

## ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN UZMA ASLAM KHAN'S TRESPASSING: NATURE, CULTURE, AND AWARENESS

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### **Abstract**

*The paper examines how ecological consciousness is depicted in some of the passages of *Trespassing* by Uzma Aslam Khan. Basing on the Ecocriticism as the form of theoretical basis, the study examines how the text forms the relations between the human and the nature, emphasizes the harmony between nature and humans, and prefigures the spiritual interdependence between man and nature. Through qualitative textual analysis, the research determines the role of metaphors, imagery, and symbolic environments in enhancing the ecological awareness at a greater level. The results show that sustainability, compassion to all living creatures, and human moral duty as the guardian of nature are highlighted in the story by Uzma Aslam Khan. The end helps to emphasize the idea that ecological consciousness in the text is not only a thematic issue but also a spiritual and ethical appeal to the ecological awareness.*

### **Keywords:**

Ecocriticism, ecological awareness, ecological harmony, imagery of nature, Uzma Aslam Khan, *Trespassing*, literary ecology, qualitative textual analysis.

### **1.1 Introduction**

Ecological consciousness is the human consciousness of the interdependence between humans and natural environment with the focus on the responsibility, sustainability, and ecological system respect. Ecological consciousness can be seen as a key theme of *Trespassing* (2003) by Uzma Aslam Khan, which reveals the delicate mix of human presence in the country and nature in Pakistan. The novel uses rich descriptions, symbolic landscapes, and personal experiences of the characters to expose the threat of ecological balance caused by human encroachment, both physical and symbolic.

Khan predicts problems like waste, forest degradation, industrial growth and the loss of traditional means of livelihood, all of which influence how the characters perceive the surrounding. The story does not only criticize the degradation of the environment but also emphasizes on the way ecological consciousness is formed through individual experiences of land, nature and memory. Discussing these aspects, the novel encourages readers to question their own contribution to the ecological destruction or protection.

In such a way, *Trespassing* turns into a strong literary canvas to analyze ecological consciousness and shed light on the ways in which culture, politics, and identity become intertwined with the reality of the environment. The novel shows that ecological sensitivity is no longer a theoretical concept but a reality that is determined by social, economic and emotional forces that determine how human beings relate to nature.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

1. What is the awareness of the characters towards the natural environment and their identification with the natural environment in *Trespassing*?
2. What does the novel say about the ecological destruction, and what does the novel say about the impact of human encroachment on the natural places?

### 1.3 Research Objectives

1. To discuss the representation of ecological consciousness in the context of relationships of the characters with the surrounding in *Trespassing*.
2. To examine how the novel depicts the degradation of the environment and how the ecological awareness feels.

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

The work is important as it demonstrates the way literature can develop ecological consciousness by showing the impact of human activities on the natural environment. By studying the idea of *Trespassing* through the prism of ecocritical approach the research contributes to the better comprehension of how environmental issues are integrated into contemporary fiction, particularly South Asian one. The research adds to environmental humanities by showing how ecological awareness in literature can make readers reconsider the relationship with nature and promote sustainable behavior.

In addition, the study contributes to the existing body of academic debate on the subject of ecological representation in Pakistani literature, which remains an emerging concept in the academic arena. The study provides useful information on how authors such as Khan question industrial growth, socio-political regimes, and cultural practices that facilitate ecological destruction by foregrounding the environmental issues. Altogether, the study contributes to the ecocritical literature, demonstrating how narrative fiction could be the gamechanger in terms of the development of the ecological ideas.

### 1.5 Delimitation of the Study

This paper is limited to the exploration of ecological consciousness in Uzma Aslam Khan's *Trespassing*, paying special attention to the ways in which environmental consciousness is created with the help of characters, settings, and events of the story. It does not study other themes like heterotopia, gender relations, political struggle unless it has a direct effect on the ecological issues. The textual analysis of this particular novel is also limited because the study does not cover the other novels by Khan and other ecological novels in Pakistani literature.

## 2 Literature Review

In recent years, ecocritical criticism of Pakistani English fiction has developed around the subject of negotiations of the environment, land politics, and human-nature relations in literary texts. Critics including Shazia Rahman and Ben Conisbee Baer believe that South Asian ecoliterature tends to locate environmental crises in colonial, political and international capitalist frameworks revealing the way in which landscapes become a disputed space. In this tradition, the novels by Uzma Aslam Khan are often credited with the sensitive approach towards ecology and vulnerable environments, especially in connection with the marginalized communities. Previous work emphasizes the rich use of natural imagery and the symbolism of the natural environment, but seldom discusses the presence of *Trespassing* as a piece of writing that criticizes ecological exploitation and predicts the environmental awareness of ordinary people. Postcolonial ecocritics like Rob Nixon and Graham Huggan highlight the disproportionate nature of environmental destruction on formerly colonized areas, and what Nixon terms as a slow violence. The ecological consciousness, which is often depicted in literature of these areas includes not only personal awareness but also reaction to the systemic exploitation. According to previous studies, ecological awareness in postcolonial stories tends to take place as a result of experience, whether in the form of food shortage, land loss, or exposure to climate. These thematic issues are particularly acute in *Trespassing*, although not much scholarly work has been done to understand the ecological aspect of the novel, which leaves the opportunity to study the way in which characters represent, oppose and negotiate environmental consciousness in their daily activities.

The idea of heterotopia developed by Michel Foucault has been used in the study of literature to describe spaces of tension, contradiction or multi-layered realities. Since the 1990s South Asian fiction has taken the heterotopic space of border, marketplace, rivers, and domestic interior as a site where identities are negotiated and various social orders co-exist alongside each other. Researchers believe that the heterotopias in the South Asian literature is inclined to represent the political instability, cultural hybridity and socio-economic divisions. Although critics have recognized the existence of spatial complexity in the works of Khan, an academic void in scholarship has existed in the application of heterotopia to the specifics of *Trespassing* and in particular, geopolitical tension, textile spaces, and rural-urban differences.

The analysis of Uzma Aslam Khan as an author of her narratives about gender, colonialism and cultural displacement is subject to multiple studies, yet few researchers have applied theoretical perspectives of ecocriticism or heterotopia to her spatial strategies. Studies of her novel *The Geometry of God* demonstrate that she creates spaces of the layers warping personal history with politics of the country. This essential perspective is extended to *Trespassing* where the textile factory, university, the urban landscape in Karachi, the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan are the symbolic spaces of operation. These spaces are ecologically and heterotopically constructed, i.e. environmentally precarious and at the same time demonstrating the multiplicity and contradictions of social and political life.

### **3. Methodology**

The research design adopted in the study is the qualitative research design based on textual research, which is used to investigate how the ecological consciousness and heterotopia is represented in Uzma Aslam Khan *Trespassing*. The methodology is based on the literary methods of close reading, interpreting, and categorizing the themes as a literary inquiry that aims to investigate the role of the narrative techniques, spatial construction, and symbolism to the chosen concepts. It is an interpretivist approach, which puts greater emphasis on the creation of meaning in the text instead of quantification, and is based on the preexisting academic discussion to situate the findings within the framework of a larger ecocritical and spatial theory.

#### **3.1 Tools for Data Collection**

Close textual analysis of *Trespassing* is the main method of collecting data in the form of the novel. The most topical passages, descriptions of scenes, and structural narratives, especially the ones that dealt with natural landscapes, environmental imagery, space delimitations, and heterotopic symbols were singled out and interpreted. Peer-reviewed journal articles, theoretical texts, and critical essays were also used as secondary sources to reflect the analysis and provide theoretical correspondence. These sources were found in the digital libraries, scholarly databases, and the available studies on the postcolonial ecocriticism and Foucauldian spatial theory.

#### **3.2 Sample**

The study sample will be limited to the novel *Trespassing* by Uzma Aslam Khan, as it was chosen based on purposive sampling, because the novel is highly informative on the themes of environment and space. The key units of analysis are particular episodes and characterizations, as well as descriptive passages that directly or indirectly refer to ecological consciousness or heterotopia. The sample can be explained by the fact that *Trespassing* is the multi-layered depiction of landscape, socio-political tensions, and spatial dynamics, and this text responds well and effectively to the research aims.

#### **3.3 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical basis of the given work is based on Ecocriticism, which is the method that investigates the connections between the literary and the physical world. As proposed by William Rueckert (1978) and subsequently developed by authors like Cheryll Glotfelty and

Lawrence Buell, ecocriticism gives us the conceptual framework on the manner *Trespassing* shapes the ecological awareness. As noted by Glotfelty (1996), ecological criticism criticizes the historical division between the human culture and nature, claiming that the ecological awareness of literature should be based on ontological understanding of the location of human beings within and not outside the natural world. This ontological change, emphasizing on being and not just knowing is the center of ecological conscience that makes the readers think about how the narratives speak of human embeddedness in natural ecosystems. The paper also relies on the statement by Glotfelty that ecocriticism questions the way literary texts express environmental ethics, ecological crisis, and changing perceptions of wilderness, rural landscapes, and the environment in general. Under this view, literature seems to be the sphere where the cultural values regarding the nature are expressed and the interactions between human and environment are analyzed in a critical manner. This is in line with the idea of the environment of the literature Meeker calls literary ecology that considers literary texts as spaces where ecological concepts are pursued and where the relations between humans and the environment are created and challenged.

Another argument, which supports this framework, lies in the influential concept of environment imagination which was put forward by Lawrence Buell (1995) and which holds that literature can renegotiate the human relationship with nature. According to Buell, the definition of nature should be extended to cover not just the wilderness and countryside but also the man-made space, the industrialized space, and city ecologies. Such extended notion is of particular importance to *Trespassing* as the themes of ecology are introduced in both natural and commercialized territories as a reflection of the interdisciplinarity of the problems of nature and socio-politics. Also, the model of textual analysis applied in this research is informed by the work by Dobson (1998) on environment and justice. His framework emphasizes the influence of social structures, technological interventions and political realities to shape ecological consciousness. The current paper applies this model in the analysis of the way *Trespassing* builds ecological awareness with the help of narrative descriptions, experiences of the character, and the depiction of environmental degradation. Taken together, these ecocritical interpretations inform the understanding of *Trespassing* in terms of locating the novel against a wider set of ecological interrelatedness, environmental ethical practices, and the literature of environmental crisis. This theoretical approach allows paying special attention to the way the text develops ecological awareness and criticizes human activity interfering with the state of the environment.

#### **4: Analysis of Ecological Consciousness in *Trespassing***

##### **4.1 Introduction**

The book *Trespassing* by Uzma Aslam Khan (2003) is a somewhat complicated exploration of human relations with nature, showing the importance of ecological awareness in the perceptions, behavior, and moral justifications of characters. The nature in the novel is not just a setting but rather a participant of the story which shapes the events, human feelings, and ethical decisions. The theme of ecological consciousness comes out prominent to highlight how humans rely on their environments and vice versa, which is both vulnerable and strong.

In this chapter, an attempt is made to examine how characters in *Trespassing* experience and react to environmental forces, both in how the ecological consciousness influences their choices, embodied experiences, and their associations with both natural and heterotopic space. The critique highlights the contradiction between human needs, social constructs and environmental preservation and shows that ethical, social and aesthetic aspects of environmental consciousness are negotiated in the novel.

#### **4.2 Incarnated Experience and Corporeal Relationship with Nature.**

The embodied and sensory quality of ecological consciousness in *Trespassing* is one of the most vivid aspects of the ecological consciousness. The characters become aware of the environment as a result of physical interaction with the environment. As an example, it is seen in the observations Dia made at the silkworm farm, suggesting the close connection between humans and nature:

The mention of going to the silkworm farm to-morrow raised the spirits of Dia. The caterpillars had now started to spin their cocoons...she had also acquired a kind of art, that of stillness. She was capable of freezing in a room with humidity more than seventy per cent with sweat streaming down her brows and binoculars quickly hazy (Khan, 2003, p.14).

Khan preempts the way human body is subjected to perceiving and interacting with nature through the careful observation of Dia of the cocoon-spinning procedure of the caterpillars. The text stresses the ideas of stillness, patience, and being in touch of the body as the requirements of being ecologically sensitive. This argues that ecological consciousness is not purely cognitive in nature, but rather it is profoundly embodied that man must resonate with, both physically, emotionally and ethically with the rhythms of nature.

On the same note, encounters with the sea and the marine life also present embodied ecological awareness in Daanish:

The initial shell that Daanish had ever heard of was a purple sea snail. It was a one-inch drifter, riding upon the water of the ocean, and going far farther than most things that live, or die" (Khan, 2003, p.45).

In this case, Daanish considers nature to be independent and intertwined and shows respect to the motility and existence of the snail. The narrative of the snail voyage highlights the importance of the ecological interdependence and the moral importance of the acknowledgment of the agency of nonhuman life. These symbolic interactions emphasize how the novel insists that ecological awareness is the result of the conscious act of attention to the natural world, and not purely of abstract thought.

#### **4.3 Environmental issues brought about by people.**

The weakness of the ecological systems with regard to the human activity is also a foregrounded phenomenon in Khan novel. The sensitivity of the characters on the degradation of the environment highlights the effects of not looking after the environment. As an example, Dia notes the reduction in the productivity of silkworms because of water shortage:

and that was worse than last year, Dia said to himself. She was selling the produce of the leaves in half a ton when she was a child. However, in the past three years, this had started to decline alarmingly because of the rising water-shortage (Khan, 2003, p.103).

This text is an expression of ecological acumen, because Dia is connected to the well-being of silkworms with the larger environmental circumstances. In this regard, ecological consciousness implies the realization of causal-effect relationships of human activity, climate variability, and nonhuman life. The loss of silk production is not only an economic issue, but also a moral and ecological one, and it is important to highlight the diversity of human and natural systems.

Moreover, social and cultural factors as mediating environmental awareness are depicted in the novel. Most ecological balance is disrupted by human interventions whether infrastructural, economic or social. Urbanization, travel, constructed spaces, e.g. airports, are examples of heterotopic spaces, in contrast with the organic rhythms of nature and changing the ecological perception of characters:

At last the door was opened and Daanish trailed the others to the runway. The heaven was a pale gray smog and the sultry heat instant suffocation. There was no star shone through" (Khan, 2003, p.39).

The airport being a constructed and artificial space is a good example of a heterotopic site in which natural rhythms are put on hold. The characters are physically and psychologically alienated to face nature directly, and the conflict between ecological awareness and modernity is pointed out. The opposition between the two highlights the insistent nature of the novel to acknowledge that environmental awareness is susceptible to socio-cultural and technological factors.

#### **4.4 Moral Aspects of Ecological awareness.**

In trespassing, ecological awareness is highly ethical. The sensitivity of the characters towards nature has a moral implication in the way that these characters acknowledge the responsibilities of humans to nonhuman life. The interaction of Dia with natural resources, the study of caterpillars and eating of berries, proves that the ecological attention is concerned with care, respect, and thoughtfulness:

"Dia popped another berry. The best of the lot was sweet...her admiration of natural foods" (Khan, 2003, p.92).

Such consideration of the natural products and their quality, taste, and origin is an indication of ethical thought. Mindful consumption is then made a path to ethical environmental practice indicating that there is an element of observation and doing in ecological consciousness.

On the same note, the interactions that Daanish has with marine life depict an appreciation of the inherent worth of nonhumans. Through valuing the life cycle of the purple sea snail, and the ecological interdependences it embodies, Daanish demonstrates an ethics of coexistence, in which understanding environmental systems is the determinant of behavior and a sense of compassion with nonhuman creatures.

#### **4.5 Strains between Human Action and Environmental Consciousness.**

The conflict between the ecological consciousness and human desires is a constant theme in the novel. The attempts of characters to establish their independence, social ambitions, or to find their ways in heterotopic space often go into conflict with environmental conservation. As an illustration, social gatherings, urbanized buildings, and economic processes tend to interrupt contacts between characters and nature:

Not only was Nini ruining Dia the opportunity to see the moths, but she made Dia listen to others speak against Riffat once more (Khan, 2003, p.199).

The ecological interaction that Dia experienced in this passage is disrupted by social and cultural forces. The difference between her interest in nature and the perturbing social space highlights the fact that ecological consciousness is relative and depends on social, cultural and individual circumstances. According to Khan, environmental consciousness is forced to struggle with other human interests, which is a manifestation of the conflicting nature of ecological ethics and human needs.

This conflict is reflected in the experience of heterotopia that Daanish undergoes at the beach, in which the issues of personal relations are crossed with the observation of nature:

The complex signs of Daanish are aligned to the contrary cultural arrangements of expansive ecological set-up and a traversive network of heterotopia (Khan, 2003, p.170).

The contrast between natural involvement and heterotopic experience represents the idea that ecological consciousness is both locational, relational and often opposing social order or human-constructed limitations.

#### **4.6: Heterotopia and Environmental Perception**

In *Trespassing*, the heterotopic spaces, environments constructed or socially differentiated, are the place of reflection of the relationships between humans and nature. Airports, cities, and society are the heterotopias, which accentuate the loss of contact with nature. You move around in these spaces and characters tend to feel an ecological awareness being interrupted, mediated or complicated:

The internal space of the airport establishes contrasting space with nature in the Outside (Khan, 2003, p.33).

These rooms accentuate the instability and situationality of ecological awareness. Environmental awareness as a form of dynamic negotiation depicted in the novel is subject to space, time and cultural action. Comparing natural and heterotopic spaces, Khan proves that the ecological consciousness does not only concern the ability to perceive nature but also to realize the social, cultural, and constructed powers influencing the interaction of humans and the environment.

#### **4.7 Conclusion of Analysis**

Altogether, ecological consciousness is proposed in *Trespassing* as:

Embodied and sensory: Perception is based on direct experience with natural things.

- Ethically charged: Environmental involvement brings about moral accountability and esteem towards nonhuman life.

Contextual and relational: The environment creates awareness of the environmental issue through social, cultural, and heterotopic factors.

- Stressed by human presence: Social aspirations, built environments and individual needs often interfere with ecological sensitiveness.

The rich presentation of nature in the novel showing flora, fauna, weather and environmental destruction in the novel explains the depth of environmental awareness. The way characters interact with nature demonstrates the fact that ecological consciousness is not just an observational precept, but is also closely connected to ethics, social system, and bodily experience. The juxtaposition of natural space and heterotopic space allows Khan to point out that ecological consciousness is relational, adaptive, and mediated by human and environmental relationships.

Using *Trespassing*, readers have an understanding of the complex relationships between nature and humans and realize that ecological awareness is a negotiated and ongoing and an ethically important process. The description in the novel provokes the consideration of the human responsibility in terms of nature preservation and the social, cultural, and psychological aspects of our interaction with nature.

### **5. Findings and Conclusion**

#### **5.1 Findings**

As can be seen through the examination of *Trespassing*, there are some important lessons regarding the ecological awareness and its impact on the experience and perception of characters:

##### **1. Spiritual Interaction with Nature:**

Ecological consciousness is shown by the characters like Dia and Daanish, who have direct interaction with the natural environments. Their sensual experiences of watching cocoons being spun by silkworms, walking on the shore, communicating with plants and animals, demonstrate that ecological awareness is based on physical perception. Nature is not a passive surrounding, but rather an active participant in human life, it can give the emotions, the ethical reasoning and the perception of the interconnectedness.

##### **2. Connection between Ethics and the ecological world:**

Ecological consciousness has an ethical implication, which is highlighted in the novel. The moral responsibility that humans have towards nature is manifested through the characters in the way they respect the natural processes or recognize the environment being polluted. To take one example, the fact that Dia cares about the problem of water scarcity and its impacts on the production of silkworms shows that she is sensitive to the ecological issues and understands the anthropogenic impacts on the environment.

### **3. Mediating Effect of Social and Cultural Situations:**

The societal norms and cultural expectations usually mediate ecological consciousness in the novel. The social interactions, the hierarchical space, and heterotopic space, including airports, parties, and man-made farms, disrupt or support the environmental engagement of characters. Social processes at parties shatter the ecological consciousness of Dia, which demonstrates that the consciousness of the environment is not shaped by the direct experience of nature only but also affects the environment in terms of its large-scale social and cultural processes.

### **4. Ecological awareness can be described as dynamic and relational in nature.**

The novel demonstrates the ecological awareness as changeable and contingent. The environmental sensitivity of characters is formed during their contacts with both heterotopic and natural space. Awareness is not fixed or universal as well as it varies depending on individual experiences, the situation in the environment and social cultural demands. The experiences of marine creatures that Daanish has as well as the observations that Dia does in the silkworm farm are examples of this relational and adaptive nature of the ecological consciousness.

### **5. Disagreement between Human Needs and Environmental Preservation:**

Human ambitions and desires tend to disrupt ecological consciousness in the novel. The need of characters to gain independence or social status is often contradictory to the environment. The story shows that the ecological consciousness has to moderate these tensions revealing the frailty of the environmental ethics in humanistic societies.

### **6. Ecological Awareness Techniques:**

Khan predicts ecological consciousness with imagery, symbolism, and description of natural places. The repetition of interest to natural phenomena, whether it is weather, plants, and animals, produces unease and morality among both the characters and readers. With the help of these narrative devices, the novel establishes ecological consciousness as an important instrument of understanding human-nature relations.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

The paper has concluded that *Trespassing* creates the theme of ecological consciousness that cuts across bodily experience, social structures and ethical reflection. Key conclusions include: Ecological consciousness is lived and embodied. More awareness is generated by characters when they directly, sensorily interact with the natural world.

Awareness is moral and interpersonal. Environmental recognition involves having moral obligations to nonhuman objects and ecosystems that they live in.

Ecological consciousness is mediated by the socio-cultural contexts. The level and quality of environmental awareness are brought about by human interactions, the societal norms, and constructed spaces.

It is movement oriented and situational. The ecological sensitivity is varied with the individual experiences and social relations as well as the environmental transformations.

- The struggle against human needs emphasizes the vulnerability of the environment. Desires of human beings, social and cultural expectations, engineered spaces tend to interfere ecological interaction, and the subtlety between human activity and environmental conservation is highlighted.

As the novel by Khan shows, ecological consciousness is not a personal and naturalistic characteristic, but a rather complex, mediated, and situated phenomenon. The relations of the characters with the environment demonstrate the opportunities and restrictions of ecological consciousness in human lives. The text, through experiences, stresses the importance of focusing on the environment, being ethically concerned, and sensitive to the social and cultural settings within which human beings have to work.



### 5.3 Future Research Recommendations.

1. Comparative Ecological Analysis: Compare ecological awareness in other South Asian contemporary novels to determine regional trends and themes of the novels.
2. Psychological and Cognitive Level: Explore how environmental consciousness influences cognitive and emotional growth, strength, and moral thinking of characters in literature.
3. Cross-Cultural Studies: Research ecological consciousness in various cultural and socio-economic settings to comprehend the mediation of culture in environmental interaction.
4. Interdisciplinary Approaches: Use ecocriticism in conjunction with environmental sociology, urban studies, or anthropology to address the overall forces of the society that affect ecological consciousness.
5. Literary Technique Analysis: Discover how imagery, symbolism and story point of view have been used to emphasize ecological awareness and draw readers to moral contemplation.

To sum up, *Trespassing* also relates the complexity of ecological consciousness, which implies that environmental consciousness is a relational, embodied, ethically important practice, conditioned by the forces of nature, society, and culture. The novel offers a critical context of seeing how human beings interact with nature and responsibilities that arise out of the interaction.

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