiritual vocabulary of Maryam as a way of exposing the kind of violence of state rhetoric that transforms mountains into theatres of war and nomads into suspicious movers but undefined possessive communities embedded in glacial ecosystems.

Most importantly, Khan avoids such naive symbolisation of woman as nature. Maryam agency is presented as she is promised by verbs of movement and negotiation: she bargains with the tourists and refuses the soldiers' orders, and finally makes a choice, which leads to a tragic climax of the novel. Her actions are entangled in webs of duty and terror as opposed to being couched as a heroic act of resistance; however, they merge the heterotrope of active feminine victimhood. The ecolinguistic intervention based on replacing passive forms with active ones (she crosses, she bargains) and reforming women and nomadic groups as the subject of the environment and not its safeguard or victim constitutes a means of reconstruction of women and nomad communities as the subject of the environment, not as objects of protection or pity.

In this way, *Thinner than Skin* enacts what Rahman (2019) identifies as Pakistani women's "alternative, environmental modes of belonging": Maryam's sense of self is rooted not in abstract national identity but in kinship with animals, glaciers and ancestral routes. The novel thus offers a postcolonial ecofeminist critique of both imperial militarism and post-9/11 securitisation, showing how their combined logics accelerate climate vulnerability for those living closest to melting ice.

Haunted Floodplains and Disabled Bodies: Ecofeminist Memory in Noor

Sorayya Khan's *Noor* centres on Sajida and her niece Noor, a disabled child whose drawings and visions gradually expose repressed memories of atrocities committed during the 1971 war that led to Bangladesh's independence (Khan, 2003). Although set primarily in Islamabad, the novel is haunted by the flooded fields, rivers and mass graves of what was once East Pakistan.

Ecofeminist criticism has shown how Noor aligns the exploitation of women's bodies with the violation of land and water during wartime. Mir (2021) argues that the "controlled and exploited lives of all female characters run parallel with the exploitation of land," as military campaigns scar both landscapes and bodies. Rahman (2019) similarly reads Khan's work as emblematic of Pakistani women's environmental modes of belonging, where cooking, drawing water and tending children become sites of ecological and political meaning.

From an ecolinguistic perspective, Noor is saturated with vocabularies of ghosts, stains and residues. The war rarely appears as a linear, fully narrated event; instead, its presence surfaces in metaphors of "stained" soil, "heavy" air and "drowned" memories. In one scene, a bathroom is described as having faucets "stained with age," the tap water tinged and suspect. Such details are more than atmospheric: they frame history itself as a polluted environment through which characters must breathe and drink. The lexical field of stain and taint constructs a story of national memory as toxic residue difficult to confront yet impossible to expel.

Noor's disability complicates any easy ecofeminist association of women with nurturing nature. Her seizures and visionary paintings are not signs of purity but of a bodily, often painful attunement to violence done to both people and place. Critics have read her art as a counter-archive that testifies to war crimes and challenges official histories (Mir, 2021). Environmentally, her recurring images of submerged villages, broken trees and faceless women foreground how militarised nationalism rewrites rivers and borders as much as it rewrites memory. Noor's body becomes a medium through which the landscapes of Bangladesh "insist" on being remembered, despite the state's desire for amnesia.

Gendered difference is also encoded in patterns of speech. Male characters often mobilise discourses of heroic sacrifice, territorial integrity and divine sanction to justify wartime actions. This language functions as a justificatory story in Stibbe's (2015) sense, presenting violence against women and scorched-earth tactics as necessary costs of national survival. By contrast, Sajida and Noor's conversations, domestic routines and silences gradually piece together an alternative narrative in which land and water themselves appear as witnesses and co-sufferers. When Sajida dreams of a landscape where "the fields... would not stay buried," memory is figured as a hydrological force that keeps pushing bodies and stories back to the surface.

The temporal structure of *Noor* reinforces this ecofeminist work of memory. The novel shifts between past and present, dream and waking life, but does so through iterative, cyclical patterns rather than linear chronology. Recurrent images of flooding, monsoon rain and stagnant pools echo Pakistan's more recent climate disasters, positioning the 1971 war not as a closed chapter but as an ongoing environmental and psychic condition. In this sense, Noor anticipates climate-justice discourse by showing how communities already living with the residues of state violence are rendered still more vulnerable to intensified monsoon variability and infrastructural neglect. Ultimately, Noor performs what we might call ecofeminist memory work. It retrieves suppressed histories of violence against women and landscapes; critiques national narratives that treat both as expendable; and imagines reparative forms of care rooted in everyday practices bathing, cooking, tending gardens that bind bodies to damaged environments.

Toxic Water and Neoliberal Masculinity: Urban Ecologies in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*

Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* is structurally and stylistically distinct from the other two novels. Framed as a parody of a self-help manual, it addresses the reader in the second person "you" and offers numbered chapters that promise to guide "you" from rural poverty to urban riches (Hamid, 2013). The protagonist's fortune is made by selling filtered water in a city where municipal supplies have become unsafe due to corroded pipes and intermingled sewerage.

Ecocritical studies highlight how the novel satirises neoliberal growth narratives by tying upward mobility to the commodification of a basic ecological necessity clean water (Bose, 2023). At one point, Hamid describes drinking-water pipes whose cracks allow "gutter contents" to seep in, so that taps in rich and poor neighbourhoods alike disgorge clear liquid laced with faecal matter and disease-causing microbes. The passage condenses several

themes: infrastructural decay, classed yet shared vulnerability, and the invisibility of toxicity in a system driven by cost-cutting and corruption.

From an ecofeminist perspective, gender enters primarily through labour and risk distribution. Rural women are responsible for fetching water over long distances; urban women manage household hygiene and care work under conditions of scarcity; and the unnamed “pretty girl” navigates precarious employment in media and beauty industries that treat her body as commodity. Yet these forms of labour and exposure rarely feature in the self-help address directed at “you,” a male subject whose rise depends on the invisible work of women and on ecological damage borne by others. The gap between what the narrative voice foregrounds (entrepreneurial risk-taking, business deals) and what it backgrounds (care work, ecological toxicity) is itself an ecolinguistic marker of gendered erasure.

At the same time, the novel produces the codes of masculinity with the metaphors of hardness, linear ascendancy, and conquest: to be successful, you should raise, ascend and take chances (which is rather often based on shortcuts of questionable personal ethics). This language structure reflects the prevailing discourses of progress and growth which Stibbe (2015) describes as ecologically disastrous in terms of projecting endless growth as natural and desirable and concealing the environmental boundaries. In comparison, the scenes that show illness, old age, vulnerability with women, children, or the elderly are linked with dripping pipes, damp rooms, and stagnant water. Disease is rendered into the terms of leakage and stagnation not heroic upward movement which helps to understand who face the embodied consequences of toxic infrastructure.

The address to the second person is essential. On the one hand, it is used to flatter the reader: the narrator calls this book a self-help book and guarantees that he/she will be able to demonstrate to you how you can succeed (Hamid, 2013). Conversely, it makes the reader critical of the very narration that is under critique, and makes us complicit in our subjectivity, which accepts falsehood and exploitation as well as the destruction of the environment as the inevitable stages in becoming rich. Within the context of ecolinguistics, the text itself apes the rhyme and slogans of inspirational rhetoric so as to reveal their complicity in the destruction of the environment and gendered injustice. That is why it does what Stibbe (2015) terms resistance to destructive stories: fills them inside to open their ethical and ecological bankruptcy.

Significantly, the novel’s final chapters soften the self-help voice as the ageing “you” loosens his grip on wealth and status and reconnects, tentatively, with the “pretty girl.” The language shifts from upward motion to lateral relation, from aggression to care. This narrative turn is fragile and never fully idealised, but it sketches an alternative story in which value lies not in accumulation but in interdependence and mutual vulnerability a story more compatible with ecofeminist visions of just, sustainable life.

Patterns Across Texts: Toward an Ecofeminist Ecolinguistics of Pakistani Fiction

Reading *Thinner than Skin*, *Noor* and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* together reveals several convergent patterns that an ecofeminist-ecolinguistic approach helps to clarify.

First, water and ice function as gendered relational media rather than inert scenery. In *Thinner than Skin*, glacial meltwaters both sustain and endanger nomadic communities, mediating encounters between Maryam’s family, tourists, militants and soldiers. In *Noor*, rivers and flooded fields carry corpses, memories and unspoken guilt, turning hydrology into a medium of historical return. In Hamid’s novel, urban water is commodified, filtered, bottled and sold, but remains haunted by the “whooshing thirst” of a city whose infrastructure leaks filth into every tap. Across these texts, the linguistic representation of water as “stained,” “mating,” “filtered,” “thirsty” tracks how gendered and classed bodies encounter environmental change.

Second, the novels challenge dominant stories of development and security that saturate Pakistani policy and media discourse. Large dams, military operations, tourism projects and real-estate booms are often framed as solutions to poverty and climate risk. Yet in these fictions, such projects correlate with dispossession: nomads pushed off glacial routes, villagers displaced by war, slum dwellers priced out of clean water and safe housing. The language of “progress,” “modernisation” and “security” is revealed as a story that conceals ecological damage and the gendered labour that sustains everyday life under crisis conditions.

Third, all three texts rework memory and time in ecofeminist ways. *Thinner than Skin* and *Noor* in particular disrupt linear national narratives by foregrounding cyclical temporalities: seasonal migrations, recurring floods, persistent ghosts. This resonates with ecofeminist arguments that women’s experiences of care, reproduction and subsistence labour generate temporalities other than those of militarised states and markets (Shiva, 1989; Rahman, 2019). Linguistically, repeated present-tense descriptions and iterative verbs keep past violence alive in the narrative “now,” resisting efforts to confine it to history.

Fourth, the novels stage a shift from victimhood to relational agency. While women characters suffer disproportionately from sexual violence, displacement, toxic exposure they are not frozen as mere victims. Maryam’s negotiations with soldiers and tourists, Sajida’s decision to house refugees and Noor’s insistence on painting traumatic scenes, the “pretty girl’s” recalibration of her career and affective life: all demonstrate situated agency within constraining structures. The move from passive to active constructions in key passages is not trivial; it repositions women and marginalised communities as environmental subjects with knowledge and capacity, even when their options are limited.

Finally, the texts gesture toward new stories to live by, however tentative. In *Thinner than Skin*, the Gujjar cosmology treats glaciers as ancestral kin rather than reservoirs; in *Noor*, Noor’s art and Sajida’s care work create a counter-archive of shared vulnerability; in Hamid’s novel, the abandonment of the self-help script in favour of

modest, relational living hints at an ethic beyond accumulation. These alternatives align with ecofeminist and ecolinguistic calls for narratives that foreground care, reciprocity and justice instead of domination and endless growth (Gaard, 2015; Stibbe, 2015).

Figure 2. Integrative ecofeminist-ecolinguistic synthesis showing how environmental stressors, socio-historical conditions, and gendered narrative practices in *Thinner than Skin*, *Noor*, and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* converge to produce climate-just storytelling frameworks.

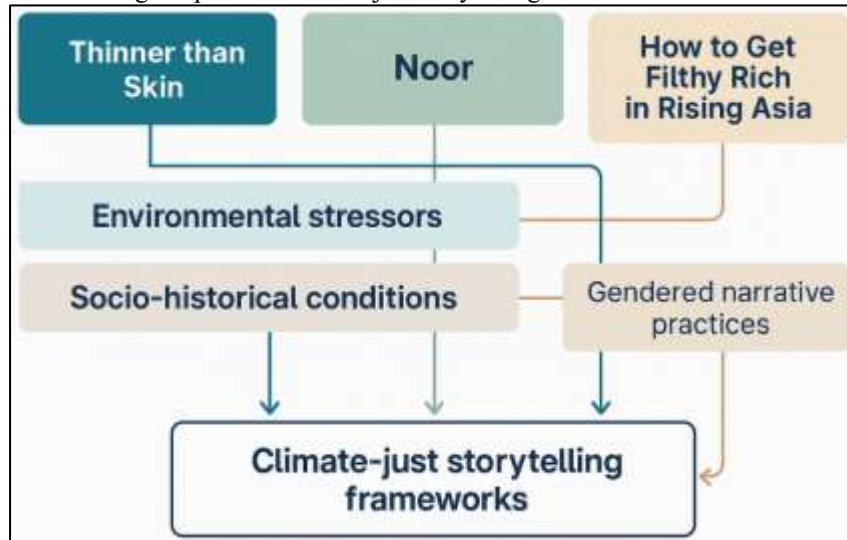


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CONCLUSION: CLIMATE-JUST READINGS OF PAKISTANI ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE

This article has argued that *Thinner than Skin*, *Noor* and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* together form a rich archive for thinking about climate change, gender and language in contemporary Pakistan. Moving from high-altitude glacial landscapes through war-scarred floodplains to toxic megacities, they converge on a central insight: environmental degradation in Pakistan is never merely “natural.” It is produced and experienced through intersecting structures of gender, class, ethnicity, militarisation and citizenship, and through the stories that legitimise or contest those structures.

By bringing ecofeminism into dialogue with ecolinguistics, we see more clearly how Pakistani writers contest dominant stories of development, security and entrepreneurial self-help. Khan’s novels insist that women’s labour, memory and mobility are indispensable to understanding climate vulnerability in Pakistan’s borderlands and post-war geographies, while Hamid’s caustic self-help parody exposes the ecological and ethical costs of neoliberal masculinity and capital accumulation in urban Pakistan. Their narrative strategies shifts in pronoun, metaphor, tense, perspective and erasure are not mere stylistic flourishes; they are ecological interventions that reframe who and what matters in the story of climate crisis.

Situated against the backdrop of Pakistan’s recent climate disasters catastrophic floods, intensified monsoons, accelerating glacial melt these novels do more than foreshadow catastrophe. They model ways of remembering, speaking and imagining otherwise. *Thinner than Skin* and *Noor* retrieve histories of slow and spectacular violence that continue to shape whose homes are washed away and whose bodies are deemed disposable. Hamid’s novel reveals how violently unequal urban water infrastructures make climate vulnerability an everyday, embodied condition long before disaster headlines appear.

For climate-change literary studies, taking these works seriously means repositioning Pakistan not merely as a “victim” of extreme weather in policy reports but as a producer of sophisticated, self-reflexive climate narratives that challenge what Ghosh (2016) calls the “great derangement.” Their ecofeminist and ecolinguistic textures complicate simplistic representations of Pakistani women as voiceless victims and of Pakistani environments as passive backdrops. Instead, they render women, disabled subjects, informal workers and nonhuman entities as protagonists in intertwined stories of damage, care and possibility.

Future research might extend this approach by:

- examining Urdu and regional-language Pakistani texts alongside Anglophone fiction;
- tracing how flood and heat-wave imagery in recent poetry and digital media reworks older literary representations of monsoon and drought;
- using corpus-based ecolinguistic methods to analyse climate narratives in Pakistani news, policy and literature together;

- Such corpus-based ecolinguistic work will also depend on robust NLP tools for local languages; recent research on Punjabi shows that even small diacritical and orthographic modifications can severely disrupt current NLP systems (Bhatti & Arif, 2025), underscoring the need for language-specific resilience strategies.

- and exploring connections between Pakistani climate fiction and broader South Asian or Muslim-world climate imaginaries.

Such work would respond to Johns-Putra's (2016) call for climate-change criticism that is both regionally grounded and globally aware, while further developing ecofeminist-ecolinguistic tools for reading climate justice in the Global South.

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