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**The Greenwash Effect: A Critical Examination of Ecofeminism and Corporate
Tokenization in Pakistan**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the intersection of ecofeminism and corporate tokenization in the context of Pakistan's socio-political and cultural landscape. The study explores how the ecofeminist framework, which recognizes the link between the oppression of women and environmental destruction, can provide solutions to the country's pressing environmental and social issues. Using the Thar coal project in Sindh as a case study and the impact of 2022 monsoon floods, the research analyzes how marginalized groups, particularly women, are integrated into the capitalist framework, leading to their exploitation and compounding existing social inequities. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Nancy Fraser's 'Cannibal Capitalism' and Jay Westerveld's concept of corporate 'Greenwashing,' this paper proposes a reassessment of ecofeminism as a means of challenging corporations and state institutions that perpetuate gender oppression and environmental degradation in Pakistan. The study's mixed-methods approach, which includes a case study, discourse analysis, and qualitative data analysis, provides a range of perspectives and enriches the research findings. This thesis aims to inspire action among policymakers, corporations, and civil society to recognize the potential of ecofeminism in providing transformative solutions to some of Pakistan's most pressing gender and environmental issues. Through the reassessment of the ecofeminist ideology, the study underscores the urgent need to work towards a more equitable, just, and sustainable society.

Introduction

In 2022, while speaking before a Pakistani charity called Friends of Khwendo ("Sisters' Home" in Pashto), ecologist Emily Beasley claimed that 80% of people displaced by climate change are women who desperately need education and personal autonomy (Chambers, 2023). This alarming estimation inspired Claire Chambers, a global literature professor and trustee of the organization, to document the oppression faced by women who bear the largest burden of unpaid labor among climate refugees and internally displaced persons. She stated, "Environmental degradation contributes to increases in zoonotic diseases, school exclusions, and incidents of domestic violence, further exacerbating the problems women shoulder" (Chambers, 2023).

Ecofeminism is both a socio-political movement and an ideological framework that emerged from the intersection of feminism and environmentalist thought in the 1970s. Françoise d'Eaubonne was one of the first thinkers to develop the concept of ecofeminism, which she defined as "the movement of women who see the connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women" (d'Eaubonne 1974, 6). Scholars such as Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva have also significantly shaped our current understanding of the environment, the struggles of women, and the nexus between the two. This phenomenon can be seen in Pakistan, where the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on women is starkly visible. In this thesis I propose a radical transformation of the ecofeminist theory by exploring Pakistan's socio-political and cultural landscape. By reassessing ecofeminism in the context of Pakistan, I hope to explore the ideology's potential to offer transformative solutions to some of the most pressing environmental and social issues today.

In the contemporary milieu of climate change and the increased awareness of women's issues, there has been a discernible trend of corporate entities attempting to align their practices

with these concepts. Corporations are seen tokenizing social and environmental issues as marketing tools to reap profit from the cycle of environmental degradation and gender oppression. This concept will be further explored using the Thar coal project in Sindh as a primary case study. The project is being developed by a public-private partnership between the Government of Sindh and Engro Corporation as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to extract fuel for coal-fired power plants (Cite). As part of the project, Engro trained indigenous women to become truck drivers, ostensibly to provide them with additional sources of income (Engro, 2023). Through a critical analysis of this project, this paper seeks to demonstrate how marginalized groups, particularly women, are integrated into the capitalist framework, thereby sanctioning their exploitation and compounding the pre-existing social inequities.

Furthermore, the devastation wrought by monsoon floods across the country in 2022 brought these tokenization efforts to the fore, with capitalist entities taking advantage of the global and domestic spotlight being shone on the issue to boost their own publicity. While numerous companies such as Butterfly and Always purported to be leading relief efforts to provide women with menstrual hygiene products, in practice they were appropriating concrete work being carried out by grassroots organizations such as Mahwari Justice to sell their products at standard prices. The secondary analysis of this paper will examine these grassroots ecofeminist movements that aim to challenge institutions that perpetuate environmental degradation and social inequality and how they have been impacted by corporate tokenization in the aftermath of the 2022 floods in Pakistan. Based on these themes, I hope to answer the following questions:

1. How can an ecofeminist framework offer transformative solutions to the aforementioned issues?

2. How does corporate tokenization exacerbate the aftereffects of climate induced natural disasters and perpetuate gender oppression in Pakistan?

The intersection of environmental degradation and gender oppression in Pakistan has been a topic of limited research by environmental scholars. Despite the existing literature addressing women's exploitation and environmental degradation, little attention has been given to the impact of corporate tokenization on the environment and how it disproportionately affects women in Pakistan. While ecofeminist scholars have extensively studied developing countries in the Global South, it is essential to reexamine the applicability of ecofeminism in the specific context of Pakistan, which presents a unique set of challenges. Pakistan's economy is largely agrarian, with a significant percentage of the agricultural workforce consisting of informally employed women who are often responsible for collecting and applying farmyard manure and possess knowledge of herbs for medicine, food and fodder (Siddiqi 2021, 76-90). Nonetheless, agricultural land is typically owned by men who control the allocation of family labor and revenues from crop production. Similarly, Pakistan's textile and clothing industry heavily depends on female labor, particularly during the cotton-picking season. Around 700,000 workers are hired to pick cotton from the fields during these four months, most of whom are women and girls who work on the 1.5 million farms that grow cotton in the country (Salman and Iqbal 2007, 861). These women work in a hazardous environment where they are exposed to poisonous pesticides for 8-9 hours daily, and 74% of female cotton pickers in Pakistan suffer from moderate pesticide poisoning (Salman and Iqbal 2007, 861).

Furthermore, the lack of resources available or provided to women in the aftermath of natural disasters such as floods indicates a larger patriarchal structure that values domination and control over both women and nature for profits. This analysis will provide insight into how

corporate tokenization operates in Pakistan and perpetuates the marginalization of women and the destruction of the environment. The findings of this research will add to current literature and initiatives toward a more equitable and sustainable society and inform state policy in addressing these pressing environmental and social issues in Pakistan.

Using Nancy Fraser's theoretical framework in her book *Cannibal Capitalism* and Jay Westervelt's concept of corporate 'Greenwashing,' the thesis will also demonstrate how, under the guise of broadening the umbrella of corporate work for indigenous people, 'marginalized communities are integrated into the capitalist system to legitimize their expropriation and exacerbate societal inequalities. By exploring Fraser's description of the 'cannibal' nature of 'capitalism,' I showcase how the Thar project's 'corporate social responsibility initiatives' aimed to empower local communities was merely, what Jay Westerveld describes as a 'greenwashing' technique used to exploit indigenous Thari women (Agencies, 2017).

Additionally, this paper will expand upon the insights of scholars like Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies to provide a comprehensive analysis of the importance of ecofeminist movements in challenging existing power structures. While their contributions are significant, they have yet to examine the impact of corporate tokenization in Pakistan specifically, and this is where this thesis seeks to contribute. In doing so, I hope to complement the existing literature by shedding light on the crucial issue of corporate tokenization and the lack of state interventions on issues related to environmental sustainability and gender oppression. Additionally, I also hope to bring ecofeminist movements to the forefront by looking at marginalized non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Women's Democratic Front, Mahwari Justice, and Sindhiani Tehreek to be able to highlight the community aspect of Ecofeminism.

This thesis will be divided into four parts. In the first part, I will begin with my methodology section which will be followed by the literature review in which I will critically analyze Jay Westerveld's concept of corporate 'greenwashing' and situate it within the ecofeminist discourse. The third part will focus on the Thar coal project and its impact on the indigenous Thari women and the environment, analyzing how corporate tokenization perpetuates environmental degradation and gender oppression. The fourth part of the paper will examine the grassroots ecofeminist movements such as the Women's Democratic Front, Mahwari Justice, and Sindhiani Tehreek and their perspectives on the issues that stemmed from the aftermath of the 2022 monsoon floods. Finally, in the fourth part, I will conclude the thesis, summarizing the main findings and suggesting how, by gaining a deeper understanding of the interplay between Ecofeminism and corporate tokenization, the former can be reassessed or amended to mitigate the harmful effects of the latter.

Methodology

This research is a mixed-methods study, using both qualitative data collection and case study analysis techniques to explore the impact of corporate tokenization on Pakistan's ecofeminist activism. The study will include peer-reviewed academic articles, books, and other relevant theoretical works which directly inform the understanding of ecofeminism and the critique of capitalism built into a framework of environmental Justice. The study includes the following research methods:

Thar Coal Project as a Case Study: This paper employs a case study approach to explore how the Thar coal project in Sindh perpetuates environmental degradation and gender oppression by tokenizing upon a feminist discourse. As a public-private partnership between the governments of Sindh and Engro Corporation, the project is part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and aims to extract fuel for coal-fired power plants. The case study also investigates the role of the government and corporations in perpetuating these injustices and the impact on local communities, especially women. Although the project is one of the largest investments in Pakistan's history, with the potential to impact the country's energy security and economic growth, not much attention has been given to the unjust labor practices and environmental hazards caused by the project. By highlighting the devastating impact of this mega-scale corporate project, I aim to amplify the voices of the indigenous Thari population and understand the ways in which the ecofeminist discourse can help not only the women, but also the state's economy.

Discourse Analysis: A review of newspapers and other media sources was conducted to gather information on the representation of ecofeminism in corporate settings and to track the Thar coal project's coverage over the years. For this purpose, I reviewed several Pakistani media sources including *Dawn*, *The Express Tribune*, *The News International*, and *The Nation*. These sources are

widely recognized as reliable and credible news outlets in Pakistan. I also surveyed several other local news organizations such as the business magazine called *The Profit* (Pakistan Today) and corporate news wires such as *PR News Wire*, where information reported was mostly press releases shared by corporations such as Shanghai Electric, relevant to the Thar case study. To ensure a systematic search, I used search terms such as "eco-feminism," "corporate social responsibility," and "Thar coal project" to identify relevant articles. I also looked at a particular time spanning over the past 5 years, to gather a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

In addition to reviewing traditional media, I also examined digital media sources shared on social media platforms or internet communities discussing the effects of corporate tokenization on ecofeminism in Pakistan. I conducted these internet surveys via guided keyword searches on internet browsers. Some of the reliable Pakistani media sources from which I took information include *Pakistan Today*, *The Diplomat*, *The Nation*, and *The Express Tribune*. These media sources were selected because of their reputation for objective and balanced reporting and their extensive coverage of corporate social responsibility in Pakistan. Luckily, the language used in these media sources is in English, so it was not difficult for me to refer to them in my thesis. However, a point of contention here, which I will elaborate on later is the fact that these media sources only represent and cater to the elite minority of Pakistan. This situation is problematic because it creates a potential bias in the information gathered and distributed, as the voices of those living in the rural areas of Pakistan are either muted or entirely discarded from the media. Moreover, the issue of ecofeminism and corporate tokenization is not limited to the elite class in Pakistan. It extends to marginalized groups such as women and low-income groups who are significantly more likely to be affected by these phenomena.

Qualitative Data Analysis: I conducted semi-structured interviews with Haider Kaleem, Abida Channa, and Bushra Mahnoor. The purpose of these interviews was to gather the perspectives of individuals who have expertise in the area of ecofeminism and have worked directly with the victims of the thar coal project as well as the 2022 floods. Their interviews can be considered a bottom up approach in understanding the grievances of women affected by environmental degradation. Haider Kaleem, a local journalist and filmmaker, provided valuable insights into the nuances of the Thar coal project and its impact on the environment and local communities. Bushra Mahnoor, a young environmentalist, and founder of a menstruation hygiene campaign shared her insights in understanding the impact of the 2022 floods on the health and hygiene of women. She sheds light upon the lack of initiative taken by the state in providing relief funds and medical assistance to menstruating and pregnant female agricultural laborers. Similarly, Abida Channa, the district president of the WDF in Sindh, also shared her perspective on the efforts made by WDF in supporting women affected by the Thar coal project as well as the floods. Through her interview, this study aims to reveal the challenges faced by organizations like WDF when attempting to intervene in large-scale corporate initiatives. Her perspective can help us understand the systemic reluctance and obstruction faced by those working towards environmental justice and the protection of marginalized groups in the context of corporate tokenization.

In summary, by utilizing a range of research methods, including a case study analysis, discourse analysis, and qualitative data collection through expert interviews, this study seeks to contribute to the existing literature on ecofeminism and corporate social responsibility and offer a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which corporate tokenization affects ecofeminism in Pakistan. While scholars have made attempts at dissecting the issue of gender discrimination, environmental degradation, and corporate tokenization separately, there is barely any research

done on the intersection of all these issues within the socio-political and cultural landscape of Pakistan. Ultimately, such research methods will be significant in contributing to the development of more equitable and sustainable practices in developing countries such as Pakistan.

Literature review

This paper applies and expands upon theories of ecofeminism laid down by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, as well as Nancy Frazer's understanding of cannibal capitalism. I will extend their argument and situate them in the context of the 2022 floods and the Thar case study. This will be done with the intention of analyzing the Pakistani ecofeminist landscape and reforming the ideology as a source of economic and social state empowerment.

The West's understanding of ecofeminism comes from various sources and influences. However, it can be traced back to the late 1970s and early 1980s, when a coalition of academic and professional women in the United States and Europe held a series of conferences and workshops to discuss the connections between feminism and environmentalism (Jalal 2009, 78). They were inspired by the social movements and protests of that time, such as second-wave feminism, anti-war and anti-nuclear stances, and the green movement. They also drew on the works of earlier thinkers and activists who had explored the links between women and nature, such as Rachel Carson, Mary Daly, Carolyn Merchant, and others (Jalal 2009, 78). They coined the term ecofeminism to describe their philosophy and movement that aimed to challenge the patriarchal domination of women and nature and promote a more egalitarian, sustainable worldview.

The ecofeminist movement and ideology aims to challenge the dominant patriarchal systems of power that have exploited both women's bodies and the natural environment, bringing together feminist and environmentalist thinking. In her essay "*Impoverishment of the Environment: Women and Children Last?*" Vandana Shiva posits that women in the Global South are not only the primary breadwinners but are also the ones most severely impacted by environmental degradation. This can be seen in the aftermath of the 2022 monsoon floods where women were not

only injured and displaced but also faced an increased risk of violence and abuse. According to the World Health Organization report, almost 650,000 pregnant women in flood-affected areas required maternal health services to ensure safe pregnancy and childbirth (WHO, 2022). Not only were women facing challenges in accessing sanitary products and hygiene items, but they were also increasingly becoming victims of gender-based violence and sexual harassment (UNFPA, 2022).

Additionally, in her essay "Reductionism and Regeneration: A Crisis in Science," Vandana Shiva argues that reductionist thinking in science has led to a narrow and mechanistic understanding of nature. This reductionist approach breaks down complex phenomena into smaller parts to understand them, but this oversimplification fails to recognize the interconnectedness of natural systems. According to Shiva, ecological systems need to be regenerated to prevent the loss of biodiversity, and this requires a shift from reductionist thinking to a more holistic and context-specific approach. While in the context of understanding the linkages between understanding climate change and devising solutions, Shiva makes a strong point. State policymakers and climate activists do need to expand their understanding of nature, how it is impacted and how it affects people and the environment. However, ironically, ecofeminism has been extensively critiqued for being reductionist itself.

Several scholars, such as Val Plumwood and Donna Haraway, have criticized the ideology for being reductionist in nature. They argue that ecofeminism's portrayal of women as inherently connected to nature can be reductive and essentialist. According to Plumwood, this view can create a binary opposition between "nature" (represented by women) and "culture" (represented by men), which oversimplifies the complexities of social and ecological relations (Plumwood 1993, 45).

This reductionism can be problematic as it obscures the diverse ways women interact with the environment. For example, women in rural areas are often responsible for collecting water and fuel for their households, which can involve long walks and exposure to environmental hazards (Jalal 2009, 77). Women also play a significant role in agriculture and livestock management, where they have traditional knowledge of plant and animal varieties and their interactions with the environment (Jalal 2009, 78). However, this role needs to be acknowledged, and their contributions should be valued. Recognizing the diversity of women's experiences and their agency can create a more nuanced understanding of the environmental issues women face. This understanding can then inform more effective strategies for advocacy and activism that prioritizes the needs and aspirations of the local communities over corporate interests.

To avoid this reductionism, the reformed version of ecofeminism in the context of Pakistan needs to consider the diversity of women's experiences and their agency in shaping their relationship with the environment. Karen Warren, a feminist philosopher who has also contributed significantly to the development and articulation of ecofeminism, argues that ecofeminism is not a single monolithic perspective but a broad and diverse movement encompassing different theories, practices, and goals (Warren 1997). She also acknowledges ecofeminism's challenges and criticisms, such as the accusations of essentialism, universalism, or anthropocentrism. She responds to these critiques by clarifying the meaning and scope of ecofeminist claims and proposing ways to improve and enrich the ecofeminist philosophy (Warren 1997; 2000). This requires an intersectional approach that considers how factors such as class, politics and religion intersect with gender to shape women's experiences of the environment (Jalal 2009, 80). Furthermore, this approach must recognize the political and economic structures that impact

women's ability to access and control resources and participate in decision-making processes related to the environment (Jalal 2009, 81).

Another criticism of ecofeminism is that it overlooks the role that corporations and governments have played in contributing to environmental degradation, as well as the agency of some men in resisting such degradation in developing countries. Khairul Chowdhury's (2008) article examines South Asian historical political ecology's discourses of environmental movements while questioning the articulation of ecofeminism and subaltern resistance. Chowdhury argues that both ecofeminism and subalternity have limiting constructs for analyzing conflicts over natural resources, the articulation and dynamics of environmental subjectivity, and environmental movements in general. This implies questioning the nationalist-romantic reaction to nature and the limits of resistance. Thus, Chowdhury suggests that an analysis of environmental movements needs to go beyond the rhetoric of environmentalism. Instead, Chowdhury argues such an analysis needs to explore multiplicities of forces, actor agencies, and their articulation by examining institutions, power, and environmental subjectivities, along with their specific histories encompassing movements of human, nonhuman, conquest, and subjugation, and the complex relations of their networks within local society (Chaudhary 2008).

I build upon the reassessment of the ecofeminist approach by Karen Warren and Khairul Chowdhury and argue that it is actually ' 'corporate tokenization'' reductionist nature that takes away agency from feminist as well as the reassessed ecofeminist discourse. Jay Westerveld coined the term "greenwashing" in a 1986 essay examining hotel industry practices. He claimed that the hotel industry falsely promoted the reuse of towels as part of a broader environmental strategy when, in fact, the act was designed as a cost-saving measure (Becker-Olsen & Potucek, 2013). For example, a company might claim that its products are "all-natural" when the term "natural" has no

standardized definition and the products are anything but 'natural.' In this context, corporate tokenization refers to the practice of using social or environmental issues as a marketing tool or public relations strategy by corporations without making significant changes to their underlying business practices or contributing meaningfully to solving environmental or gender issues at hand. In other words, it is a form of "greenwashing" or "pinkwashing," where companies use language and symbols associated with social or environmental causes to create the appearance of being socially responsible while prioritizing profits over genuine progress. It is through these reductionist tendencies that corporations intervene in ecofeminist and climate conservationist modalities of life and make a marketing strategy out of it. This reductionism works in their favor and directly opposes the interests of those it applies to.

Within this context, Maria Mies argues in her essay that the concept of "catching-up" with development is a myth that perpetuates global inequality and environmental degradation. Mies contends that the idea of "catching up" with the industrialized countries (Global North) assumes that economic growth is the key to development. She argues that this development model is unsustainable and based on exploiting resources and labor in the Global South to benefit the overdeveloped centers or metropolises (Mies 1993, 56). In this paper, I extend this critique and try to contextualize how indigenous women are fooled by this development narrative that Mies talks about.

The way capitalist corporations devour sustainable development is also aptly depicted in Nancy Fraser's book *Cannibal Capitalism*. This book refers to a mode of capitalism that feeds on itself, consuming resources, and populations in a never-ending pursuit of growth and profit. Fraser argues that the capitalist mode of reproduction is best apprehended as an "institutionalized societal order" that requires continuous consumption of crucial but often hidden background conditions to

facilitate profitable exploitation (Fraser 2022, 19). This expanded understanding of capitalist practices sheds light on the underlying nexus between capitalism, gender oppression and the environment through the lens of social reproduction. Fraser uses the term 'social reproduction' to describe the activities and institutions that sustain human life, such as care work, education, health care, culture, and social movements (Fraser 2022, 53-54). She argues that social reproduction is essential for capitalism, as it produces and reproduces labor power and maintains social order (Fraser 2022, 55-56). However, capitalism also exploits and devalues social reproduction, as it relies on unpaid or low-paid work of women and racialized people (Fraser 2022, 57-74). Fraser claims that this creates a crisis of social reproduction, which manifests in various forms of oppression, inequality, and ecological destruction (Fraser 2022, 75). I borrow this understanding of social reproduction from Fraser and embed my framing of ecofeminism in Pakistan as it continues to face the capitalist effects of corporate tokenization on the same.

In the context of ecofeminism in Pakistan, it is crucial to recognize the importance of social reproduction and its linkages to environmental conservation and sustainability. Women in Pakistan are at the forefront of care work, and their labor is essential for maintaining social order and environmental balance. However, they are relegated to low-paid and precarious work with little job security and social protection. In this regard, ecofeminism can be seen as a movement that seeks to challenge the dominant capitalist model of development and promote alternative forms of social reproduction that both prioritizes the needs and aspirations of the local community, as well as seeks to preserve the surrounding environment. By embedding Fraser's concept of social reproduction in the framing of ecofeminism in Pakistan, we can better understand the links between capitalism, gender oppression and the environment.

The scope of what constitutes an "anti-capitalist struggle" is broadened by Fraser's argument, providing opportunities for sustainable alternatives. According to Fraser, pursuing short-term profits in the current economic system comes at the expense of long-term sustainability and social justice (Fraser 2022, 25). Her analysis of the true nature of a capitalist society ties in with Vandana Shiva's theory of reductionism. I deploy the dialectical connection between the two to inform the term 'corporate tokenization.' The nature of corporate tokenization, similar to how Fraser characterizes capitalism, is cannibalistic as it continues to consume the same background conditions that allowed its growth. In this case, the focused analysis is on ecofeminist movements. This means that when the Thar Foundation was established as a corporate social responsibility venture, its true purpose was securing the local community's consent to continue the capitalizing, profit-driven mission rather than what it purported to be, a humanitarian intervention. In this way, it temporarily provided the climate-conscious women of Thar with the illusion of financial security through labor participation.

An intersectional approach can challenge how corporations use the ecofeminist discourse for their profit. However, before I delve into how this approach can offer us a fresh perspective on issues related to environment sustainability and gender parity, it is important to reassess ecofeminism, keeping in mind its limitations and critiques.

Corporate Social Responsibility in Action: The Thar coal power plant and the impacts of its corporate tokenization efforts on Pakistan's ecofeminist ecology

The following section will seek to apply the Thar coal project as a case study to better understand how tokenization efforts by multinational corporations, such as Engro, manifests under the guise of essentially a '*greenwashed*' ecofeminist discourse. This case study also highlights the need to address the root causes of social inequality and gender oppression and suggests a more holistic ecofeminist approach that prioritizes the well-being of the local people and the environment.

The Thar coal project is a mega-scale fossil fuel project for the extraction and utilization of the vast coal reserves in the Tharparkar district of Sindh. The project is part of the much-celebrated China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and has attracted several multinational corporations (MNCs) such as - Novatex Limited, Descon Engineering and China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) (Kamran, 2023). These MNCs have invested billions of dollars and have successfully managed to sell the narrative of being socially responsible and gender inclusive. At the face of it, the Thar Foundation has provided more than 18,000 direct employment opportunities for the locals and is considered one of the largest coalfields in Asia, with 175 billion tons of coal (Jaswal, 2023). While the project has brought some level of economic development to the region, it has also raised several concerns related to environmental degradation, displacement of local communities and the harsh treatment/working conditions at the reserves.

Haider Kaleem, a human rights activist, and documentary filmmaker from Pakistan, has documented the environmental and social impacts of the Thar coal project in a documentary film. Recalling his last visit to Thar, he remarked that along several kilometers leading up to the power plant are barbed wires and military-like check posts, surveilling the region through stationed

guards and the use of cameras. The people who were displaced during the corporations' land acquisition phase claimed that they received less than half of the compensation promised to them five years ago. Additionally, all pastures were common land before the land acquisition and encroachment of the coal mining and power-generating corporations.

In May 2020, the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) released a 24-page report stating that the project would result in 40,000 asthma emergency room visits, 19,900 new cases of asthma in children, and 57,000 years lived with disability related to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and stroke (CREA, 2022). This essentially means that ultimately in exchange for the 18,000 jobs offered, a plethora of diseases and inter-generational health risks were also given to the residents (Myllyvirta, 2020, 2-20). These costs disproportionately affected the poor and marginalized groups, especially women and children (Lee and Preston 2021).

Maria Mies' concept of "collective schizophrenia" is relevant here, as corporations use the rhetoric of progress and development to justify and normalize actions that ultimately harm local communities. In her essay "The Myth of Catching-up Development," Mies contends that the people of the North experience "collective schizophrenia" due to their complicity in the global capitalist system. She argues that the capitalist system creates a schism in people's consciousness, who are both beneficiaries and victims of the system's destructive impact on the environment and communities in the Global South (Mies, 1993, 57). This concept of a "collective schizophrenia" is relevant in the context of the Thar coal project, where corporations use the language of development and progress to justify their actions while undermining local voices and agency. Expanding and reassessing this relationship in a global landscape where China is a rising economic superpower helps reorient the relationship between the two parties in this case study - Thar and the corporations (including Chinese corporations and Engro). China's positionality in this context

is that of the neocolonial capital investor that perpetuates the same all-powerful capitalist hierarchy which Mies discusses in the context of the global South vs. the global North.

In 2017, it was reported that the Thar coal project was "breaking cultural boundaries" by offering a select group of women the opportunity to drive a truck for a living (Agencies, 2017). Images of Thari women wearing neon green vests and posing next to Engro's logo on Women's Day created a certain kind of perception that the corporation was making efforts to be inclusive and socially responsible, and that these efforts were being warmly received by the local community. Around this time, the '#MeToo' movement brought the hot topic of gender issues back into the public discourse spotlight. This created an ideal opportunity for the Thar Foundation to engage in greenwashing of its project, as can be seen in Engro's apparent championing of women's rights through a display of Women Empowerment Principles with the support of UN Women (Engro, 2018). These principles included ensuring the safety and well-being of female laborers, supporting their professional goals, and compensating them fairly.

The same corporations responsible for the ecological collapse and destruction of the land carried out their project by tokenizing the Thari women's circumstantial disposition to hard labor. Due to the desert landscape and recurrent drought conditions, women in Thar are used to long hours of physical labor. Little did these women know that they would be driving the trucks which enable ecological devastation on such a grand scale (ACJCE, 2021, 8).

This corporate tokenization of the feminist narrative became even more evident when Engro refused to be held accountable for the murder of a female Hindu worker just three years later. The brutal torture and murder of Dodo Bheel, a local Thari woman employed by Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC), was reported by the country's largest English-language newspaper, *Dawn*, in August 2021. The report exposed the misuse of authority by SECMC's

security staff and the company's failure to establish a mechanism to prevent such abuse of power. Despite a government-mandated mission to investigate the murder, SECMC refused to cooperate. Instead of displaying cultural sensitivity towards the traditional practices of the Thari women in maintaining an ecological relationship with the land, they were coerced into participating in their own destruction and murdered for protesting mistreatment.

As evidenced by the Thar coal project, the corporations involved used a tokenizing approach to present themselves as socially responsible and inclusive, while disregarding the environmental and social impacts of their profit-driven activities.

This tokenizing approach is a form of greenwashing, which Jay Westerveld describes as a technique used by corporations to present themselves as socially responsible. Through the lens of ecofeminism, this approach can be seen as an attempt to perpetuate the same dominant structures of power that have historically marginalized women and other marginalized groups. In this context, women in Thar have been coerced into participating in their own destruction, as seen in the case of Dodo Bheel.

Ecofeminism recognizes that solutions to environmental problems must address the root causes of social inequality and gender oppression. This means recognizing the importance of the voices and agency of women in the decision-making process. Additionally, ecofeminism recognizes the need for a shift away from a profit-driven economic model towards a more holistic approach that considers the interconnectedness of environmental and social issues. This involves reorienting corporate priorities towards the well-being of people and the environment, rather than just short-term profits.

Archiving the attempts of corporate tokenization made against nascent ecofeminist movements in Pakistan

The 2022 floods in Pakistan were one of the most devastating natural disasters the country has ever faced, affecting over 1.2 million people and causing widespread damage to infrastructure and livelihoods. In this section, we will be examining the interviews of women working and leading ecofeminist organizations in Pakistan such as Women Democratic Front (WDF), Sindhiani Tehreek and Mahwari Justice. These organizations provided relief and support to the affected communities, particularly women who were disproportionately affected by the floods. The purpose of this section is to help center their experiences and perspectives in the ongoing discourse around environmental and social justice. Viewed through the ecofeminist lens, the disproportionate impact of the floods on women is not simply an isolated incident but a manifestation of larger systemic issues of patriarchy and capitalism that have profoundly contributed to their vulnerabilities in disaster situations.

To understand the intersectionality of these issues, it is crucial to look at the socio-cultural and environmental landscape of Pakistan. According to the Global Climate Risk Index (2021), Pakistan is ranked the eighth country in the world most vulnerable to long-term climate risk, with increasing numbers of extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, and heatwaves (Arif, 2022). Almost 68% of the agricultural labor force in the country comprises women, who are paid less than their male counterparts and lack access to resources such as land and credit (World Bank, 2019). Given this socio-political context, ecofeminist movements have become increasingly important for the protection and promotion of women's rights and addressing the systemic flaws that make them particularly vulnerable to disaster situations. They prioritize the voices of women and advocate for their rights in decision-making processes. However, the efforts of these movements are being undermined by the corporate tokenization of the crisis.

Women's Democratic Front

The Women's Development Foundation (WDF) is a non-profit organization based in Pakistan that recognizes issues related to gender disparity and has been working towards empowering women since 1984. Apart from flood relief work, the organization hosts Aurat Azadi Jalsa (Women's Liberation Rally) on Working Women's Day and presents a coherent charter of demands addressing the intersection of climate activism and feminist politics in the country (WDF, 2023).

In this context, I had the privilege of conducting an interview with Abida Channa, the district president of WDF in Sindh, who shared her experiences and insights about the organization's relief work during the floods. Channa provided a vivid account of how the floods had devastated farmlands and deprived the majority of the people, especially women working as sharecroppers, of their only source of income. She went on to explain how WDF's relief work had been informed by the deep attachment of flood-affected women to their land. For these women, their land was not just a source of income but also their cultural identity and ancestral heritage. They had cultivated this land for generations and had developed a deep emotional bond that was impossible to sever. The impact of this dispossession had severe psychological consequences as their connection went beyond a mere economic relationship.

Mies and Shiva's ecofeminist literature sheds light on the pervasive issue of land dispossession that disproportionately affects women. In patriarchal societies, men are generally seen as the sole breadwinners and have the primary responsibility for land ownership and agricultural practices. On the other hand, women are pushed to the margins, lacking access to resources and decision-making power, making them more susceptible to land dispossession. However, despite being the sole breadwinners in the case of Sindhi women, their vulnerability to natural disasters is further exacerbated by the lack of state and corporate initiatives to address their

specific needs. This neglect disregards the intrinsic bond these women have with their land as a core part of their being. Ecofeminist literature urges the need to center the voices of these women by recognizing their contribution to society.

Channa's relief work has slowly spread to Larkana and Qambar ShehadathKot, where she recounted that multitudes of flood-affected women were camped along the highway nearby, either in camps made for them or erected by themselves. The state had given these women the impression that they were being protected, but many of them were experiencing sexual violence and did not feel safe in the same land they had cultivated for generations. Unfortunately, the state and big corporations turned a blind eye to these issues and did not come to their aid. Women there were struggling to feed their children and were forced to rely on unsafe drinking water. WDF worked tirelessly to provide these women with safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, and medical assistance.

Additionally, Channa emphasized the nature and context of her work by focusing on the challenges encountered by pregnant women who, owing to shortage of resources, were obliged to consume the same type of meals every day, resulting in severe malnutrition and low immunity. Within just two days, Channa successfully managed to accumulate sufficient funds to purchase nutritional supplements in bulk. Her goal was to ensure that pregnant women and their unborn children could have a healthy shot at life, thereby rendering her relief efforts genuinely impactful.

Channa expressed her frustration with the lack of funding available. She explained that WDF struggled to sustain their relief efforts beyond the initial few weeks, as NGOs, corporations, and trust funds eventually lost interest and ceased their efforts. She also recounted a disturbing incident in Naseerabad, where an organization set up a medical camp but failed to properly consider the individual medical needs of patients. Instead, the organization distributed medicines

randomly while taking photographs for publicity purposes. This neglected the fundamental principle of providing dignified and equitable relief to those in need. This highlights the issue of corporate tokenization in disaster relief efforts, where the focus on publicity and deliverables can overshadow the true needs of disaster-affected communities.

Despite facing numerous challenges, Abida Channa's commitment to advocating for women's rights remains unwavering. Her relief work with WDF serves as an example of the importance of grassroots movements and community-based initiatives upholding the ecofeminist discourse. By prioritizing the needs and voices of women affected by the floods, Channa and WDF were not only able to provide immediate aid to the survivors but were also able to recognize and uplift women's contributions to society and advocate for their empowerment.

An ecofeminist analysis highlights the intersectionality of these issues, revealing how the lack of government support and insufficient funding has further dispossessed indigenous communities of their livelihoods. Even when the state and corporations do extend a helping hand, they are often ignorant of the essential necessities of women such as hygiene products, sanitary pads, undergarments, and nutritional supplements. This disregard for the basic needs of women is an indication of a larger systemic issue in which women are reduced to their marginalized status in society, and any apparent efforts to alleviate this plight are largely for the sake of publicity. It is therefore crucial to center the experiences and perspectives of women in the ongoing ecofeminist discourse to be able to provide dignified help that goes beyond arbitrary distribution of relief funds and supplies.

Sindhiani Tehreek

In writing this paper, I had the further privilege of speaking with Tehreem Khalid, a passionate political campaigner for the Sindhiani Tehreek movement. Sindhiani Tehreek is a

grassroots social movement that emerged in the Sindh region of Pakistan in response to the myriad environmental and social challenges Sindhi women face. The campaign leads community workshops and educational programs to empower women and build their capacity to resist domestic abuse (Memon, 2013). During our conversation, Tehreem spoke candidly about the struggles of Sindhi women, revealing heart-wrenching stories of domestic abuse and violence, especially during environmental catastrophes such as floods.

One such story involved women who were unable to conceive, faced constant abuse or even murder at the hands of their partners. She recounted another story of a Sindhi woman in a relief camp with bruises all over her body. The woman felt helpless and trapped, unable to seek assistance or relief due to the presence of her abusers. However, with the help of Tehreem and the Sindhiani Tehreek, she managed to escape and find refuge while her husband and in-laws were detained for a few hours. Tehreem expressed her frustration at corporations who believed that their charity in the form of meal boxes and limited monetary funds was sufficient to absolve them of their responsibility towards the affected communities. Women were not just experiencing PTSD from the loss of their livelihoods and family members but were also being domestically as well as sexually abused in the relief camps.

The state's lack of resources, motivation, and initiative to address these issues creates a further imbalance of power and vulnerability for Sindhi women. The case study of Tehreem Khalid and the Sindhiani Tehreek highlights the importance of intersectional ecofeminism that not only addresses the role of women as agricultural laborers but also as wives and mothers who increasingly become victims of abuse in the aftermath of the floods. Additionally, Corporate tokenization can be observed in the way that relief efforts are implemented in the aftermath of such disasters. Corporations and governments use relief efforts as an opportunity for publicity and

tokenization, without adequately addressing the underlying structural inequalities and environmental issues that lead to the disasters in the first place.

Mahwari Justice:

Mahwari Justice, a student-led initiative by Bushra Mahnoor and Anum Khalid, provides biodegradable menstrual hygiene supplies to women affected by the floods, exemplifying ecofeminism in action. The campaign distributed hygiene kits that include sanitary pads, soap, undergarments, and painkillers, providing menstrual relief to flood victims. Additionally, it raises awareness about menstrual health and hygiene and works to end the stigma and shame surrounding menstruation in Pakistan. Through its work, Mahwari Justice empowers women and girls to manage their periods with dignity and comfort, allowing them to participate in social and economic activities without fear or discrimination.

While discussing the issue of corporate tokenism, Bushra Mahnoor explained that businesses have often tried to co-opt her work by stealing her awareness posters on social media and by increasing the prices of sanitary napkins. While big corporations like Butterfly and Always produce and sell mass-produced sanitary pads and other menstrual hygiene-related products in Pakistan, they have also attempted to co-opt Mahwari Justice's work for profit-driven motives. After Mahnoor's interview with the BBC, Butterfly approached her and offered to provide large quantities of sanitary pads in exchange for promoting the Mahwari Justice project under their brand. However, when in return Mahnoor asked them for pads in bulk, they refused to give them the pads at a reasonable price.

Similarly, when Mahwari justice contacted Always in hopes of procuring sanitary pads at a subsidized rate, the corporation not only failed to respond but also co-opted their campaign by sharing images of their relief work on their social media accounts, giving the impression that the

project was supported by the corporation. This highlights the issue of corporate tokenism and the need for critical examination of CSR initiatives. While Mahwari Justice was trying to gather funds for actual relief work, corporations were busy trying to find ways to increase their sales by tokenizing the vulnerabilities of flood affected women.

Through the stories of Bushra Mahnoor we also see clearly how CSR initiatives are used as a tool for cannibal capitalism as mentioned by Nancy Fraser. The case study also aptly portrays how corporate tokenism feeds upon the feminist discourse, and how grassroots movements like Mahwari Justice challenge these systems of exploitation by centering the voices and needs of marginalized communities.

In the context of Pakistan, ecofeminism has been reassessed considering cultural and socio-political factors that impact women's rights and environmental sustainability. This reassessment recognizes that environmental issues are often linked to gender and class-based inequalities, and that addressing these issues requires intersectional approaches that take into account the unique experiences and needs of different communities. The grassroots movements of Women's Democratic Front, Sindhiani Tehreek, and Mahwari Justice exemplify this reassessment of ecofeminism in Pakistan. The Women's Democratic challenged patriarchal structures that limit women's rights and agency, while also advocating for environmental sustainability. Similarly, Sindhiani Tehreek recognized the intersectionality of environmental and gender-based issues, and worked to promote sustainability and women's rights in tandem. Lastly, Mahwari Justice, provided menstrual hygiene supplies to women affected by natural disasters and continues to try and break the stigma surrounding menstruation in Pakistan. All three of these grassroots movements reflect the reassessment of ecofeminism in Pakistan by centering the voices and needs of marginalized communities and recognizing the intersectionality of environmental and gender-

based issues. They demonstrate how ecofeminism can be a powerful tool for promoting social justice, gender equality, and sustainability, while challenging the capitalist system that prioritizes profit over people. By taking into account the cultural and socio-political context of Pakistan, these movements are able to address the unique needs and experiences of their communities, and work towards a more just and sustainable world for all.

Analysis

For the purpose of my analysis and concluding argument, I will refer to the current ecofeminist ideology as the first wave and its reassessment as the second wave of ecofeminism. As with feminist literature and the feminist movement at large, it is apparent that ecofeminism must also evolve beyond the first wave and acknowledge that associating women with a natural affinity to nature is potentially essentialist, excluding a diverse range of women from representation and creating harmful systems of bias and oppression. An evident problem that arises from this perception is the fact that despite more than half the agricultural sector workforce consisting of women, who carry out most of the labor, they are underpaid and undervalued. This inequality is then masked behind and justified through a corporate reproduction of the view that women are in tune with and representative of nature, and their involvement in ‘working the land’ is simply a part of their identity as opposed to an economic necessity. The tying together of women as symbols of nature and *vice versa* becomes appropriated by capitalist narratives that view nature as something to be used and exploited for production, as women are for reproduction.

This narrative is problematic not only because it reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes but also because it overlooks the ways in which environmental degradation and climate change disproportionately affects women and corporate tokenization exacerbates this disparity. This is evident in the case of the Thar coal project as well as the 2022 floods, where women not only suffered physical injuries but also experienced domestic violence, malnutrition, sexual harassment, lack of essential hygiene products, and inadequate medical facilities.

In addition to the critique of the reductionism and oversimplification that arises from this association of women with nature, I also argue that ecofeminism as it exists today overlooks the role that corporations and governments have played in contributing to environmental degradation.

In the aftermath of climate-induced natural disasters, relief efforts often fail to recognize the physical and emotional toll on women, who bear the brunt of the burden. By addressing the gaps in the ideology and incorporating the various critiques made by scholars, a reassessed ecofeminist perspective should engage in a more nuanced and holistic discourse on gender parity and environmental sustainability.

It is also imperative to recognize the impact of socio-political and cultural norms on women's lives, and how these norms shape their relationship with the environment. Rather than reducing women to their roles in the agricultural economy, a second wave of ecofeminism must consider the values, practices, and knowledge that women bring to the care and nourishment of their environment.

Moreover, a sensitive understanding of the sexual division of labor is essential to address the ways in which gender roles shape women's experiences with the environment. This requires acknowledging the systemic barriers that limit women's participation in decision-making processes related to land and the environment. Understanding the nature of these connections is necessary for any adequate understanding of the oppression of women and the oppression of nature; feminist theory and practice must include an ecological perspective, and solutions to ecological problems must include a feminist perspective.

Therefore, it is important to reinterpret ecofeminism's significance to feminism through an intersectional lens, bringing nuances from the study of unequal relations between developed and developing worlds characterized by patriarchal and unequal relations. In this context, Rahman's book *Place and Postcolonial Ecofeminism* (2019) gave powerful insight into the issue. She suggested alternative environmental modes of belonging in Pakistani women's novels and films and encouraged scholarship and activism in Pakistan by connecting conversations about women

to conversations about the environment, qualifying place over nation and religion. The ongoing effects of climate change make it increasingly necessary to do so. Rahman's emphasis on prioritizing local knowledge and perspectives over national or religious identities is especially essential in a postcolonial context, where the legacies of colonialism continue to shape social and environmental relations. By centering the experiences and knowledge of Pakistani women, Rahman's work encourages scholarship and activism that is grounded in local contexts and responsive to the needs of marginalized communities.

For example, when Abida Channa of WDF spoke of how she could provide help in many ways, it shows that she had to reimagine the entire notion of how help is provided. She had to rethink the moral fabric on which these ideas of corporate social responsibility stand tall and attempt to tokenize the opportunity to help by converting it into an opportunity to advertise. This is essentially what is lacking in the ecofeminist ideology. Abida Channa's experience highlights a major issue with the current wave of ecofeminism: it has failed to critically examine the ways in which corporate entities co-opt and tokenize feminist and environmental movements for their own profit-driven agendas. Similarly, when Bushra Mahnoor of Mahwari Justice and Tehreem Khalid of Sindhiani Tehreek decided that help must be given and that the most vulnerable out of all the affectees were women, they both worked towards creating a meaningful intervention in society which did not generalize the concerns of the environment or the relationship between nature and womanhood, but in fact, went further beyond to imbibe an ethic that is embedded into a lifestyle of ecofeminism - not as an ideology, not as a movement, but simply a lifestyle which acknowledges the vulnerability of women without ignoring their experiences of environmental subjectivity.

The commodification of feminist and environmental movements by corporations, as seen in the case of the Thar coal project, not only perpetuates gender oppression and environmental

degradation but also puts a blind eye on the real issues women face. To address this issue, a new wave of ecofeminism is necessary - one that is more vigilant and critical of the ways in which corporations operate. This means that ecofeminism needs to move beyond a simplistic focus on women's roles in the agricultural economy and recognize the complexity and diversity of women's experiences. Ecofeminist movements, such as the Women's Democratic Front and Mahwari Justice, need to be wary of how their actions and messages may be co-opted and used by corporations to legitimize their practices.

It is also important to note that the ecofeminist movement originated over two decades ago, with actions such as women's legal challenges to giant nuclear corporations in the United States and tree-hugging protests against loggers in Northern India. The movement reflects a double-edged political perspective grounded in working women's commonsense understanding of everyday life needs and the intuition that the struggle for a feminine voice to be heard relates to the struggle for a nurturant, protective attitude toward our living environment. Despite being an international movement, ecofeminist literature has only sometimes received equal recognition worldwide. Therefore, ecofeminists working from more visible niches in the dominant English-speaking culture have tended to get their views broadcast first. For example, classic ecofeminist statements such as Rosemary Ruether's "New Woman, New Earth" (1975), Elizabeth Dodson-Gray's "Green Paradise Lost" (1979), and Carolyn Merchant's "The Death of Nature" (1981) are more widely recognized than others. This means that narratives such as how ecofeminist movements are currently facing the brunt of corporate tokenization in the global south, as some of the most climate-vulnerable regions of the world remain missing.

Additionally, the concept of greenwashing complicates this issue further by allowing corporations to manipulate consumers into believing that their products and practices are

environmentally friendly and socially responsible, further perpetuating the exploitation of marginalized communities and the environment. For example, In most TV advertisements about types of bottled water and packaged milk cartons, the most frequently used character is that of a 'mother,' who is only satisfied with the brand of bottled water or packaged milk which she is advertising. Somehow this character is used to instill a sense of trust within the audience and exploits the existing relationship between a mother and a child, experienced by most human beings across the world, and uses it to create a more significant connection of trust between the brand and the consumer. The idea behind advertising Thar women as "empowered truck drivers", was perhaps enabled by this very understanding that if Engro and partners manage to portray that even the desolate desert's indigenous women are in favor of this project and are in fact willing to facilitate it, it must be *reasonable* and *necessary*, like how a mother thinks for her children.

In conclusion, recognizing the role that corporations and governments play in contributing to environmental degradation and its disproportionate impact on women is essential to develop a more effective ecofeminist framework. By moving beyond essentialism, a reassessment of ecofeminism can address the structural inequalities that prevent the state from achieving its full potential and create a more just and sustainable world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has presented an analysis of the interplay between patriarchy, capitalism, and the ecofeminist movement in Pakistan. By exploring the first and second wave of ecofeminism, it is evident that a reassessment is necessary to address the co-optation and tokenization of feminist and environmental movements by corporations, as seen in the case of the Thar coal project.

To address these issues, a new wave of ecofeminism must critically examine the ways in which corporate entities co-opt and tokenize feminist and environmental movements for their own profit-driven agendas. This requires moving beyond a simplistic focus on women's roles in the agricultural economy and recognizing the complexity and diversity of women's experiences. Ecofeminist movements need to be wary of how their actions and messages may be co-opted and used by corporations to legitimize their practices.

Moreover, this reassessed ecofeminist perspective should engage in a more nuanced and holistic discourse on gender parity and environmental sustainability by centering the experiences and knowledge of Pakistani women. Using Nancy Fraser's theoretical framework and Jay Westerveld's concept of corporate 'Greenwashing,' the thesis shows how corporate tokenization in Pakistan perpetuates environmental degradation and gender oppression.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the ecofeminist movement originated over two decades ago and has yet to receive equal recognition worldwide. As such, ecofeminists working from more visible niches in the dominant English-speaking culture have tended to get their views broadcast first. This means that narratives such as how ecofeminist movements are currently facing the brunt of corporate tokenization in the global south, as some of the most climate-vulnerable regions of the world remain missing.

To conclude, this thesis demonstrates that ecofeminism can offer transformative solutions to the issues faced by marginalized communities in Pakistan, but only if it critically examines its own assumptions and acknowledges the impact of patriarchy and capitalism. By doing so, ecofeminism can empower women and marginalized communities to take control of their lives and their environment, challenging the status quo and creating a more just and sustainable world.

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