

AN ECO-CRITICAL STUDY OF KHALED HOSSEINI'S AND THE MOUNTAINS ECHOED

*Dr. Sadaf Shah

Sr. Assistant Professor
Department of English
University of Jammu

*Pooja Kumari

Ph.D Scholar
Department of English
University of Jammu

Abstract

Ecocriticism is a critical theory that focuses on the study of relationship between the literature and environment. The theory identifies the root problems that cause environmental damage in relationship that society shares with nature. The preservation of natural environment is a serious concern for ecocritics. Khaled Hosseini is a well known Afghan American writer. Born in Kabul, he loves to write about his hometown. The present paper attempts to study Hosseini third novel And the Mountains Echoed (2013) from an eco-critical perspective. The novel is about the relationship between a brother and a sister named Pari and Abdullah who live in a village called Shadbagh in Afghanistan. While dealing with this relationship and their tragic parting in childhood and again meeting after many years when they are old, Hosseini focuses on the natural ecology of Afghanistan and environmental disaster due to different wars that took place in Afghanistan that led to overall ecocide. He shows that when human beings go on exploiting nature, it sometimes too becomes violent and cause serious health issues in human beings. Besides, he also touches on the different facets of nature where it is benevolent and cruel to human beings. In the novel, the nature is also seen as possessing divine powers which is one of the basic tenets of spiritual ecology.

Key words: *Ecocriticism, Environmental Pollution, Environmental Degradation, Environmental Destruction, Environmental Disaster, Ecocide, Spiritual Ecology.*

Ecocriticism is an umbrella term that refers to the environmentally based study of literature and the art, and the theories that take into consideration such critical practice. It focuses on nature writing and ecological issues in all literature. It deals with the ecological problems like pollution, global warming, climate change, deforestation, species extinction and other ecological problems. It seeks to offer solution to the current environmental problems. Ecocriticism as a concept arose in the late 1970s at the meetings of the WLA (World Literature Association, a body whose field of interest is the literature of the American West).

The term "Ecocriticism" was coined by William Rueckett in 1978 in an essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" where he writes that it involves "application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature" (107). His definition encompasses all possible relations between literature and the physical world. Ecology is a term derived from German 'Oecologie' meaning, "the branch of biology that deals with the relationship between living organisms and their environment" (Johnson 193). The etymology of the word 'Ecology' (oikos + logos) describes it as the knowledge of the household science. Therefore ecology is not a binary relationship between an organism and the environment but is inclusive of the interrelationships among the environment, society and the individual. Thus an analysis of a text in terms of these three components is termed as Ecocriticism. It is derived from Greek word 'oikos' and 'kritis.' Oikos means household and Kritis means judge. The theory made a great progress with the publication of two landmark books in 1996, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm and Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination*. Cheryll Glotfelty, the first American professor of Literature and environment in his book *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996) defines the term 'Ecocriticism' as:

Simply put, Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, Ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (xviii)

In the same book, Glotfelty writes that human beings are responsible for the environmental problems. She also talks about the wide scope of this critical approach. Ecocriticism broadens its scope to other genres besides nature writing as long as the works examine ecological awareness. Glotfelty writes, "nature per se is not the only focus of eco-critical studies of representation. Other topics include the frontier, animals, cities, specific geographical regions, rivers, mountains, deserts, Indians, technology, garbage, and the body" (xiii). In 1992, Glotfelty was also the co-founder of ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) which has its own journal named ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment) started in 1993. Ecocriticism as a critical approach began in USA in the late 1980s and in UK as Green Studies in the early 1990s. Ecocritics holds the view that human beings are largely responsible for the destruction of nature. So, the main aim of ecocritics is to preserve and protect nature from any kind of disaster. Ecocriticism is also known as "Ecopoetics," and "Environmental literary criticism."

Ecocide is the major concern of ecocriticism. It refers to ecological disaster which can be man-made or natural. The term was coined by Arthur W. Gaeleston in 1970 at the conference titled “War and Natural Responsibility” in Washington, USA to describe the attacks from military resources, such as the use of chemical defoliants in Vietnam. Polly Higgins, a legal scholar and an environmental activist in her book *Eradicating Ecocide* defines Ecocide as, “the extensive destruction, damage to or loss of ecosystem(s) of a given territory, whether by human agency or by other causes, to such an extent that the peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been severely diminished” (63).

Spiritual ecology implying ecomysticism may be considered as an arena at the interfaces of religions (or beliefs/faiths) and spiritualities on the one side, and environment and ecology on the other. It does not advocate any single religion; instead those who are spiritual are encouraged to examine their own beliefs and values to see how they relate to nature. In the book *Human Ecology: Basic Concepts for Sustainable Development*, Gerald Marten while discussing mysticism, ecosystem and social transformation points out that “human-ecosystem interaction is sustainable when social system and ecosystem are co-adapted” (136). It is through spiritual wisdom only that environmental sustainability and ecological living is achieved. Ecomysticism implies the realization of the underlying mysteries of nature and to feel oneself as a part of it which leads to the union with the ultimate reality that inspires one to live ecologically like a mystic. The notion of ecomysticism can be tracked in all world religions and spiritual teachings which reflect on nature and the Cosmos as a fundamental part of God and reverence for nature and life as sacred. Spiritual puts emphasis on spiritual development in relation to nature than economic development.

Khaled Hosseini is the famous Afghan-American author. He was born on March 4, 1965 in Kabul, Afghanistan. His father worked as a diplomat in the Afghan Foreign Ministry and his mother was a teacher who taught Farsi and History at a High School in Kabul. In 1965, Hosseini along with his family moved to Paris when the Foreign Ministry issued relocation order to his father. In 1980, his family sought political asylum in the United States as it became impossible for them to return to their hometown i.e. Kabul due to invasion of Soviet army in Afghanistan in 1979. Presently, he is a Goodwill Envoy for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). He is also working to provide humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan through his foundation known as Khaled Hosseini Foundation. Hosseini’s first novel *The Kite Runner* was published in 2003 and immediately it became an international seller. The novel also won Exclusive Books Boeke Prize in 2004. His second novel *The Thousand Splendid Sons* was published in 2007. The novel won several awards like California Book Award Silver Medal for fiction in 2007, British Book Award in 2008, Book Sense Book of the Year Award for Adult fiction in 2008. The setting of both the novels is his hometown, Afghanistan. His third novel *And the Mountains Echoed* was published in 2013 which won Goodreads Choice Award for fiction in the same year. Recently, he has published a novella *The Sea Prayer* (2018) which focuses on the plight of refugees.

In his fictional writings, Hosseini has shown concern for ecological issues. Through these issues, he is trying to educate people about the importance of environmental preservation. In the novels— *The Kite Runner* (2003), *The Thousand Splendid Sons* (2013) and *And the Mountains Echoed* (2018), he has written about the history of Afghanistan which is replete with many wars. Through the description of these wars, he is actually showing the ecological destruction that took place in Afghanistan. Besides, he also focuses on the beauty of natural ecology of Afghanistan prior to these wars that led to environmental pollution and degradation. The period before Soviets ruled Afghanistan is known as the golden era of the country. He feels very sorry for the fact that stories about Afghanistan misrepresent its people. According to Hosseini, the writers are much interested in writing about the destructive facets of Afghanistan rather than its humanistic facet. Hosseini feels at home when he talks about Afghanistan. He has lived through the period of monarch, the declaration of republic period, and the early years of Daud Khan’s (the fifth Prime Minister of Afghanistan) rule i.e from 1953-1963.

Through the novel *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013), Hosseini is bringing awareness about the different environment problems. The novel is divided into nine chapters, each told from the perspective of a different character or narrator. The common thread that binds all these chapters is the story of a brother and a sister named Abdullah and Pari respectively. The novel begins with Abdullah and Pari’s father Saboor, telling a story to them which serves as an allegory. The story is indicative of the ecological concerns shown by Hosseini. Saboor begins the story with a man named Baba Ayub, a farmer who lived with his family in a village named Maidan Sabz. Having a large family to support, he worked very hard at his farms. During that time, *divs* (monsters) and *jinnns* (spirits of any class but lower than angels in Islamic mythology) were commonly found roaming around the villages. Baba Ayub valued his family above all other things. Although Baba Ayub loved all his children, but he shared a close bond with his youngest child, Qais. One day, a *div*, a cruel monster came to Maidan Sabz, and unfortunately Baba Ayub had to give his most cherished son, Qais to *div* for the sake of his other children. In reality, the *div* had put Baba to a test of love and it was the first phase of the test. In the story, nature of Maidan Sabz was not shown as benevolent and in harmony with man. In contrast to the neighbouring villages which had abundant trees, fruits, healthy air, streams with clear and cold water, the nature of Maidan Sabz was portrayed as cruel, unkind and unsympathetic. It was devoid of greenery, which is the symbol of life.

There was a drought in Maidan Sabz, due to which many children died which again shows man-nature conflict. Like, *div* testing the human beings so is the nature in Maidan Sabz through its cruel facet:

... But Maidan Sabz was a desolate place, and it didn't resemble in the slightest the image that its name, Field of Green, would have you picture. It sat in a flat, dusty plain ringed by a chain of craggy mountains. The wind was hot, and blew dust in the eyes. Finding water was a daily struggle because the village wells, even the deep ones often ran low. . Yes, there was a river, but the villagers had to endure a half-day walk to reach it, and even then its waters flowed muddy all year round. Now, after ten years of drought, the river too ran shallow. (2)

At the core of Spiritual Ecology is an understanding that the present outer ecological crisis is a reflection of an inner spiritual crisis. Baba is lacking the spiritual values, so the nature is not friendly thus putting him to hard work. For many coming years nature remained dormant. One day, Baba Ayub decided to kill the *div* who had taken his dearest son. So, he started his journey to reach *div's* place who had his fort at a mountain top. When *div* finally led him to the place where his son was playing, he was astonished. The description of nature at *div's* palace was totally in contrast to that of Maidan Sabz. Nature at *div's* place was benevolent, sympathetic and supportive of life:

... Baba Ayub looked down on an enormous garden. Lines of cypress trees bordered the garden, the ground at their base filled with flowers of all colors. There were pools made of blue tiles, and marble terraces, and lush green lawns. Baba Ayub saw beautifully sculpted hedges and water fountains gurgling the shade of pomegranate trees. In three lifetimes, he could not have imagined the place so beautiful.

But what truly brought Baba Ayub to his knees was the sight of children running and playing happily in the garden. They chased one another through the walkways and around trees. They played games of hide-and-seek behind the hedges. (9-10)

Baba Ayub tried to meet his son, but *div* told him that his son no longer remembered him. When Baba Ayub expressed the desire to take his son away, the *div* reminded him of the hard life at Maidan Sabz like droughts which had taken away the life of so many children. He further asked him if he would be able to forgive himself, if Qais died of drought. Baba Ayub wept and cursed *div*. It was the second phase of the test and Baba passed it and he did not take away his son with him. He left *div's* palace who gave him a flask containing liquid and advised him to drink it during his journey. Days passed, he forgot everything due to the magic drink given by *div* to him. He did not remember his visit to *div's* palace and meeting children and his son, Qais who were playing among the trees. This was the last phase of *div's* test and Baba Ayub forgot everything. After Baba Ayub passed *div's* test, nature became benevolent. Father Loren Kerkof in his article "Eco-spirituality and Lenten Practice" writes, "Eco-spirituality realizes that the earth is a reflection of the divine; it sees the universe as a sacrament of God, an incarnation of God" (Web). Through this story, Hosseini is trying to depict that nature can be benevolent only if man possesses benevolence himself. The nature can be friendly if man sacrifices his happiness for the welfare of the whole community. The *div* tested Baba Ayub who made a great sacrifice by leaving his son whom he liked the most. After this incident, the depiction of nature of Maidan Sabz is totally different. The nature was in harmony with man and supporting life. After years of drought, a heavy rainfall poured over Maidan Sabz. The wells and rivers were filled with water. The flowers blossomed and children started playing among trees instead of dying. Hosseini writes:

... That spring, the skies at last broke open over Maidan Sabz. What came down was not the soft drizzle of years past but a great, great rainfall. Fat rain fell from the sky, and the village rose thirstily to meet it. All day, water drummed upon the roofs of Maidan Sabz and drowned all other sound from the world. Heavy, swollen raindrops rolled from the tips of leaves. The hills to the east turned green. Wildflowers bloomed, and for the first time in many years children played on grass and cows grazed. Everyone rejoiced. (14)

After rain, Baba Ayub produced a plentiful of crops and the next year, the crop increased in both quantity and quality. He sold his goods in cities and sat proudly among his produce and became the happiest man in Maidan Sabz. The important thing is that after this, there was no drought in the village again. So, through this story, Hosseini gives a deep ecological message that nature can be benevolent to man when man himself is sympathetic, merciful, and ready to sacrifice and possess spiritual values in him.

Coming back to the main narrative of the novel, Pari and Abdullah lived in the village Shadbagh in Afghanistan with their father and step mother Parwana. When the novel opens in 1952, Saboor was taking them to Kabul at the residence of Wahdati's where Parwana's brother Nabi worked as a driver. Both brother and sister were unaware of the purpose of their visit to Kabul. Abdullah and Pari could not live without each other but they were going to be parted soon as Wahdati's were about to adopt Pari as their daughter. While narrating their journey to Kabul, Hosseini vividly describes the nature of Shadbagh, the village in Afghanistan that was the only companion of Saboor, Abdullah and Pari. The nature is described in such a way as if it knows what is going to happen in the life of Abdullah and Pari:

. . . For long stretches they were alone, the three of them, nothing and no one in sight but the deep copper gorges and vast sandstone cliffs. The deserts unrolled ahead of them, open and wide, as though it had been created for them and them alone, the air still, blazing hot, the sky high and blue. Rocks shimmered on the cracked floor. (19)

Hosseini also focuses on the relationship that man shares with nature in Shadbagh before the series of wars that took place in the history of Afghanistan. In the village, there was a giant oak tree that “was the oldest living thing in the village.” Saboor had spent almost half of his childhood under the shade of this massive tree by climbing its branches. Even Saboor’s father had used this tree to make a swing which survived for so many years. The oak trees were also witness to the childhood memories of Parwana, Saboor’s wife and Masooma, Saboor’s sister in law when they used to play on that swing. One winter morning, Saboor decided to cut the oak tree, without giving a single thought to the memories attached with it. He hit the tree with his axe mercilessly. Cutting of trees is the major cause of environmental degradation. Having an ecological vision, Hosseini protests this cutting of tree by Saboor. Since ages this oak tree has nurtured the human being with its shade. When the tree was finally cut down by Saboor and his men, it fell on the ground with a “massive groan” as if it was protesting against cruel treatment meted out to it by man. It seemed as if tree was weeping loudly over what man has given it in return for its services to human beings. Hosseini vividly describes the cutting of the tree:

One morning that winter, Father fetched his ax and cut down the giant oak tree. He had Mullah Shekhib’s son, Baitullah, and few other men help him. No one tried to intervene. Abdullah stood alongside other boys and watched the men. The very first thing the Father did was take down the swing. He climbed the tree and cut the ropes with a knife. Then he and other men hacked away at the thick trunk until late afternoon, when the old tree finally toppled with a massive groan. Father told Abdullah they needed the firewood for winter. But he had swung his ax at the old tree with violence, with his jaw firmly set and a cloud over his face like he couldn’t bear to look at it any longer. (45)

Like an ecologist, Hosseini is showing the pain suffered by the oak tree as if he was able to sense the pain of the tree himself. George Sessions, a deep ecologist in “Introduction” to his book *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-first Century* views, “To be fully human, we must protect and nurture our wilderness, which involves bioregional living, intimate contact with wild animals and plants in ecosystems, animistic perceptions, and primal nature rituals” (6). Through the description of the oak tree, Hosseini also shows the spiritual powers possessed by nature. Nature is the revelation of God. It has the power to fulfill the wishes of any person. In one of his conversations with Parwana and Masooma while they were playing on the swing, Saboor told them the magical or divine powers possessed by the giant oak tree. He told them that if anyone has a wish, he or she should kneel in front of tree and whisper it and if the tree desires to grant that wish it will shed ten leaves on the head of that person.

Nature and human beings are closely linked to each other and it is impossible for human beings to separate themselves from its influence. Since ages, man has been exploiting nature for his personal profits and pleasures without giving a single thought to the damage and destruction he is causing to natural environment. When man goes on exploiting nature ruthlessly, nature sometimes too becomes violent. Nature shows its power through natural calamities like cyclones, famine, drought, flood, earthquakes, etc. Glotfelty in “Introduction” to *The Ecocriticism Reader* cites Barry Commoner’s first law of ecology that ‘everything is connected to everything else’ while arguing that “ecocriticism expands the notion of the ‘the world’ to include the entire ecosphere” (xix). In the novel, nature too is portrayed as showing its fury and human beings have to accept nature’s adversity. In an e-mail to Nahil (Idris’s wife) Amra (a Bosnian nurse) who works in Kabul, Afghanistan writes that the rains that has led to floods in Kabul causing damage to both life and property. She writes, “It has been raining “angrily” in Kabul . . . and the streets are packed with mud up to the ankles. The rain has caused flooding, and some two hundred families had to be evacuated by helicopter in Shomali, north of Kabul” (165). Ecocriticism also focuses that destruction of nature leads to the serious health effects. In the novel, Idris father died of cancer and Suleiman Wahdati and Abdullah suffered a stroke.

The history of Afghanistan has witnessed several wars. From 1933-1973, Afghanistan was ruled by the king Zahir Shah. In 1973, Mohammad Daoud Khan seized power. He was Zahir Shah’s cousin and former Prime Minister of Afghanistan. He ruled Afghanistan for six years and served as both President and Prime Minister of the country. On April 27, 1978 he was violently overthrown by People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Daoud Khan was killed in the coup. For a long time, Afghanistan was insisting on maintaining its independence from Russia, but PDPA was a communist party and therefore held close ties to the Soviet Union. During their rule, PDPA instituted many political and social reforms in Afghanistan, including abolishing religious and traditional customs. But the conservative people of Afghanistan challenged these reforms. As a result in the late 1970s, the Soviet Union sent thousands of troops into Afghanistan and immediately assumed complete military and political control of large portions of the country to replace the existing communist government. Throughout the ten years of Soviet occupation, internal Muslim forces put up resistance. The United States supported the resistance, because of its own anti-Soviet policies. Soviet troops withdrew in 1989 and Afghanistan remained under PDPA for three more years. In 1992, the Mujahedeens (Islamic warriors who defended their country from Soviet Union) finally won Afghanistan and converted it to an Islamic state. In 1996, the Taliban took control of Kabul. After September 11, 2001, the United States invaded Afghanistan and

overthrew the Taliban. In the novel *And the Mountains Echoed*, Nabi, Parwana's brother also talks about the wars that Afghanistan faced which led to environmental pollution and degradation along with the death of human beings. In his book *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982), Bookchin writes, "The domination of nature by man stems from the real domination of human by human" (1). A massive damage has been caused to nature and human beings as a result of wars led by man against man, thus creating ecological imbalance. War is a human act which is perceived as an act against nature and human beings. War, an act of violence can be seen as crime against nature. In a letter to Mr. Markos, the plastic surgeon, Nabi describes the extent of environmental damage caused to earth on account of wars in Afghanistan:

I can sum up it in one word: war. Or, rather, wars. Not one, not two, but many wars, both big and small, just and unjust, war with shifting casts of supposed heroes and villains, each new hero making one nostalgic for the old villain. The names changed as did the faces, and I spit on them equally for all the petty feuds, the snipers, the land mines, bombing raids, the rockets, the looting and raping and the killing. (121)

During this tumultuous period, the only relief for Nabi was that at least Pari was safe away from these wars as she left Afghanistan with Nila Wahdati. Then he describes the period of 1980s, which was not so horrible for Kabul, as most of the wars took place in the countryside. It was the period of exodus in Kabul. Most of the families in Nabi's neighbourhood left Kabul with their belongings in the hope of settling in the countries like Pakistan or Iran. Mr. Bashiri, Wahdati's neighbour in Kabul also left Kabul with his son Idris and Idris's cousin Timur. Before leaving, Mr. Bashiri came to meet Nabi and there was an emotional parting between the two. Nabi told Idris that he would miss him and his cousin, Timur. Then he describes the period of 1990s that completely destroyed the ecology of Kabul. In 1990s, the war broke out within the city of Kabul that led to ecocide. Ecocide means destroying the ecosystem by the actions of human species. War which is a human activity is ecocidal as it leads to large scale destruction of both human and non-human resources and thus violates the principle of environmental justice. The destruction of life due to war is a bleak example of crime against nature. Again in the same letter to Mr. Markos, Nabi discusses about various weapons like guns, rockets, bullets, RPGs, etc. used in wars to destroy the natural ecology of Afghanistan:

... The street where we lived, once so quiet and pristine and gleaming, turned into a war zone. Bullets hit every house. Rockets whistled overhead. RPGs landed up and down the street and craters in the asphalt. At night, red-and-white tracers flew every which way until dawn. Some days, we would have a bit of reprieve, few hours of quiet, and then sudden bursts of fire would break it, rounds cracking off from every direction, people on the street screaming. (122)

In contrast to the characters, who exploit nature, the novel contains a number of characters who love nature. In the novel, Nabi is shown as the great lover of nature. He worked as a chauffeur and cook in Mr. Wahdati's house and loved to converse with Nila Wahdati. In one of his conversations with Nila, he talks about the special kind of grapes, the gift of nature that could grow only in Shadbagh. It was usually believed among people, that these grapes can be grown only in Shadbagh. If a person tried to grow them in another place or area, it would wither and die. The people held the view that it will die of sadness. He pointed that it was due to the richness of soil and water that it could grow only in Shadbagh. In a letter to Markos, a plastic surgeon and narrator of the eighth chapter of the novel, Nabi talks about yearly festivals during which Nabi and Mr. Markos planted tomatoes in the garden. He describes the natural beauty of Mr. and Mrs Wahdati garden before the 1990s wars. When Nabi first entered their garden, he felt as if he had entered the *div's* palace where nature was booming to its fullest. In the garden, there were abundant flowers of different colours and fruit trees namely cherry, apple, apricot, and pomegranate thereby calling it the best place to live on earth:

Mr. Markos, look down on the garden, and try to picture as it was. One entered it through semilunar veranda bordered by a railing sheathed with great vines. The lawns in those days was lush and green, dotted with beds of flowers—jasmine, sweetbriar, geraniums, tulips—and bordered by two rows of fruit trees. A man could lie beneath one of the cherry trees. Mr. Markos, close his eyes and listen to the breeze squeezing through the leaves and think that there wasn't on earth a finer place to live. (75-76)

The war caused the serious damage to the Wahdati's house. Being a lover of nature, Nabi laments the destruction of the natural beauty of the house and in fact of the whole natural ecology of Afghanistan, which became a victim of war. The windows of the house broke by RPGs blast. A grenade damaged the roof and bullets pierced the roof of the Wahdati's house. The war also led to the destruction of the natural beauty of the garden of Wahdati's. Earlier, the garden was full of different flowers and trees. But after the war, the trees became dead and they did not bore fruit for many years. The lush green lawn became yellow and flowers perished which were once adding to the natural beauty of the garden. So, nature became dead due to war and was not able to regenerate even after many years. This is clear from the visit of Idris and Timur when after some years, they came to reclaim their property in Afghanistan and visited Wahdati's house, they were shocked to see the house that was damaged during the wars in Afghanistan. When they visited the garden, they saw dead bushes, leafless trees and yellow lawn. Like many things in Kabul, it was showing "hesitant rebirth." Glotfelty in "Introduction" to *The Ecocriticism Reader* writes, "The current environmental problems are largely of our own making and, are, in other words, a by-product of culture" (xxii). Nabi writes that finally the war ended with

the coming of Taliban. The rule of Taliban was also horrible in Afghanistan. Their main victims were the young man and poor women who were exploited by them. As Nabi was an old man, so he was safe from their torture.

Adel, son of Baba Jan talks about the fight of his father with Russians. His father was a Jihadi (an Islamic principle based on constant struggle for faith) and there were pictures of his jihadi days in the living room. He father was shot twice by Russians during the war. Adel had seen those wounds of his father, but Baba Jan considered himself lucky that he survived the war. In the war, his friend lost legs, eyes, arms and even the faces of some of his friends were burnt in the war. They were proud that they had done it for their country and jihad was all about it i.e. sacrifice. War caused huge destruction of man and nature thus leading to ecocide, the term that denotes disrupt and disaster of different species in an ecosystem by the actions of the human beings. Adel wished that he would have joined his father in his fight against Russians, "He liked to picture himself and Baba Jan shooting at Russians Helicopters together, blowing up tanks, dodging gunfire, living in mountains and sleeping in caves. Father and son, war heroes" (242). Baba himself tells the story to Adel of his unit's fight with Soviet Russians when they stopped them from entering the north valley. When the Russians entered the kill zone, Baba Jan's unit started gun fire and hit their lead vehicle. Other vehicles too became their target. While describing this war, Baba Jan also talks of orchards that got damaged due to war thus leading to ecocide:

We outnumbered them, may be three to one, but they had heavy weaponry and it wasn't long before they were attacking us! Attacking our positions in the orchards. Soon, everybody was scattered. We ran for it. Me and this guy, Mohammad something or other, we ran together. We're running side by side in a field of grapevines, not the kind on posts and wires but the kind that people let grow out on the ground. Bullets are flying everywhere and we're running for our lives, and suddenly we both trip and go down. . . (271)

Adel is also shown as the lover of nature. He loved to be in the orchards of Baba Jan and was very proud of these orchards which had pear trees, apple trees, apricots, cherries, figs, loquats, etc. Whenever Adel took long walks in these orchards with his father, he would make him sit on his shoulders and Adel would pluck ripe apples. There is also description of the giant oak tree which had been cut down by Saboor. Baba Jan was against the cutting of tree as it led to environment pollution. Gholam, the son of Abdullah's half brother Iqbal also talks about the mysterious power of the giant oak tree while conversing with Adel. He tells Adel that his grandmother (Parwana) had told him a story about the tree which was told to her by her husband (Saboor). He was the one to cut the tree. His grandfather told the story to her grandfather when they were children. Gholam narrates, "The story was that if you had a wish, you had to kneel before the tree and whisper it. And if the tree agreed to grant it, it would shed exactly ten leaves on your head" (266). Through Gholam, Hosseini also echoes his ecological concerns. Through Gholam, Hosseini is pointing out injustice done to human being and nature by man. He adds that Adel's father cleared their orchards and even damaged their house. He protests this ecological degradation in the following way:

"This was my family's tree. This was my family's land. It's been ours for generations. Your father built his mansion on our land. While we were in Pakistan during the war." He pointed to the orchards. "These? They used to be people's homes. But your father had them bulldozed to the ground. Just like he brought down the house where my father was born, where he was raised." (266-67)

In the novel, Pari shows a close affinity with nature. In her village Shadbagh, Pari's family had a dog named Shuja. Both were attached to each other. Shuja was even able to sense when she was sad. When it first came to Shadbagh, the children of the village threw stones at him. Not only that, they poked Shuja with branches of the tree and spokes of bicycle's wheel which are very hard. Once, someone severed his ears and tail too. But Shuja never hurt anybody. From ecocritical perspective, Shuja mistreatment is the mistreatment of nature at the hands of man. As Glotfelty writes that rivers, cities, forests, animals, etc are of great concern for ecocritics. Hosseini writes, "All day the dog shadowed Pari, sniffing at her heels, and at night when they parted ways, he lay outside the door, forlorn, waiting for morning" (25). On the way to Kabul with Saboor and Abdullah, Pari kept thinking of Shuja who must be sad after the departure of Pari from Shadbagh. When Pari left her village, she was very small, after so many years she still has the faded memory of the dog. Later in the novel, when she is shown as grown up, she asks Mamon (Nila Wahdati) whether they ever kept dog in Kabul but the reply of Mamon brings out the cruelty of man towards dogs, who are part of nature. She replies that dogs have no value and self respect, people usually kick them but they (dogs) love them. Pari is also shown as joining student's protest against seal hunting. Another character in the novel, Mr. Wahdati's mother is shown to be very close to dogs, who are part of the nature. She did not live with Mr. Wahdati and his wife. She lived in a separate house in another part of Kabul. She had a team of servants to look after the two dogs. She loved them and she treated them as superiors to her servants.

Hosseini again echoes his ecological concerns through Pari. When finally Pari comes to Shadbagh in 2010, she laments the loss of their old house and orchards at the hands of a war criminal who had built his big mansion there. She laments the destruction of his old house and wishes that she could know where her old house was exactly. The faded memories of her childhood come back to her mind. Her memories mostly consist of the natural surroundings of

Shadbagh which shows her love for nature. It further shows that she was a keen observer of nature. The memories related to giant oak tree and the swing on it came to her mind. She further thought of her favourite dog, Shuja and how children made fun of him by teasing and pricking. She was also reminded of the day when she was leaving Kabul with his brother Abdullah and father Saboor. In her memory there is a beautiful picture of nature which is described by Hosseini in the novel:

... but a little red wagon with a squeaky wheel bouncing along beneath a sky of unfurling clouds, rolling over ridges and down dried-up gullies, up and down orcher hills that loom and then fall away. She sees tangles of fruit trees standing in groves, the breeze catching their leaves, and rows of grapevines connecting little flat-roofed houses. (237)

CONCLUSION

And the Mountains Echoed echoes Hosseini's ecological concerns. He proposes that humanity should establish harmonious relationship and balance with nature. He further adds that nature does not passively accept the discrimination and injustice done against it, rather has the power to fight back when it desires which can be disastrous. So, human beings should avoid ruthless exploitation of nature. He is critical of wars as it leads to environmental degradation, pollution and ecocide. He views war as an act of violence done by man against man and man against nature. War leads to exploitation of both natural and human resources. Through characters like Pari, Uncle Nabi, Adel, etc. the writer is bringing out the important message of preservation of nature and close ties that man must form with nature so that it can be preserved for the future generations.

WORKS-CITED

1. Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Havard UP, 1995.
2. Glotfelty, Cheryl, and Harold Fromm, editors. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. U of Georgia P, 1996.
3. Higgins, Polly. *Eradicating Ecocide: Laws and Governance to Prevent the Destruction of our Planet*. Shephard-Walwym, 2010.
4. Hosseini, Khaled. *And the Mountains Echoed*. Bloomsbury, 2013.
5. Johnston, R.J., et al, editors. *The Dictionary of Human Geography*. Blackwell Publishers, 2000.
6. Kerkof, Father Loren. *Eco-spirituality and Lenten practice*. www.cscsisters.org/justice/issues/climate/Churches/ecospirituality.pdf>. Accessed on 10 Sept. 2019.
7. Marten, Gerald G. *Human Ecology: Basic Concepts for Sustainable Development*. Earthscan Publications, 2001.
8. Murray, Bookchin. *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*. Chesshire Books, 1982.
9. Reuckert, William. "Literature and Ecology: A Experiment in Ecocriticism." Glotfelty and Fromm editors. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. U of Georgia P. 1996,pp. 105-23.
10. Sessions, George, editor, *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century: Readings on the Philosophy and Practice of the New Environmentalism*. Shambala, 1995.