

**A QUEER ECOFEMINIST STUDY OF  
MAJUMDAR'S *A BURNING* AND WINTER'S  
*ANNABEL***

**BY  
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**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES**

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**A Queer Ecofeminist Study of Majumdar's *A Burning* and  
Winter's *Annabel***

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NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES

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The undersigned certifies that they have read the following thesis, examined the defense, are satisfied with the overall exam performance, and recommend the thesis to the Faculty of Arts & Humanities for acceptance.

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **A Queer Ecofeminist Study of Majumdar's *A Burning and Winter's Annabel*** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of M.Phil. degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution in future.

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## ABSTRACT

**Title:** A Queer Ecofeminist Study of Majumdar's *A Burning* and Winter's *Annabel*

This research critically examines the novels *A Burning* by Megha Majumdar and *Annabel* by Kathleen Winter, focusing on the pervasive oppression of women, queer individuals, and the degradation of nature. By utilizing the theoretical framework of Queer Ecofeminism, as articulated by Greta Gaard, the study explores how these novels depict resistance against the intertwined forces of heteronormativity, patriarchy, and capitalism. Additionally, Christopher Shelley's concepts of transphobia and social repudiation are employed to elucidate the societal hatred and rejection faced by queer individuals in these narratives. The selection of novels from India and Canada underscores the universal nature of these oppressive forces, demonstrating their impact across diverse cultural contexts. This study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on gender, sexuality, and environmental justice by highlighting the ways in which oppressed groups resist and challenge systemic oppression by raising awareness of marginalized experiences and the systemic forces that perpetuate inequality. It challenges dominant narratives, advocates for social justice, and provides a platform for underrepresented voices. In both *A Burning* and *Annabel* women, queer individuals, and nature face oppression due to systemic forces. Women are oppressed because of their gender under patriarchal structures, queer individuals suffer due to heteronormative attitudes, and nature is degraded for capitalist gains. Despite these oppressive forces, the characters resist and challenge their conditions, demonstrating resilience and courage, even when their resistance does not always lead to success. By highlighting the interconnectedness of gender, sexuality, and environmental issues, research promotes more inclusive policies, fosters empathy and understanding, and encourages collective action towards a more equitable and sustainable future. Research aims to promote social justice by dismantling oppressive system.

**Keywords:** *Gender, Ecology, Oppression, Resistance*

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## **DEDICATION**

To my dear parents who are my greatest support system.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Oppression, as an inherent aspect of societal dynamics, manifests at all levels, particularly targeting individuals or groups lacking power. This phenomenon typically occurs when individuals are systematically subjected to political, economic, cultural, or social degradation due to their membership in a marginalized social group. Such subjugation arises from established structures of domination and subordination, perpetuated by ideologies that assert the superiority of some over others. In essence, oppression entails actions and policies that diminish the potential for individuals to realize their full humanity, effectively dehumanizing them. The consequences of oppression are often the result of the decisions and policies of a select few, leading to the entrenchment of unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols within society.

The multifaceted nature of oppression can be explored through various lenses, one of which is literary analysis. The study of oppression is extensive, frequently encompassing issues related to gender and the subjugation of women. This research, however, extends beyond these traditional focuses to examine the diverse forms of oppression experienced by marginalized groups in the novels *A Burning* and *Annabel*. It further investigates the resistance strategies employed by these groups, utilizing Greta Gaard's Queer Ecofeminism and Christopher Shelley's theories on Transphobia and social repudiation as theoretical frameworks.

*A Burning* by Megha Majumdar and *Annabel* by Kathleen Winter are two literary works that specifically focus on oppression of women queer and nature. Both novels explore the complexities of identity and the struggles faced by marginalized communities in societies that seek to silence their voices. Lovely in the novel *A Burning* faces discrimination and violence daily because of her gender identity. She is often harassed and threatened by both strangers and people she knows. Lovely struggles to find acceptance and support from her family and friends. Her parents are unsupported of her transition and often criticize her for her choices. Similarly, Jivan is a character that is oppressed because of gender and her Muslim identity.

In *Annabel*, the protagonist is intersex and faces several struggles including the difficulty of fitting into a binary gender system that does not recognize her identity. One of Annabel's biggest struggles is the secrecy surrounding her intersex condition. This secrecy causes Annabel to feel isolated and confused, as she struggles to understand who she is and where she fits in. She also faces discrimination and harassment from those who do not understand her condition. These struggles make it difficult for both Lovely and Annabel to feel accepted, and loved, both find their way to embrace their identity.

Drawing from the theory of Queer Ecofeminism, as proposed by Gaard, the novels challenge the traditional binary categorization of gender and sexuality and demonstrate the interconnections of humans and the environment. Gaard's theory emphasizes the importance of recognizing the interdependence of all life forms and the need to dismantle patriarchal structures that perpetuate the exploitation and oppression of women, non-human, and the earth. Shelley's concept of transphobia and societal rejection is relevant in understanding the obstacles faced by Trans and non-binary individuals seeking recognition and approval. It emphasizes the effects of societal norms and biases on the lives of oppressed groups, emphasizing the suffering and violence perpetrated by entities and individuals reluctant to acknowledge their presence.

Through their exploration of these themes, *A Burning* and *Annabel* offer a poignant commentary on the societal structures that perpetuate oppression and the need for radical change to ensure the liberation of all individuals, regardless of their identity. This study aims to investigate the experiences of queer characters in both novels and their relation with ecology, with a focus on their resistance to the dominant structures. The research is going to analyze how these characters advocate for a just society, and how their struggles for recognition and acceptance relate to broader social and environmental concerns.

## **1.2 Thesis Statement**

The novels, *A Burning* and *Annabel* not only delineate the dynamics of oppressed groups, including queer individuals, women, and nature, within male-dominated societies but go beyond merely identifying these groups by categorizing the specific forms of oppression they face and exploring the strategies they employ to resist

and challenge these injustices. This study is anchored in the theoretical framework of queer ecofeminism, as articulated by Gaard, as well as the concepts of transphobia and social repudiation, set forth by Shelley.

### **1.3 Delimitation**

The study is delimited to the examination of different oppressed groups, their resistance and struggles against those in power as represented in *A Burning* and *Annabel*, using Gaard's concept of Queer Ecofeminism and Shelley's concept of Transphobia and Social Repudiation as a theoretical framework.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How do the novels *A Burning* and *Annabel* focus on the portrayal of female and queer characters and their lived experiences intersecting with ecological and feminist concerns?
2. In what ways do the selected novels illustrate the resistance of oppressed women and queer characters against patriarchy, heteronormativity, and capitalism?

### **1.5 Significance of the Research**

The significance of the research is to bring attention to the groups that have historically been oppressed. By examining their experiences and narratives, the research helps to make their voices heard. The aim of the research is to provide this group with a sense of recognition and legitimacy. Research challenges the dominant heteronormative, patriarchal narratives that often exclude these groups. It encourages a more nuanced understanding of society by incorporating different perspectives that challenge status quo. Research also contributes to highlighting the resilience of the groups that provides insight into how individuals and communities cope with and resist systematic oppression. The research highlights the specific needs and challenges faced by oppressed groups, leading to more inclusive and equitable policies.

### **1.6 Research Plan**

The research plan of this research consists of five chapters. The first section is an introduction that briefly discusses two novels *A Burning* and *Annabel*: by theorists Gaard and Shelley respectively. It also includes a thesis statement, research questions, significance of research, and delimitation.

The second chapter is divided into three sections. The first section considers the historical evolution of both theories i.e. Transphobia and Social Repudiation and Queer ecofeminism. The second section deals with previous scholarly research incorporating these theoretical frameworks. The third section takes up the research done on both novels. Finally, it mentions the research gap that is going to be filled with this research project.

The third chapter deals with theoretical framework and research methodology. In chapter four, the researcher has devised an analysis by keeping in mind all research questions and objectives, while chapter five is the last chapter that is based on conclusion and findings with recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The literature review is structured into three parts. Firstly, the researcher has discussed the theoretical underpinnings and historical evolution of queer ecofeminism and transphobia, whilst the second section encompasses a comprehensive review of scholarly research incorporating Queer Ecofeminism, transphobia, and social repudiation. Lastly, the third section reviews previous research conducted on the selected novels.

#### **2.2 Queer Ecofeminism**

Ecocriticism has evolved significantly over time to correspond to evolving standards of literary discourse. It has emerged as a prominent perspective within this field, integrating nature with women and emphasizing the interconnections of liberating both. Ecofeminism strives to highlight the joint suffering of women and nature by establishing parallels between their oppression. When examining ecocritical perspectives, it has become necessary in modern literary discourse to include a wider spectrum of sexual identities. Consequently, Queer Ecofeminism has emerged as a new area of study and inquiry. This method, which combines ecofeminism and queer theory, prepares the door for engaged debates regarding sexual minorities and marginalized communities in society. The combination of these two perspectives introduces new possibilities. Queers being integrated into ecology and feminism disciplines reflect a shared call echoing the resistance of nature and women against the patriarchal 'culture' of bygone eras. The term 'queer' refers to both the sexual and social aspects of the LGBTQ community and other marginalized groups in society (Libraries). Queer ecofeminism is a paradigm that blends parts of queer theory and ecofeminism. It investigates the connections between environmental challenges, feminism, and LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) concerns. This viewpoint criticizes the interwoven oppressive systems that lead to the exploitation of nature, women, and LGBTQ+ people, while also offering alternative methods of living in peace with the environment and with one another.

Queer ecofeminism arose as an extension of both ecofeminism and queer theory, of both which have complicated and unique histories. Ecofeminism arose in the 1970s and the 1980s in response to the exploitation and oppression of both women and nature. Early ecofeminists such as Ynestra King (King) and Carol J. Adams (Gruen) maintained that patriarchal systems and nature's dominance are inextricably linked. They emphasized how a system that emphasizes dominance and control marginalizes and exploits women and the environment while in the 1990s queer theory emerged as a critical response to normative and binary understandings of sexuality and gender. Scholars such as Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Gayle Rubin challenged hetero-normative beliefs by questioning fixed categories of identity and emphasizing the performative nature of gender and sexuality (Gregory and Urbna). Queer ecofeminism builds on these foundations, recognizing that the exploitation of the environment and marginalized groups such as women and LGBTQ+ people are inextricably linked. Queer ecofeminism rejects binary thinking, such as nature/culture, male/female, human/animal, and heterosexual/homosexual thinking. Instead, it attempts to obscure these distinctions and undermine fixed classifications (Gaard).

Greta Gaard, a queer ecofeminist researcher, has articulated the concept of "ecosexuality," which advocates for an ecological approach to sexuality and relationships. This perspective aims to develop a more intimate and reciprocal relationship with nature, redefining it as more than a resource to be exploited. It emphasizes the significance of inclusive and intersectional action, which recognizes and addresses concerns about both environmental and social justice issues. It encourages solidarity and collaboration among various social movements to confront repressive structures. Queer ecofeminism criticizes the anthropogenic concept, which attributes environmental degradation solely to human activity because it ignores how certain groups (e.g., women, queer people, and indigenous people) have been disproportionately affected and marginalized. Owing to its extensive and inclusive approach, queer ecofeminism is significant in the field of environmental studies. Some important elements that emphasize their significance are as follows:

**Intersectionality:** Queer Ecofeminism recognizes and addresses the intersectionality of multiple types of oppression and discrimination such as gender, sexuality, race, and class. It emphasizes the importance of considering the experiences



of all people, especially sexual minorities and marginalized communities, in environmental studies.

**Diverse Perspectives:** This approach broadens the scope of understanding environmental challenges by combining queer theory with ecofeminism. It challenges traditional binary viewpoints and embraces a broader spectrum of perspectives and identities, expanding the debate and providing new perspectives on environmental issues.

**Social Justice and Environmental Justice:** Queer Ecofeminism views social justice and environmental justice as intrinsically connected. It acknowledges that environmental challenges adversely affect vulnerable and marginalized populations, especially LGBT people. It strives to build more equal and sustainable solutions by recognizing and addressing existing gaps.

**Reclaiming Relationships with Nature:** Queer Ecofeminism strives to redefine human relationships with nature by shifting away from current exploitative and hierarchical viewpoints. It promotes a more compassionate and interrelated perspective of nature, acknowledging that the liberation of marginalized populations and the environment are inextricably linked.

**Heteronormativity Critique:** This point of view criticizes the heteronormativity and prevailing gender standards that frequently serve as the foundation for discussions about sustainability and environmental challenges. Queer Ecofeminism creates space for alternative ways of living in harmony with the environment by challenging and dismantling established standards.

**Advocating Inclusivity:** In the context of environmental studies and actions, queer ecofeminism supports inclusivity. It promotes recognizing and honoring the unique contributions of people of all gender identities and sexual orientations to develop a more accepting and supportive environmental community.

**Creativity and Imagination:** Queer Ecofeminism promotes innovative and imaginative responses to environmental problems by combining various viewpoints and experiences. It opposes conventional wisdom and promotes creative strategies for sustainability and environmental protection.

Gaard, a scholar and activist has contributed significantly to the development of queer ecofeminism. At its core, queer ecofeminism recognizes the interconnections of

all forms of oppression, including sexism, racism, heterosexism, classism, and environmental degradation. It posits that these forms of oppression are rooted in a patriarchal, capitalist, and social system that privileges certain bodies, identities, and ways of life at the expense of others. In her book, *Ecological Politics: Ecofeminist and the Greens*, Gaard examines the relationship between two aspects of ecological politics. She argues that ecofeminism and the green movement share a common goal of creating a more sustainable and just world, but they differ in their approaches to achieving this goal. Ecofeminism, according to Gaard, is a political and philosophical movement that sees the domination of women and nature as two sides of the same coin. It argues that the patriarchal system of power has led to the exploitation of both women and the environment and that this system needs to be dismantled to create a more sustainable and just world. Ecofeminism also highlights the contributions that women have made to environmental movements and argues that women's perspectives are essential in achieving ecological sustainability.

The green movement, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with promoting environmental stability through political action. It seeks to create policies and regulations that reduce the negative impact of human activities on the environment. While the green movement recognizes the importance of social justice issues, it tends to focus more narrowly on environmental issues. Gaard argues that ecofeminism and the green movement can complement each other, but they also have key differences. Ecofeminism she says provides a more holistic perspective on environmental issues, seeing them as interconnected with social justice issues. The green movement, on the other hand, provides concrete policy proposals and practical solutions for addressing environmental problems.

She argues that the ecological crisis is not simply a matter of environmental degradation but is also a result of social and political inequalities. She contends that mainstream environmentalism, which tends to focus on technical solutions and individual behavior change, fails to address the systematic roots of environmental degradation and social inequality. Queer Ecofeminism emphasizes addressing issues through intersectional analysis and action. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing the interrelationship of many forms of oppression. It also emphasizes the importance of incorporating queer and feminist perspectives into environmental and social justice movements. Ultimately, Gaard suggests that a combination of ecofeminism and green

approaches is needed to create a truly sustainable and just world. She argues that this will require both systemic changes to patriarchal and capitalist systems of power, as well as policy changes that promote environmental stability.

In *Toward a Queer Ecofeminism*, she examines the intersection of queer theory, ecofeminism, and environmental activism. She argues that a queer ecofeminist perspective can help to create a more inclusive and intersectional approach to ecological politics. Queer ecofeminism according to Gaard, is a political and philosophical movement that seeks to dismantle patriarchal systems of power, promote environmental sustainability, and celebrate diversity in all its forms. It acknowledges how gender, sexuality, race, class, and other forms of identity intersect with environmental issues, and it seeks to create a more inclusive and just world for all. One of the key ideas in queer ecofeminism is the concept of “queer ecology,” which challenges the idea that nature is fixed and unchanging. Instead, queer ecology recognizes that nature is constantly evolving and changing and that it is influenced by human and non-human interactions. It also acknowledges that human identities and experiences are shaped by their relationship to the environment. She has also discussed the work of Val Plumwood. She references Plumwood’s concept of “Shadow places” (Plumwood, *Shadow Places and the Politics of Dwelling*) which refers to the spaces within ecosystems where oppression and domination occur. Nature's control, in her opinion, is inseparable from the control of women, people of different nationalities, and other marginalized groups. Plumwood emphasizes the interdependence and reciprocal reinforcement of these oppressive processes.

The concept of queer ecofeminism has been reviewed and discussed by various theorists and writers in the fields of ecofeminism, queer theory, and environmental studies other than Greta Gaard. Catriona Mortimer-Sandiland, a well-known scholar in the field has written about the intersections of gender, sexuality, and nature in her book *The Good-Natured Feminist*. The book begins a long dialogue between ecofeminism and recent feminist postmodernism and radical democracy texts. Assuming that ecofeminism contains democratic conceptions, the book navigates North American radical feminist discussions around "nature." It is intertwined with identity politics, to integrate nature into democratic debate. It aims to politicize gender and nature linkages in both academic and active contexts. Chrysanthi Nigianni, Merl Storr’s study, *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, delves into a wide range of topics, such as reevaluating the term

"queer," reconsidering the implied sex-gender distinction in Queer Theory, investigating queer temporalities, reviewing the homosexual body/desire, and the becoming-queer of Deleuze/Guattari philosophy. Sherilyn MacGregor's work, *Beyond Mothering Earth: Ecological Citizenship and the Politics of Care*, dives into ecofeminism, queer theory, and environmental politics. In her book *Ecofeminism*, Mies and Shiva, two writers—one an economist, the other a physicist and philosopher—join forces to discuss a contentious environmental agenda. Using interview material, they create a novel, pragmatic, and philosophical approach to this body of knowledge by bringing together the viewpoints of women from the North and South on environmental degradation. Do female environmental activists believe that there is a connection between ecological deterioration and patriarchy? What connections exist between the devastation of nature and global militarism? By examining these issues, the writers challenge accepted wisdom and provide an analytically sound ecofeminist viewpoint that is grounded in the demands of daily existence. They make the case for adhering to a new code of ethics, accepting boundaries, and rejecting the commercialization of necessities.

Gaard's postulates of queer ecofeminism have been the subject of much debate and discussion, with some scholars including Catriona, Stacy and Ariel Salleh offering praise for the innovative approach to environmental issues, while concerns about their potential limitations and shortcomings have also been raised.

## **2.3 Transphobia**

The unjust treatment and prejudice towards individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles is a serious issue. It can only be resolved when society as a whole acknowledges and addresses their biases surrounding gender identity and societal expectations. When a person's natural gender sense clashes with their birth-assigned sex, they are labeled transgender, and the resulting backlash, known as transphobia, includes fear, hatred, and biased behavior. Transphobia, which is typically directed at transgender people, intersex individuals, lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals, permeates communities worldwide. Transgender discrimination is everywhere, affecting all parts of life, from mis-gendering to denial of housing, employment, healthcare, legal protections, and even humiliation or assault when venturing outside. Discrimination can be unintentional or intentional, with some people oblivious to the consequences of their bigotry. Unintentional discrimination occurs when transgender

people are overlooked, but deliberate discrimination, even if unintentional, deprives entire populations of equal opportunity. Systemic discrimination occurs when an entire group is denied the same rights as others. Similar to how most transgender people suffer marriage prohibitions, homosexuals and lesbians endure systemic discrimination in marriage rights. Imposing significant barriers to benefits, such as undergoing “Sex Reassignment Surgery,” shows purposeful discrimination, disproportionately harming transgender women who are unable or unwilling to undergo surgery. As Mirha Soleil points out, this politically contentious regulation excludes many transgender women from shelters, particularly those who are least likely to be eligible for surgery. Despite their current legal entitlement to this care, the goal is to limit services to a subgroup of transgender women.

Excluding specific people and denying their existence is an example of societal marginalization. This is witnessed in the United States with Indigenous, African American, and homeless people. LGBTQ people, who are increasingly facing discrimination, are rarely recognized abroad. Their mention is frequently based on disparaging language, such as “faggot,” which is common in schools. While name-calling is dehumanizing, silence and societal invisibility are far more so. LGBTQ people face prejudice when they take a step forward. As a result, name-calling and rejection turn physical. Despite efforts to adapt, LGBTQ persons face continuous prejudice, which harms their well-being and society as a whole. Due to negative opinions at school, LGBTQ adolescents suffer a higher risk of violence and ill health than their straight counterparts do. A national research conducted by the “Centers for Disease Control and Prevention” in 2015 revealed that LGBTQ students were nearly three times more likely to skip school due to safety concerns. 34% reported bullying on school grounds, and 10% reported threats or weapon-related injuries. Cyberbullying affects 28% of the population. In terms of mental health and violence, 29% of LGBTQ kids attempted suicide, compared to 6% of heterosexual peers (kids). Harassment extends beyond the schoolyard; negative family talks about sexual orientation are common. Coming out is a traumatic event when there is a Fifty percent chance of negative parental reactions. Twenty-six percent are facing eviction, and Thirty percent are facing physical attacks. Forty percent of the homeless are women (Friedman).

Transgender people, also known as hijras or khusras in informal contexts and Khwaja-seras in South Asia, are biological males who choose feminine roles by

publicly adopting women's clothes and behaviors. Historically, they ran Mughal harems and made significant contributions to Indian literature, music, and art. According to popular belief, Khwaja sera can provide prosperity and fertility through prayers and curses. Regardless of their initial social standing, many were forced into begging and prostitution due to an abrupt decline in their social standing. Following the death of the Mughal emperor and the decline of the harem lifestyle, the transgender/Hijra population in South Asia endured significant marginalization, stigma, and social rejection. The situation worsens due to a lack of acknowledgment and respect for these groups, which casts them as social outcasts, denies basic rights, and exposes them to various sorts of gender and identity-based discrimination, harassment, and violence.

Family establishments play a big part in marginalizing Khawaja Sara/transgender people. The dominant heterosexist system is forcefully defended and promoted due to family members' rejection of nonconforming gender attitudes, identities, and behaviors. Furthermore, families do not have enough cultural or social references to comprehend their children's gender identification and behaviors. Therefore, rather than shielding a child from the emotional and physical abuse they endure at the hands of society at large, the family instead humiliates, beats, and, in many cases, exiles the child from the home. Employment possibilities are restricted by discrimination, and transgender communities frequently experience abuse, humiliation, and intimidation. Many also fall prey to criminal groups, sexual assaults, and extortion. Toli, an organized request for donations from the public; vadhai, the blessings and prayers that hijras offer to newborn newborns in the area in exchange for donations and money; and common begging are the traditional sources of revenue in the hijra subculture. Some transgender women also engage in living-performing sex acts. Education is in a bad condition among transgender people for a variety of reasons, most of which are brought on by social stigma and taboos. First, parents do not take their transgender child seriously and do not care about their schoolwork and studies. Second, transgender children are frequently the targets of sexual abuse at school by their teachers or senior schoolmates, which leads to dropouts. Once he is kicked out of the house, he is more open to abuse, assault, and drug use. Transgender people continue to experience discrimination, abuse, heteronormativity, and physical violence in various forms.

Heteronormative beliefs, which are deeply rooted in the notion of separate male and female features and duties, prescribe set behavioral expectations. The acceptance of these sentiments, associated with unfavorable views on gender nonconformity, stems from "Queer Theory," which asserts heterosexuality as the norm and labels other sexual preferences as "abnormal or wrong." Heteronormativity shapes institutions like marriage and develops specific views of sexuality that are firmly embedded in our daily lives. Because heteronormativity pervades social, legal, economic, political, educational, and religious institutions, it influences people's collective psyche. LGBTQIA or queer populations are especially vulnerable to its destructive consequences. It penetrates numerous elements of civilization by restricting rituals such as marriage, childbirth, and adoption to different-sex couples. Gender questions on forms and shopping experiences reinforce heteronormative notions in people's daily lives. This may seem like a simple case of heteronormativity, but many documents still demand people to choose between the two declared genders: male or female. Examples include driver's licenses and the "required information" areas on online travel booking forms. This presupposes that these categories apply to everyone and contribute significantly to heteronormativity. It is difficult for queer and gender-nonconforming people to have access to identity-affirming medical treatments. With insurance policies and medical benefits that expressly exclude them, healthcare is at its most heteronormative. Here is an illustration of more nuanced heteronormativity. A cis person feels that because their pronouns are the "expected" ones, there is never a need to discuss them when meeting new people. That is essentially the same as thinking that you are "normal" and that only those who are different from the norm need to disclose this kind of information. No pronouns should be taken for granted. The heterosexual group exhibits heteronormative aggression at an early age. Developing gender roles that produce violent, hyper-masculine men, gender policing, and the rigid teaching of gender roles to youngsters have negative consequences on cisgender, heterosexual children. Importantly, LGBT communities are violently affected by policing and education.

Transphobia is an irrational fear, anger, or bias directed at persons who do not conform to traditional gender stereotypes. Prejudice presents itself in a variety of ways, ranging from bias to verbal or physical harm and marginalization. Transphobia frequently leads to social rejection, isolation, and violence. Aside from Shelley, few

researchers dive into these issues, providing a detailed and groundbreaking analysis of the challenges experienced by transsexual and transgender people in everyday life. They face widespread prejudice not only from societal conservatives, but also from a variety of lefties, psychiatrists, feminists, lesbians, and homosexual people. Shelley presents the concept of social repudiation, which refers to the systematic rejection or exclusion from societal participation based on gender identity or expression. This rejection manifests itself in a variety of ways, including restrictions on access to basic services such as healthcare, education, work, and housing. Another aspect is stigmatization, which has serious emotional and physical health effects on people who are affected.

Transphobia and social repudiation are closely linked, as they both stem from the same underlying prejudice against transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. Social rejection frequently arises from transphobia, casting aside those who diverge from conventional gender norms. Social repudiation, in turn, reinforces and perpetuates transphobia by marginalizing and silencing those who do not fit into societal expectations. In his book *Transpeople*, he covers a wide range of topics from the history of transgender people to the legal and medical aspects of transitioning. The book is divided into different sections. The first section provides an overview of transgender identities, definitions, and terminologies explaining the difference between them, and different types of transgender experiences. He goes on to describe the different types of transgender experiences. He distinguishes between those who identify as male-to-female (MLF) and those who identify as female-to-male (FTM). This section also includes a discussion of the various ways in which individuals express their gender identity. Shelley emphasizes that gender expression is not the same as gender identity and that individuals may express their gender in a variety of ways, regardless of their biological sex or gender identity. The second section delves into the history of transgender people, discussing the cultural, social, and medical contexts in which transgender identities have emerged. The third section focuses on the experiences of transgender people including the challenges they face in their personal and professional lives, as well as the discrimination they often encounter. The fourth section explores the medical and legal aspects of transitioning, including hormone therapy, surgery, and legal recognition of gender identity. He also discusses the future of transgender



identities and the ongoing struggle for transgender rights. Shelley emphasizes the importance of understanding and accepting transgender identities and experiences.

## **2.4 Previous Researches**

The contemporary Indian nation, known for its rapid global emergence, is grappling with an ongoing struggle for a significant portion of its populace, specifically women. Women in contemporary society face several threats, regardless of their status, caste, or educational level. Throughout history, women have been exploited in the physical, social, mental, and financial domains. Many unknown causes of sexual and moral abuse in contemporary Indian society are often brought to light by the media. Although sexual harassment, exploitation, and violence against women are not new, they have a long history of use in India. Rape, kidnapping, crimes involving dowries, molestation, sexual harassment, eve teasing, and other incidents continue to occur. Women's empowerment is impeded by patriarchal Indian society, in which men dominate all spheres of life. Women are subjected to harassment at work, sexual trafficking, and abuse both at home and in society. Women are negatively affected by several societal challenges, including gender bias, economic inequality, poverty, unemployment, and inadequate education. There is a difference between the rights guaranteed by the constitution, and the actual rights that are granted to women, even in cases where gender discrimination is outlawed and political equality is guaranteed.

Kazmi has analyzed and explored Arundhati Roy's "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness in Environmental Injustice: A Queer Ecofeminist Study of Ministry of Utmost Happiness". This analysis considers ecocritical principles as it examines how Roy's Booker-winning novel treats and portrays nature. In his picture of India, Roy covered a wide range of topics, including development, religion, politics, nature, and environmental issues. In addition, it draws attention to the current state of global development while highlighting the superiority of "luxury" over "necessity." Using these ideas, the story explores Anjum's search for identity and her relationship with her surroundings. Environmental concerns are viewed through the prism of Roy's picture of chaos and the socio-cultural images of humans and animals. The natural resources of this beautiful valley are severely strained by the substantial troop presence in Indian-held Kashmir because of the army occupation. Road construction is one of the army's initiatives to support troops. Roy's use of imagery is examined closely to determine its intent and applicability to industrialization, development, politics, and economics. The

novel's plot concentrates on the environmental disaster faced by this region, covering themes such as the production of injected chickens for commercial purposes and spotlighting the unhealthy nutrition of people there.

An article, "A Queer Ecofeminist Reading of Matsuri (Festival) examines Towards the Ecofeminism," a text by Gaard. The main goal is to demonstrate how the poem can be seen as an expression of Gaard's unconventional ecofeminist perspective, which depicts an ideal ecological society in which women, nonhuman animals, and people who identify as non-heteronormative can live free and independent lives. As such, the most important portions of the text deal with gender, nature, and non-heteronormative sexuality. Although there are many definitions for the term "queer," this article adopts the inclusive definition given by queer studies professor Kazuya Kawaguchi, which refers to attraction towards or participation in sexualities other than heteronormativity (Morita).

The renowned filmmaker Deepa Mehta's film *Fire* is examined from the perspective of queer ecofeminism in the article, "Coupling Nature and Women: A Queer Ecofeminist Reading of Deepa Mehta's *Fire*". Queer ecofeminism combines ecofeminism with queer theory to undermine normative dualism and guarantee the identity of all people as well as nature. This article looks at the movie's female leads, the oppression they experienced, and the form of resistance they used by retaining a connection to nature's support in their daily lives. This study focused on the relationship between women, nature, and sexuality. It concluded that the contemporary-era film *Fire* tackles concepts related to how women are treated. Exploring new lesbian textures, *Fire* explores the complexities of people living in a middle-class Indian household, looking at the emotional needs of the two sisters and their marriages. The most recent advancements in our society's legal, political, and ecological realms strive to give every living thing on Earth, regardless of color, class, gender, equal representation, and identification. The preservation of the environment and the interests of future generations depend on a balanced ecology, in which humans play a key role as intellectual animals (Paul).

"Attention Is the Beginning of Devotion: Reading Queer Ecofeminism in Mary Oliver's Poetry", examines the poetry of Mary Oliver to demonstrate how it promotes a worldview that goes beyond human dominance over non-human entities and challenges the prioritization of reason over spiritual and erotic aspects. Ollivain calls

on readers to envision themselves as various creatures, such as turtles, geese, birds, and insects, and to merge them with the interconnected realms of forests and oceans. Through this shared existence in vast ecosystems, the speaker in Oliver's poems transcends the subjectivity imposed by dominant ideologies. In "The Turtle," Oliver venerates a turtle whose reproductive choices emanate from compassion rather than obligation, emphasizing an inseparable connection with the world. This contrasts with the often-celebrated cerebral traits in humans, unveiling them as flaws distancing us from our corporeal reality. Oliver's verses highlight the virtues of connectivity present in maternal creatures, drawing parallels between their offspring's reliance and our dependence on Earth. The emphasis on animal lives prompts reflection on the artificial distinctions between humans and "nature," urging a remembrance of our status as animals within it. The turtle's profound interconnectedness with its surroundings, illustrated by phrases like "her children" and the "unbreakable string," serves as a model for human conduct. This worldview, guided by queer ecofeminist sensibilities, dissolves dualities, fostering a reimagining of our relationship with the non-human world rooted in love rather than violence. Oliver's poetry highlights the virtues of connectivity inherent in mother animals, equating the reliance of their progeny with our reliance on the planet. The focus on the lives of animals invites contemplation on the fabricated barriers that separate us from "nature," and it serves as a reminder of our place as animals in it. With expressions like "her children" and the "unbreakable string," the turtle's deep connection to its environment serves as a role model for human behavior. This perspective eliminates dualism and promotes a rethinking of our relationship with the non-human world as one based on love rather than violence. This is informed by queer ecofeminist sensibilities ("Attention Is the Beginning of Devotion: Reading Queer Ecofeminism in Mary Oliver's Poetry").

Ourkiya delves into the interconnections between fuel extraction, environmental degradation, and the oppression of individuals based on their sexual orientation. By employing queer ecofeminism as an analytical framework, she sheds light on the role of the far right in perpetuating and facilitating oppression. Unfortunately, humanity's fixation on oil, power, and domination has had a detrimental impact on the planet's ecology, causing extensive destruction. The extraction of resources, colonization, enslavement of populations, and exploitation of indigenous lands have all contributed to devastating environmental consequences. Additionally,

control over territory encompasses structures that seek to regulate and suppress individuals, restricting their behavior, freedoms, and ultimately, their sexual preferences.

The environmental movement and ecological thinking are frequently founded on heteronormative assumptions, according to Jonathan Gray's article "Heteronormativity without Nature: Towards Queer Ecology", which restrict our capacity to completely comprehend and address ecological issues. According to Gray, the idea that there are only two binary genders—male and female—and that heterosexuality is the only natural and acceptable sexual orientation is ingrained in western society and affects how we perceive the natural world. According to Gray, this viewpoint produces a constrained and exclusive view of what is regarded as "natural" or "normal" in ecological debate. A queer ecology, according to Gray, provides a more inclusive and nuanced viewpoint on environmental issues because it recognizes and celebrates the diversity of gender identities, sexual orientations, and ecological relationships.

Gray contends that by viewing the environment through a queer ecology perspective, we can better comprehend the nuanced interactions between gender, sexuality, and the environment and create environmental practices and policies that are more welcoming to all people. Gray also asserts that by questioning conventional dichotomies like human/nature and culture/nature, queer ecology can provide fresh perspectives on how people interact with the environment (Gray). He contends that ecological thinking must transcend heteronormative presumptions and adopt a more varied and inclusive viewpoint that acknowledges the intricate relationships between gender, sexuality, and the environment.

The emergence of transphobia, a concept that has gained increasing attention in recent years, can be traced back to the 1990s in academic discussions in Western countries. Activists in English-speaking Trans communities first brought attention to the daily challenges faced by transsexual and transgender individuals, influencing the development of the term, which is similar to homophobia. Transphobia refers to the emotions and thoughts associated with fear or dislike towards transgender people rooted in sexism. It provides an opportunity for individuals to express their personal beliefs and identity declarations, particularly those related to gender or sexual identity. Transphobia, like other forms of hatred, can bolster a person's sense of self-worth by

supporting a threatened identity. Some researchers argue that transphobia contributes to minority stress within Trans communities. Transphobia is widely recognized as a form of intolerance and discrimination towards transgender individuals.

Snorton has conducted a comprehensive review of two seminal works, *Transgender History* by Susan Stryker and *Transpeople: Repudiation, Trauma, Healing* by Christopher A. Shelley. Both authors have made extensive use of films, television shows, and news articles to create a visual landscape that introduces audiences to key terms such as "transsexual," "transgender," "FTM," and "MTF." As a result, it falls to the authors to clarify and define these terms while also presenting readers with sophisticated and flexible language to discuss trans-political issues. These ambitious projects make significant contributions to the fields of history and psychology, as well as to the emerging field of transgender studies. Shelley's *Transpeople* includes well-argued sections and examples of rejection, with the author thoroughly examining conservative, liberal, feminist, and queer perspectives on Trans identities and expressions. Shelley also delves into the psychiatric gaze and how it has historically rejected Trans people, exploring various forms of rejection through a careful examination of psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis. Ultimately, Shelley suggests that depth psychology, particularly Adlerian theory, which posits that the ego seeks to integrate an unconscious fracture, may provide a space for Trans individuals to resist the gaze and voice their opinions. Gyamerah and her fellow researchers examined the prevalence of "gender-based violence" (GBV) among Trans women during their study. Hate crimes motivated by transphobia are common among the various forms of GBV experienced by transgender women. However, there is limited understanding of the factors contributing to transphobic hate crimes and how their occurrence differs across racial and ethnic lines. To address this knowledge gap, Gyamerah along with others investigated the self-reported categories and related aspects of transphobic hate crimes, categorized by the racial/ethnic makeup of Trans women in the San Francisco Bay area. This investigation aimed to provide a framework for understanding the risk of GBV and the likelihood of reporting such incidents to the police (Gyamerah et al.).

In the late 1980s, following the inclusion of transsexualism in the "DSM-III" (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual), investigations into Trans issues were still in their infancy. Nonetheless, academics have identified transgender people as being more

vulnerable to maltreatment and estrangement from the general population in recent decades. This covers incidents of physical, verbal, and sexual abuse. In her research, Kooy assessed attitudes towards Trans people and discovered potential defenses against transphobia and discriminatory behavior. A growing number of sociocultural portrayals of Trans people are being produced not only for older audiences but also for younger generations. Transgender people have been introduced into youth culture through young adult novels. Despite recent advances, the portrayal of Trans experiences in young literature remains limited. As a result, this genre has the potential to educate trans-children by mimicking their own experiences and concerns.

In an article titled “Transphobic Tropes and Young Adult Fiction: An Analysis of Brian Katcher’s *Almost Perfect*”, scholars delved into prevalent motifs, inconsistencies, and exclusions, taking into account their grasp of prevalent cultural repertoires affecting transgender portrayals. They investigated the obstacles faced by Sage, the protagonist, who lives a solitary, anxious, confused, and stigmatized trans-existence, by extracting information from texts, scrutinizing media reviews, author interviews, endorsements, publicized materials, and digital discourse. Tragically, when confronted with a terrible assault, her fragile trans-life morphs into complete pathos, resulting in her confinement in a mental health center. The world she once imagined became unattainable (Pini et al.).

Transgender people endure exclusion in Pakistani society, with Pakistani studies focusing on their vulnerability, discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization. The analysis has centered on Bhanggi, a transgender protagonist in Faiqa Mansab's novel *This House of Clay and Water* (2017). Using Judith Butler's Queer theory, this case reveals that Bhanggi has been subjected to a lifetime of gender-based victimization and stigma. The study article examines real-life transgender tales, demonstrating various forms of victimization within the fabric of Pakistani culture (Nadeem and Javed)

## **2.5 Researches on Selected Novels**

### ***2.5.1 Annabel***

Males have traditionally been considered the dominant gender, in contrast to females, who are recognized for their tenderness and submissiveness. As a result, their behavior is governed by their biological structures. The establishment of hegemonic

masculinity relies on heterosexuality (Garlick). There is a preconceived expectation that individuals will comply with specified behaviors matched with their inherent sex within a cultural structure that categorizes persons based on gender. Males are expected to embody masculine features, whereas females are expected to embrace femininity. Governance and patriarchy are established softly and become institutionalized long before awareness. The idea of hegemonic masculinity emerged in the 1980s because of the convergence of political issues faced by women and those with non-normative gender identities, greater attention to oppression, and pragmatic investigations of boys and men. Hegemonic masculinity means the structure of gender practices that represents the currently acknowledged solution to the issue of patriarchy's legitimacy, which is believed to ensure men's dominance and women's subjugation

“Hegemonic Masculinity and the Position of Men in Kathleen Winter’s *Annabel*,” examines the attitudes and choices made by men in Winter's *Annabel*, using the notion of hegemonic masculinity. This article focuses on the investigation and reconsideration of men's societal place in light of the implications of hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, this project includes tracing men's roles in the narrative through a series of arguments. The study depicts an alpha individual's behavior within the framework of hegemonic masculinity in *Annabel*. The male characters in the story occupy the place of men in the hegemonic masculine environment by demonstrating their steadfastness in decision-making and adeptness in the topics of faith, religion, and finances (Kit and Roselezam).

*Annabel*, a text of intersexual nature, exhibits a multitude of aspects. Portraying protagonists amidst their diverse existence within the Labrador landscape, they refrain from the nearing comprehension of the Labrador. Instead, it directs attention to the ongoing realizations of characters, emphasizing the perpetual discovery of additional facets in individuals or locations. Chafe in the article, “Where the Mysterious and the Undefined Breathes and Lives: Kathleen Winter’s *Annabel* as Intersex Text” describes the tale of a child, who was born in the Labradorian community of Croydon Harbour in early March 1968. Wayne learned that he is a "true hermaphrodite" from various sources over his teenage years. Wayne's mother, Jacinta, arrives at Goose Bay General Hospital with the newborn. A phalometer was used to determine the sex of the children. Wayne's real dual nature appears quickly. He defies the convention, claiming that being reared, as a boy does not preclude being raised as a girl. Wayne finds it difficult to

navigate Winter's Labrador. He was raised as a boy and he shared his quarters with Annabel, his female equivalent. His body is not dual but multifaceted. His activities reflect the emptiness of signals and destabilize individual and land narratives. Wayne, like others, is boundless and resists categorical narrative since his physique is neither masculine nor feminine, but rather something else. His intersex body defies social conventions and language demands and states natural rules. Wayne/Annabel disrupts conventional narratives, encouraging avoidance, dread, and violence. The evolving story illustrates Wayne's plurality, which is shared by all, including seemingly clichéd entities (chafe).

Using Robert McRuer's Crip theory and Erving Goffman's Stigma, "The Obscure Object: Gender Identity and the Intersex Anatomy in Kathleen Winter's *Annabel*" contends that Wayne Blake, the novel's intersex protagonist, is continually pressured to achieve able-bodied status and conform to standards of compulsory heterosexuality. Because his body does not conform to what Susan Wendell refers to as "disciplines of normality," Wayne becomes an ambivalent subject in terms of his gender identity, alienated from both his own body, which he does not understand and society, which does not recognize or accept his difference. Based on the analysis of the novel, the debate contends that understanding that nobody is perfect and that we all fall short of certain corporeal features (whether apparent or not) will aid in confronting and dispelling the stigma associated with intersexual anatomy. To create a place for the undeniable presence of intersex identity, mainstream society should focus on viewing intersexuality as a distinction rather than as a disability or abomination. Macheso considers Wayne Blake's lived experience in *Annabel*; this research established that intersex anatomy provides the foundation for the emergence of bodily ambivalence in intersex individuals. As a result, intersex anatomy should not be considered a disability or abnormality to accommodate intersex individuals in mainstream society. Rather, it must be seen merely as a type of diversity, because everyone is, in essence, unique. According to Susan Wendell, "Different is also more value-neutral than either stigmatization or "otherness," different otherness, and it, therefore, becomes possible and important to ask whether a particular kind of difference is as good as or better than normality" (Macheso).

Mckenzie examines Kathleen Winter's *Annabel* through de-colonial perspective, emphasizing survival, resistance, and regeneration within Native Canadian



contexts. This research demonstrates how indigenous resistance notions shed light on intersex and gender identities by concentrating on the intersex protagonist Wayne/Annabel. It combines the historical notion of cultural 'death' applied by the Canadian government with intersex/gendered "death" enforced by societal refusal, presenting new theoretical interpretations that question previous readings of *Annabel*. Unlike prior analyses that emphasized acceptance and eco-critical criticism, this study advocates theories that overlook death and offer novel approaches to interpreting sexual and gender identities while embracing the continuity of indigenous life. This study integrates notions from the 1960s and the 1970s Canadian Native Renaissance with an analysis of intersex and gender realities, giving a new theoretical approach to interpreting these identities via the prism of indignity.

### **2.5.2 *A Burning***

Majumdar's *A Burning* provides insight into contemporary India through its portrayal of issues confronted by its three main characters. Jivan, a poor Muslim who lives in the Kalabagan slums and drops out of school to help her family after they are evicted from their hut due to the family's poverty. Her ill father becomes helpless and unable to walk, making her dream of helping her family and saving money for herself impossible. She begins working in a shop after searching for a difficult job. She purchases a smartphone with her first paycheck, and after the government fails to apprehend the terrorists who massacred hundreds of people on a train, she starts expressing harsh remarks about it on Facebook. This leads to issues for her: She becomes the main suspect in this terrorist assault and is later taken into custody. The second character is Lovely, a transgender hijra who performs spiritual ceremonies to bless brides and newborn children but secretly longs to become a well-known actor. Jivan teaches English to help her prepare for a career in show business. PT Sir, Jivan's former instructor and fitness mentor, believes that aligning with Bimala Pal's conservative political movement will boost his society and political standing. He used his position to further his political goals. Various forms of violence and abuse committed by the upper class against the lower and poorer classes are discussed in the novel. It also examines the various castes and sects within the Indian community and the variations in their political and religious views that ultimately result in the oppression of the underclass. It also demonstrates how the national system has failed to address issues that arise between diverse faiths and classes.

“The Upper Class’s Violence and Violation in Megha Majumdar’s *A Burning*”

Examines class conflicts that are primarily caused by opposing ideologies that are supported by various elements of a society. These principles may be philosophical, political, economic, or social. By using a Marxist approach, this study examines class conflicts and looks at how these beliefs shape relationships between the various classes as well as control the behavior of the various classes. This study investigates the ideologies of fuel conflict between the ruling class, symbolized by the state system of the fictional community, and various classes due to their different goals. Instead of negotiating disputes between the various sects and classes, the political system joins them (Mohammed).

India is a diverse nation, and this can be seen in every aspect of its culture, including art, which frequently reflects the outside world. With its rapid development in industry and technology, India has become the focus of many authors' creative masterpieces. With these limitations, many authors have focused on contemporary India, particularly its urban lifestyle and its effects on the socio-political and cultural lives of individuals and groups of various nationalities. Illustrations of Indian metropolises such as Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, and many others are becoming increasingly popular in new-generation authors' writings in Indian English. The article, “*A Burning: A Novel on Indian Metropolis Assimilating Indian Dreams* by Megha Majumdar” argues that *A Burning* is a somber picture of modern India's grim situation, theme of the American dream is intertwined with *A Burning*. One may categorically include them in the literature of the Indian Dreams category, given the publishing of incisive and realistic literature portraying modern India. The narrative contains literary elements of underprivileged people raising ambitious children in a nation, on the verge of fanaticism. She has highlighted the internal challenges each person suffers in their quest for power, fame, and self-determination by depicting their intertwined lives, highlighting their distant goals (Joshi and Vyas).

In the 1990s, the multidisciplinary approach of queer theory emerged in the United States and had a considerable impact on third-wave feminism. The term "queer," coined at the turn of the 20th century, was used to refer to non-heteronormative sexuality, as well as to disparage homosexual and lesbian people. Women's studies, feminist theory, gay and lesbian studies, postmodern and post-structuralist ideas, and other influences have shaped queer theory. In 1991, Teresa de Lauretis coined the

phrase "queer theory," supporting a more fluid understanding of identity and opposing heterosexuality and binary gender categories. People who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersex, and/or transgender frequently use the term "queer" to refer to themselves. Some people find the word derogatory depending on their race, class, background, and generation. Recently, the term "queer" has been used to describe heterosexuals whose gender or sexual orientation deviates from the accepted norms. Queer theory is, therefore, a body of ideas that maintains that identities, particularly those connected to gender, sex, and/or sexuality, are neither fixed nor predictable. By politicizing and recognizing the fluidity and instability of the queer experience, queer theory undermines the presumptions and benefits of traditional heteronormative forms of study and daily life. "Gender Performativity and Identity Issue: A Queer Study of Megha Majumdar's *A Burning*" examines gender performativity and identity concerns in the novel from the viewpoint of queer theory. Gender Trouble by Butler (1990) introduced the idea that genders should be classified according to their Performativity rather than being biologically fixed. Examining *A Burning* in depth reveals individuals' ability to modify their selfhood and confront their innate gender through expressive actions. Furthermore, it is examined in the article that it is difficult for people to create social norms because of their identity (Khaki).

## 2.6 Research Gap

The novel *Annabel* by Winter has been extensively discussed in scholarly work, particularly in relation to themes such as hegemonic masculinity, the position of the alpha male, intersex identity, bodily ambivalence, and de-colonial perspectives on survival, resistance, and regeneration. Similarly, *A Burning* by Majumdar has been analyzed through various lenses, including class conflict using Marxist theory, the pursuit of the American Dream by underprivileged families, and identity issues through queer theory. However, a significant research gap remains: no studies have yet explored the identification of oppressed characters within *A Burning* and *Annabel*, their connections, and the resistance they employ against patriarchy and heteronormativity, as well as their relationship with the natural environment. This leaves an essential aspect of the text under-examined.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

The research aims to analyze Majumdar's and Winter's selected novel from Queer ecofeminist perspective to highlight the oppression faced by queer characters, women, and nature. For this purpose, the researcher has devised a theoretical framework referring to Greta Gaard's, "Toward a Queer Ecofeminism" (1997) and Christopher Shelley's *Transpeople: Repudiation, Trauma, Healing* (2008). The research focuses on exposing the oppression of women, the environment, and the queer, as well as investigating potential paths of resistance to patriarchy, heteronormativity, and capitalism.

#### 3.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of queer ecofeminism integrates queer theory, ecofeminism, and environmental justice to analyze and challenge systems of oppression rooted in heteronormative, patriarchal social structures. In her influential 1997 essay, "Toward a Queer Ecofeminism," Greta Gaard, a prominent scholar, elucidates the principles of queer ecofeminism. Gaard's exploration of the connection between queer theory and ecofeminism aims to illustrate that a society envisioned by ecofeminism, characterized as democratic and ecological, necessitates an appreciation for sexual diversity and the erotic. She argues that the oppression of women, queer individuals, and nature are intertwined, making it impossible to comprehend them in isolation. According to Gaard, achieving justice for all requires addressing both women's and nature's oppression with equal emphasis. She posits that shared authority is responsible for exploiting these oppressed groups and that simultaneous attention to these interconnected and mutually reinforcing systems of oppression is necessary to achieve genuine liberation as discussed in her essay. The utilization of political narratives is frequently observed as a means of oppressing marginalization. Greta Gaard explains how religion has been perceived as sometimes enabling gender discrimination to serve the needs of those in authority. The queer theory encompasses a broad spectrum, expanding beyond the limitations of queerness by recognizing varied sexual identities and practices. In "Towards Queer ecofeminism," Dichotomies such as "self/other" and

"culture/nature" are dissolved, redefining ecofeminism. To maintain everyone's rights, Gaard supports prioritizing fair treatment for all marginalized groups in society within queer ecofeminist studies (137).

In his book *Transpeople: Repudiation, Trauma, Healing*, Shelley explores the social and cultural factors that contribute to the oppression of transgender individuals. According to Shelley, transgender people are systematically excluded from mainstream society and subjected to discrimination, harassment, and violence (15). He notes that transgender individuals face significant institutional challenges and personal rejection when navigating mis-sexed bodies or pursuing independence beyond the sex/gender dichotomy. Transgender individuals are often categorized as "Others," placed in a group outside of their own making. Regardless of their preference, they are compelled to accept the instinctive responses of others (42).

He writes that trans people have existed in many societies throughout history and have been recognized and accommodated in a variety of ways. He explored the various ways in which transgender people have been accepted or rejected within different cultures and societies, and how these attitudes have evolved. Trans people have the right to make decisions about their bodies and identities, and to live their lives free from discrimination and violence (31). He discussed how transgender people are often denied this autonomy, both through institutional policies and societal attitudes, and how this denial of autonomy can have profound impacts on trans's mental and physical health (62). These postulates reflect the need for a greater understanding and acceptance of Trans people within society and for the recognition of how trans people are marginalized and oppressed.

The merging of Gaard's idea of queer ecofeminism with Christopher Shelley's theoretical framework offers an effective framework for addressing and assisting oppressed communities, especially transgender people who frequently experience victimization and prejudice. Shelley's theory highlights the interconnectivity of social and environmental crises with a focus on how oppressive structures interact and affect vulnerable communities. Gaard's perspective, which emphasizes the complicated connections between gender, ecology, and justice, is coupled with it to create a thorough understanding of the difficulties experienced by transgender people in ecological environments. This convergence draws attention to the increasing

discrimination that transgender people face by shedding light on their particular problems.

### **3.3 Research Methodology**

The study is descriptive/interpretative in nature, with the aim of interpreting and describing queer ecofeminism in selected novels. Gaard's works on queer ecofeminism and Shelley's work on Transphobia and Social repudiation are used both as a theoretical framework to examine *A Burning* and *Annabel*, as my research analysis will be informed by the principles laid down by these theories, whereby nature and environment are foregrounded and given equal emphasis as humans. From this perspective, the researcher can identify the suffering of the oppressed group and the authority that those in power hold. Seeking to build a connection among all subjugated factions and their subjections, the researcher endeavors to reveal the covert narratives deployed by oppressors to advance their self-serving objectives. The researcher has used qualitative methodology and the method use in the research is thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006). The thematic analysis method used by the researcher are outlined in the following steps:

#### **1) Exploring the Text**

Thorough reading of the novels with special attention on the themes related to the oppression of women, queer and nature.

#### **2) Thematic Threads**

Queer ecofeminism, heteronormativity, patriarchy, resistance, transphobia, social repudiation.

#### **3) Searching for Themes:**

Oppression of queer, women and nature, heteronormative attitude, interconnectedness of oppressed groups, Hatred, fear and rejection of queer, Resistance of oppressed human characters.

#### **4) Reviewing Themes**

Queer ecofeminism (how the oppression of queer, women, and nature are interrelated)

Resistance (ways of resisting against heteronormativity and patriarchy)

### 5) Defining and Naming Themes

Oppression of Women: It involves the oppression of women based on gender, class, and religion.

Oppression of Queer: It involves the indifferent attitudes of society towards transgender and intersex individuals.

Nature Degradation: This is related to the theme of environmental destruction and its effects on women and queer.

Resistance: It includes the ways oppressed groups resist against the forces like heteronormativity and patriarchy.

### 6) Crafting the Narrative:

In the final step, researcher has combined all the themes into a coherent story that describes and clarifies the examination of queer ecofeminism and transphobia in the novels *A Burning* and *Annabel*.

These steps by Braun and Clarke (2006) had offer a flexible framework for conducting thematic analysis, allowing a rigorous and systematic approach to analyze qualitative data.

## 3.4 Definition of the key terms/ Concepts of the study

**1) Intersectionality:** This concept emphasizes the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and speciesism, which can lead to overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and disadvantage.

**2) Heteronormativity:** Gaard analyzes the assumption that heterosexuality is the only normal or natural expression of sexuality, arguing that this norm marginalizes other sexual orientations and identities. This concept is crucial in understanding how queer identities are oppressed alongside environmental degradation.

**3) Patriarchy:** In Queer Ecofeminism, patriarchy is understood as a system of male dominance that is linked to the exploitation of both women and nature. Gaard explores how patriarchal structures perpetuate environmental destruction and the oppression of marginalized genders and sexualities.

**4) Ecofeminism:** Ecofeminism itself is a key concept, combining ecological awareness with feminist concerns. It examines how environmental issues are connected to social

issues, particularly the oppression of women, and in the case of queer ecofeminism, the oppression of queer individuals.

**5) Queer Theory:** Queer theory challenges the binaries of gender and sexuality, such as male/female and heterosexual/homosexual. Gaard incorporates this into ecofeminism to explore how environmental degradation and the oppression of queer identities are interconnected.

**6) Resistance:** Queer Ecofeminism emphasizes the importance of resistance against the interconnected systems of oppression. Gaard highlights the need for activism that addresses both environmental and social justice issues, advocating for a world that values diversity in both human and non-human communities.

**7) Ecological Justice:** Gaard advocates for ecological justice, which involves addressing the root causes of environmental destruction and social inequities, recognizing that the health of the environment is deeply intertwined with the well-being of all living beings, including queer communities.

**8) Transphobia:** An irrational fear, aversion, or discrimination against transgender people, which can manifest in social, legal, and personal contexts. Shelley explores how transphobia is rooted in the enforcement of rigid gender norms.

**9) Social Repudiation:** The systematic rejection and marginalization of transgender individuals by society. This repudiation often involves exclusion from social, legal, and economic opportunities, and is a form of symbolic violence that denies the validity of transgender identities.



## CHAPTER 4

### GENDER, ECOLOGY, AND OPPRESSION: QUEER ECOFEMINIST RESISTANCE

#### 4.1 Introduction

By applying thematic analysis to the selected texts, different forms of oppression are examined through the lenses of Gaard and Shelley's perspectives. When oppressors are identified through the analysis of these texts, it reveals how they use their authority, which is based on composed stories to degrade the oppressed. Theoretical perspective adds a new depth to the interpretation of *A Burning* and *Annabel* by informing readers about the political, social, and cultural situation in their respective societies as represented in the selected novels.

#### 4.2 Synopsis of the Novel *A Burning*

*A Burning*, Majumdar's debut novel, has received praise for its narrative style and depiction of the current issues prevailing in India. The novel takes place in twenty-first-century India in which the legal system is dysfunctional, the media is cruel, and government authority is mismanaged. Each character feels disillusioned before achieving their ultimate goal. Various government institutions regulate and run their lives, and the characters of the story trying to raise their circumstances in contemporary India face many challenges. However, after a fatal terrorist assault rattles the city, their competing ambitions to climb the social ladder set them at odds. Three people logically relate their lives to a story that is ultimately destined. The protagonist of this story is Jivan, a young woman who lives in the slums of Kolkata. Her life changes when she sees a terrorist strike close by that is too traumatic. Over a hundred people are killed in a fire that starts when a train at a nearby station is stopped and set on fire. Officials take notice of Jivan's unintentionally politically heated Facebook question and at midnight, she is arrested by police because she was near the station with a package, her clothes were soaked in paraffin at home, and she had communicated with a terrorist trainer on Facebook, and that she is a poor Muslim woman. She has been charged, she is in jail and will have a trial in a year. Two possible witnesses who are essential to Jivan's defense are also the focus of the novel. Lovely, a slum resident who wants to be an actor. She is a hijra who lives in a communal environment and survives on alms and

occasional blessings. At eighteen, Lovely went by that name. She describes herself as a "he-she" or a "half-half." Her vibrant, dramatic voice is the most prominent feature of the text. Jivan, who was formerly a charity student at S. D. Gosh Girls' School, is connected to her old teacher, PT Sir, making up the triad of main characters. After being dejected by school life and the jokes of richer females, PT Sir rises through the ranks of a local right-wing political group and develops a unique personality.

He took a keen interest in her, gave her food to eat during his service at school, and hoped she would think of him as a mentor after being impressed by Jivan's physical skills. However, she had dropped out of school and failed to acknowledge this relationship. Excel of PT sir's political career helped in the downfall of Jivan. He believes that his affiliation with Bimala Pal's right-wing political party will help him advance in both his social and political standing. He uses his status to further his political ambition. Lovely and PT Sir sacrificed Jivan after fulfilling their aspirations, and despite their common social class understanding, they fail to give the court accurate information about Jivan's life. They do things this way to preserve their interests. The government's machinery in the novel fails to effectively look into or apprehend the actual terrorists who set the train on fire and instead places the blame on Jivan, a Muslim girl because it is more convenient to do so. Jivan has no choice but to accept her fate; she is labeled a young criminal and has no support, and no investigation into the validity of the attack, so she must face her situation on her own. The two other main characters, Lovely and PT Sir, have realized their dreams of enjoying better lives after putting aside their morals and social obligations to defend a girl who was later sentenced to death for a crime she did not commit. In contrast, Lovely's appeal for mercy is denied, and she faces the death penalty.

All the characters in the novel gradually change into what society decides to be actors or puppets in a wider game of politics and desire. Even as PT Sir rises to a position of tremendous significance, his office becomes a cramped space without windows, similar to Jivan's dark prison cell. Despite being fantastic, Lovely's success has a questionable ethical cost. From the beginning of the book until the very conclusion, there is pervasive gloom; all that is left is a smoldering flame and a sour taste of injustice.

### 4.3 Transgender Oppression: Lovely's Challenging Journey

The transgender population is stigmatized and considered Hijras in India and Pakistan. They suffer from daily poverty and isolation. One of the most oppressed and powerless groups in these societies is the transgender community, which is treated inhumanely and forced to live a solitary existence. Transgender, as a social and biological minority or as a concept, denotes the identity crises and diversity of practices embodied between or beyond the male and female categories. Transgender's gender identification or expression differs from their assigned gender at birth. This consequent tension of identity crisis harms their growth and development by trapping themselves and society as the most oppressed class, denying the majority of human rights enjoyed by other individuals. Many transgender people encounter prejudice in the workplace as well as in public places and healthcare. They are not legally protected against discrimination anywhere in the world, including in India. They are people whose identities do not correspond to their biological sex, and hence they depart from the stereotype of how men and women should be. Their identities and behaviors do not conform to preconceived gender norms. They are marginalized sectors of Indian society and face legal, social, and economic challenges. They have limited access to education, healthcare, and public health services. The novel is about a variety of characters and their plight as they meet the outside world. They attempt to rise and live repeatedly from the ashes of discrimination throughout the narrative. Transgender persons continue to face discrimination despite recent legal developments, for instance in work, healthcare, and education. Similarly, Lovely, one of the two protagonists born as a boy has experienced many forms of gender discrimination in Indian society explained throughout the novel.

#### 4.3.1 *Familial Rejection*

According to Ourkiya, it was assumed that patriarchy only targets women but this system is designed in such a way that it targets and oppresses everyone that does not corresponds to the ideal image of heteronormativity. Humans perceive the world through a binary opposition. Day /night, right/wrong, black/white, man/woman etc.

People who do not fall into one of these groups are discriminated against on many levels in society and are oppressed, shunned, and excluded. Transgender person expands their horizons to meet the traditional expectations of gender norms by

separating themselves from these restrictions and mandatory conformance. The hermaphrodite, Trans sex, the other, and the third sex are considered aberrations in societies where gender is understood or seen as binary. The birth of a hermaphrodite child is an unbearable burden and a reality that is difficult to comprehend in a culture where even the birth of a female is inappropriate and regarded as disgusting. A hermaphrodite infant has the stress of being a transgender person who is horrible, and the truth is difficult to comprehend. LGBT offspring are frequently the result of heterosexual originator relationships. The parental figures may have secret biases, either implicit or explicit, against same-sex attractions, expecting that their children will embrace a heterosexual orientation. The discovery of a child's membership in a sexual minority may astonish parents, perhaps leading to adverse feelings. In the novel, when a character Lovely, was born, she faced a similar situation. Until the age of eleven, she lived under parental supervision, adopting a male attitude in public, dressed, and hairstyled like a boy, and participating in the sport of cricket. However, inside the home, because of her instinct, she loved wearing makeup and her mother's dresses. It was her uncle who, under the pressure of society and for his so-called dignity, persuaded Lovely's father to send her out of the house because it was not ethical to keep her inside the house, as it is not good for normal kids in the house to be with a trans kid. According to Lovely's uncle, his children are normal and everyone should think about them. No one in the family dared to speak in front of him as if he was speaking correctly. Lovely's mother, like any other mother, protested to keep her daughter at home. She pleaded with them to leave Lovely alone but no one listened to her. She was implying that Lovely might be attending a special school, and she would visit the doctor about Lovely. Her mother's struggle continues in the face of societal norms, but the span of her resistance is uncertain.

As a result, Lovely left. After leaving her home, she entered the Hijra house where at the age of eighteen for the first time embraced her identity by naming herself Lovely and wrapping a red sari around her hip. It was the start of her life when she was going to endure the most difficult situations. By the first night in Hijra's house, she spent her entire night dancing with other Trans sisters as a transgender individual. She is the one who suffered an identity crisis; her body is masculine, while her bosom is made of fabricated cloth.

### ***4.3.2 Trans-phobia and Social Repudiation***

At a societal level, there is a lack of regard for all people. This lack of respect stems from viewing everyone through the lenses of religion, caste, social standing, and most importantly, gender. According to Shelley, transgender people are systematically excluded from mainstream society and subjected to discrimination, harassment, and violence. He notes that transgender individuals face significant institutional challenges and personal rejection when navigating mis-sexed bodies or pursuing independence beyond the sex/gender dichotomy (15).

Mostly first interaction with a transgender person is as asking for money in the streets with the intrusiveness of a beggar and dancing in 'dreadful' night activities. Any person in a reputable, commendable profession can be either male or female, but never transgender. The same happened to Lovely; because of her gender, she cannot find work anywhere except for begging and blessing babies. As Shelley proposed, transgender should live their lives free from discrimination and violence. However, society does not let them exercise their freedom properly even after so many movements and bills have been passed in their favor (71). Similarly, this is not all for her; in the workplace, she faces extreme hatred from society. People call her with different vulgar names and consider it beneath their dignity to talk properly and respectfully with her. One instance of such aversion toward transgender is evident in the way Lovely was treated by common people in the streets. Once, when she left for her acting class and asked a guava seller to tell her the time, he did not respond to her at first because she was transgender. This was not the only time that it occurred. Nobody welcomed her when she went to the rail compartment to sell something. Even at her workplace, she faced the same issue when she was asked to perform with Brejish: he was not comfortable with her and could not perform well, although Lovely was acting as a female. After some time, being frustrated, Brejish told the acting coach that he could not express his emotions completely only because a transgender was performing with her. All the audience members were silent while Lovely was shocked and embarrassed after what happened because she was used to such behavior of people on the roads, but it is her workplace where everyone has to behave professionally. She always threw this embarrassment away because she considered it as garbage. This was not the end for her; after one year, Lovely's acting Coach Mr. Debnath called her for an interview as she was trying to get a role in the film. When she arrived at his house, Mr. Debnath

conducted her interview on the street by forwarding the excuse that his house was being painted. He did so because it was against his dignity to accept that transgender at his house. Lovely understood the situation and left after the interview.

Transgender individuals are often categorized as "Others," placed in a group outside of their own making as stated by Shelley (42). In the novel, the writer has also metaphorically represented the character of the "other." In her room when she was talking to Azad, her love partner after being scolded by Azad's brother to set him free to get married to a "proper woman" he became angry and killed a spider who was trying to climb the wall for quite some time. This scene discomforted Lovely and she shouted at Azad by saying, "Why always ruin other creatures' lives?" (Majumdar 19) Lovely is the "other" whose life has been ruined by the heteronormative society.

For South Asians, a hijra's blessing of a baby is seen as a means of bringing in growth, wealth, and lifelong health. Similarly, in the novel, the people of India believed that these Hijras had a special connection with God and that their blessings were directly from Him. One morning someone called Lovely and her sisters to her house to bless their newborn. Lovely, the future heroine has to make money by going to people's houses and blessing them. When they got there, they started calling out so that their voices could be heard throughout the home. Lovely moved back and turned to face a window when no one arrived. There was a curtain covering the window of the large house. Lovely invited the elderly women to see the baby by calling them. When the door in front of them finally opened, the mother emerged holding the child while wearing a nightgown that only reached her legs, her oily hair adhering to her scalp, and battle-weary eyes. Lovely and sisters along with the guru grabbed the infant in their arms and blessed the child with kind words of worth "three thousand rupees." In the meanwhile, Lovely witnessed the insult that was not new, she saw the baby's mother washing her hands off them. Like always, Lovely ignored this and rushed to the sweet shop but as usual, because of her gender shopkeeper felt annoyed to serve her. Lovely summarized her life experiences as a blend of emotion and insult. Regardless of their preference, their liking, and disliking, they are compelled to accept the instinctive responses of others as quoted by Shelley.

### ***4.3.3 Discrimination in Healthcare System***

According to Shelley, Trans people have the right to make decisions about their bodies and identities, and to live their lives free from discrimination and violence (31). Once Ragini, a hijra sister of lovely aspires to change her gender, defying nature and embracing a changing civilization (nature/culture dichotomy) had to undergo surgery by a dentist. She traveled to a dentist's office with Arjuni Ma for her procedure. She invited Lovely to join her. Despite a sign outside the dentist's office reading "Closed" (97), a guy answered the door when Arjuni Ma knocked. When Ragini removed her pants and the procedure started, Lovely requested the doctor to use anesthesia. The dentist muttered something about not having anesthesia that day. She was not sure why, but she had a gut instinct that the man was lying. Even though he had anesthetics on hand, something in her told her that he was hesitant to use them. However, Ragini was in excruciating pain without anesthesia. Lovely asked the doctor about giving a little bit of anesthetic or numbing medicine to her. He became upset at that point and emphasized that he was operating, not Lovely. The sight of the blade was too much for her, so she kept her eyes closed. When she first opened her eyes, Ragini's legs were covered in so much bright crimson blood that Lovely initially mistook her for a whole woman whose menstruation had started. Ragini was still alive but looked like a ghost. She was not yelling or sobbing. She appeared to have a loose skull on her neck because of the way her head was lurching to the right and left, and she was shivering as if she had a fever of 104 degrees. Her hands were like ice blocks in Lovely's hands. Then, one morning, she did not wake up. They were dousing her face in water. Lovely bit her toes. However, Ragini was far away from them, as Lovely as well as Arjuni Ma noticed. Her lips were chapped, her skin was bloodless, and her eyes were closed. Ragini had departed. The cause of her death remained unknown. Fear overtook everyone, including Arjuni Ma, preventing them from seeking legitimate medical practitioners. Lovely, on the other hand, was convinced that the dentist was to blame. Perhaps his blade was rusted, or perhaps cleanliness was neglected. Pain could have accumulated within Ragini's body without anesthesia until she gave up. Therefore, she died. Although Ragini was very much right in opting for the decision of her life as stated by Shelley that Trans people have the right to make decisions about their bodies and identities because of the indifferent attitude of society, Lovely decided not to go for the operation and throughout her life remained "half-half" (Majumdar 99).

#### ***4.3.4 Workplace Discrimination***

Lovely is an aspiring actor whose acting is loved and acknowledged by all. She played a small role in an acting class and someone shared it in a Whatsapp group that ultimately reached a film director Mr. Jhunjhunwala. He called Lovely for an interview and told her about the role she was offered in the film. Lovely was expecting a main lead role because of the hype her video had created but contrary to her expectations, she had been given the role of a “Hijra” who is chased by the hero with a broom. All her excitement vanished because they referred to her as a “bad luck” hijra in the film. He left the place agitated without expressing it and mumbled, “Are all these men playing a joke on me” (Majumdar 136). The way real men were enjoying their positions in their lives; it was hard for Lovely to enjoy that status as Trans individual.

#### ***4.3.5 Neglecting the Oppressed Voice: Devaluing Expressions***

Shelley discussed that transgender people are often denied autonomy; both through institutional policies and societal attitudes, and this denial of autonomy can have profound impacts on people’s mental and physical health. In simpler terms, they are not allowed to make their own choices or express themselves because of the rules set by institutions and the way society treats them seriously affect them (62).

Lovely took English classes from Jivan, another oppressed character in the novel, who is facing a death trial seeking a witness in her case. Lovely went to the courtroom and told the honorable judges that because of her passion i.e. acting, she had to learn English from Jivan. When she says before the court that she is an actor, the courtroom laughs. Anyways she was very proudly telling people that she went to the courtroom to give evidence in Jivan’s favor. Nevertheless, in the end, she came to know that the court did not accept her witness because she is a “hijra.” Therefore, various social, political, economic, and cultural prejudices and biases affect intersex communities. The intersex people of ancient India led honorable and joyful lives. In the current state of cultural, social, political, and economic instability in India, minorities like transgender people and others suffer. The transgender community does not have adequate representation in the social and political spheres. However, there are certain exceptions, such as *A Burning*, which offers this marginal population an important role and representation in the story. Majumdar draws attention to the social, economic, and interpersonal limitations and challenges that the intersex community encounters.



## 4.4 Unveiling Injustice: Women's Experiences of Oppression

Marginalization is the practice of isolating a specific group of people by denying them their own identity. They feel insignificant and are pushed to a secondary role. Race, gender, ability, financial position, sexual orientation, age, and religion all have a role in determining marginalization. In Christian mythology, Eve is blamed for the fall of man. Even in the postmodern era, Eve, the mother of humankind, has not been secured from men's patriarchal attitudes. It shows that hardly any one part of the entire planet is sympathetic to women. Females all over the world are filled with feelings and emotions of deprivation and subjugation. They may have language, regional, or ethnic variances, yet they face the same difficulties all over the world. Their difficulties change significantly at times, but the conclusion of many females' problems is the same, such as torture, female enslavement, hysteria, forced marriages, and inferiority complex. Feminism holds that women are marginalized because of patriarchal hegemony. Similarly, Social injustice is known as oppression. It is passed down through social structures, practices, and conventions from one social group to another group.

### 4.4.1 Intersectional Oppression

There are several types of oppression like social, political, economic, and gender marginalization. In the novel, the writer has beautifully portrayed the lives of an oppressed group of society i.e. women especially the protagonist Jivan. She faced oppression because of her gender, Muslim identity, and lower social status. She is suspected of assisting terrorists in carrying out their subway train attack as she lives near the train station. Jivan's childhood was filled with grief and sorrow. She and the rest of her family were forcibly removed from the community near the Kurla mines in a village. Jivan had a difficult existence and was unable to obtain immediate assistance from the government. To cope with state machinery she along with her mother resisted through urine bombs that they had made by storing their feces and urine for days and then they threw them on the cops but the police considered them real bombs. The next day they came fully prepared to deal with these "terrorists" laughing at the weaponry of Jivan and her family. They were angry with them, and one of the police officers even tried to hit Jivan's mother to prove his domination over a woman. A law enforcement officer raised a pointed object towards her parent in an act of hostility. She begged and pleaded with the police in tears, her vocal tones gradually fading. Her gown sprawled into the dirt beneath, mingling with mud and dung. Her loosened top fell down her

shoulders, and her face was reddened with rage. She pleaded with the police officer to spare her and her house, as they did not have a place to go. He did not spare her and dragged her through the leg by saying that he got the orders from higher authorities.

#### ***4.4.2 Digital Oppression: Lack of Freedom of Speech***

The society that she lives in does not believe in individual freedom and cannot offer her any space to express it, even though social media, which is the hallmark of expressive freedom in the modern period. It offers an opportunity for the marginalized class to share their problems and dreams. However, patriarchy to promote their views, either political or religious, frequently use social media and mainstream media. Although it provides the public with a platform to freely voice their opinions, occasionally it causes hurt and destruction to many people, especially women. Jivan succumbs to media manipulation, posting a Facebook post criticizing police apathy as an innocent woman suffers. Seeing other peoples' viral posts on Facebook, "If the police didn't help ordinary people like you and me, if the police watched them die, doesn't that mean, I wrote on Facebook, that the government is also a terrorist?" (Majumdar 10). She asks a powerful question that if police neglect us, allowing death, it means that the government is also a "terrorist." She falls asleep, forgetful. Nights later, at 3 a.m., she is caught presuming a man's misbehavior. Nonetheless, Jivan is charged with "sedition," a crime against the state.

Oppression of women by male dominance is a common and complex phenomenon in both the East and the West. It persists in explicit and implicit forms around the globe, but the situation is quite challenging in South Asia, which is tied to tradition and radicalism. These women live in a culture where males rule and have little power but must do what men tell them to, which is unfortunate for them. During Jivan's initial appearance before the judge, she protested her innocence demonstration in a legal setting. Instead, authorities cited her Facebook posts in which she called her government as a terrorist, thinking it a proof of state disloyalty. She posed a question to the court it is a crime to share thoughts on Facebook. However, her lawyer Gobind points to a document that she has signed being in police lockup. He told her that she had confessed to her crime. In reality, the police forced her to sign the documents. This demonstrates that Jivan has no right to speak and has no choice but to succumb to the male-dominated institutes. Therefore, gender roles are developed under patriarchy to preserve gender imbalance across men and women, and gender-related norms gradually

extend to sustain male rule. Men acquire the masculine quality of power. Women, on the other hand, are given the femininity of being tender, and women do not have enough power in conventional gender roles, and they must rely on males everywhere. Jivan is caught up in a complicated legal matter because of her gender; she is already at a disadvantage because she does not have the social or economic standing that would normally protect her from legal proceedings. Her gender makes her more vulnerable to criticism and retaliation. Her decision to share her political views on social media and her desire for a better life is perceived as a threat to traditional values. Gender norms have an impact on Jivan's conduct as seen by the public and media. The narrative surrounding her trial is shaped by the perception that her aggressiveness and desire to confront the status quo are inappropriate for a young woman. Biases that stem from gender also exist in the judicial system. Deeply rooted prejudices against women influence Jivan's treatment by the police, the prosecution, and the court. She faces unfair treatment as a result, which makes it harder for her to show her innocence.

#### ***4.4.3 Religious Persecution***

Simone de Beauvoir, the feminist, hit the nail on the head by saying that women are not born but gradually formed (Butler). The development of a conventional image of women by society is not innate or natural. It is, nevertheless, primarily an acquired structure, and so-called femininity, whether physical, psychological, political, or economic, remains an opinion that sees women as something intermediate between males and eunuchs. Gaard's essay explains the religious favor of gender bias for the benefit of those in authority. Religion is a subcategory of culture that serves as a spiritual support system for men and women but it is also used as a tool to subjugate women or women can be oppressed through religious hegemony (137). Hinduism is the most dominant religion in India and the cow is considered the most sacred being. Cow slaughter and beef consumption are highly charged, emotional, and politicized issues in India. The accepted holiness of the cow in dominant-caste Hindu India is at the center of discussions regarding cow slaughter and beef consumption in India. In the village of Kokilhat, at the opening ceremony of the community school, PT Sir went to a political gathering. Someone in the audience expressed fear throughout the event on the possibility of Muslim teachers teaching their religion at the school and they will not send their children if that is the case. By expressing his admiration for Hinduism and insisting that there should be no distinction made between Muslims and Hindus in

educational institutions, PT Sir tried to defuse the situation. Nevertheless, when controversy broke out from the gathering during PT sir's statement, things took a sharp turn. Somberness descended across the group as someone yelled that a sacred cow had been killed in their town. The mob became agitated and began to demand information about who was responsible for the act. Inflamed and armed, they raced towards the Muslim village, accusing a particular family of the horrible act. Frantic, the mob made its way to the Muslim family who were being charged, yelling that their holy cow had been killed and eaten. The throng protested that the cow, a representation of their ancestry, had toiled their fields for decades, giving them food, and transporting their goddess to heaven. The issue worsened as the Muslim family was held responsible for the senseless killing. The accused family's three girls cowered in fright behind a door, feeling threatened by the throng. Even the idea of chopping the girls like a butchered animal was floated by one protester. Amidst the chaos, a horrific thing happened: a guy sexually assaulted an elderly Muslim woman. "He watches his wife's legs opened by the true men of this country, and he appears to die before we can kill him" (Majumdar 179). The old person was forced to watch his wife suffer at the hands of the "true men" of the nation as he witnessed the violence. In the end, the Muslim family's home proved to be untrue to the mob. The refrigerator had chicken it was the only finding. Sadly, a fabrication caused the elderly Muslim man's wife to go through a great deal of sorrow.

#### ***4.4.4 Gender Based Discrimination***

In most conventional societies, women mostly rely on their fathers, husbands, and sons because of the establishment of a traditional hierarchical societal system, which has deprived them of their voice and sense of self. Exercising authority and the oppression of women are traits of the patriarchal lifestyle. Women, being treated as second-class individuals adopt this perspective to some degree. Under a strong and developed patriarchal system, women do not have the right to claim equality in all spheres of life. Women are treated as second-class citizens who, in some ways, internalize this attitude. Under a powerful and developed patriarchal system, women have no right to demand equality in all sectors of life. They are forced to experience interpersonal violence, and social prejudice, and to become victims of a male-dominated culture. One can find traces of male hierarchy in this novel too.

"Her husband threw acid on her but, somehow, she is the one in jail. These things happen when you are a woman" (Majumdar 31). Along with Jivan, other women

even though innocent, were imprisoned because it was “their husbands,” who committed the crime against them but somehow they were in jail. Within the jail, Jivan noticed Kalkidi, a woman whose face was marked by a severe burn that exposed the spaces between her teeth. She told Jivan when questioned, that her husband with acid had attacked her and that she was now in prison because she was a woman. She had lost one eye in the aftermath of the assault. She told Jivan, with a cracked smile that these kinds of things happen to women and are an unfortunate reality of life. In a patriarchal society, it is not an easy task for a woman to do a job or business as it hurts the male ego. When Jivan’s family was thrown out of their house, they started living in a slum. Her father was ill and it was the responsibility of Jivan and her mother to run the house. Jivan’s mother started buying and selling vegetables. One night her mother came to the house shouting. She was in a shocking situation with extreme pain in her voice when she told her about a few men who “scratched her here and there,” robbed her, and threatened her to go back to her native land. She took her head in her hands and began to cry as if she were at a funeral because she was unable to narrate to Jivan what she had gone through. Jivan was furious, she saw her mother and helplessly thought like every other oppressed woman, and she felt her humiliation. However, for men in the aftermath of their heinous acts of savagery against women, shame appears to be a minor and inconsequential word.

#### ***4.4.5 Sexual Harassment***

Women are prone to sexual harassment whether it is a family place; workplace, or educational institute, men do not miss an opportunity to harass women. It happened that when Jivan was shifted from jail to a small prison cell, she was taken in a male prison van. While she was trying to climb into a police van, a handcuffed man tried to touch her breasts. Upon shouting and protesting, the driver asked her to keep quiet instead of schooling the other male prisoner. This shows the hypocrisy of the society that is run by men.

#### ***4.4.6 Social Injustice***

In Majumdar's story, Jivan is a compelling example of social injustice. She is used as a scapegoat and then she suffered the consequences of societal prejudice. The authorities take advantage of the perception that there will be minimal attention to her situation in the end. This apathy is strengthened by Jivan's deeply rooted caste system.

This young Muslim woman has seen injustice and oppression throughout her life. Even with Jivan's kind disposition, modesty, and hard work ethic, she still has to face enormous obstacles. Her dedication to helping her elderly father while maintaining a trouble-free life, combined with her charitable offer to teach English to the less fortunate, transgender Lovely, portrays her character. Jivan's unexpected arrest and conviction add even more layers of irony. Her status as a poor Muslim girl causes restrictions on her educational and career options. Even though Jivan is a kind person at heart, she nevertheless faces discrimination because of her religion. In the view of the outside world, Jivan is reduced to little more than her faith in the ongoing battle between Muslims and Hindus in India. As her trial gets national attention, Jivan's situation is made worse by the fact that her circle of friends, who could attest to her character, is limited while she is imprisoned. Her use of Facebook, one of the few platforms for social connection, highlights the loneliness she experiences, even though it ultimately leads her life to fall apart.

#### **4.5 Nature's Degradation**

Gaard underlines the significance of offering equal attention and showing the interconnectivity of all oppressed groups. According to her, the essential structure of ecofeminism rests around the idea that a single authority that also oppresses nature holds oppression associated with race, class, gender, and sexuality (137).

When environmental deterioration occurs, women face the brunt of the consequences; when economic development occurs, they are at the bottom of the list for receiving the benefits. The impact on women emerges as increased workloads, which are worsened by decreased land production. Women work even harder as agricultural laborers and main caregivers in drought-stricken areas, attempting to obtain resources and income for their families. The pressure on girls increases since they are sometimes forced to forego their schooling to assist their moms in shouldering additional duties. Nature's deterioration operates as a "threat multiplier," increasing social, political, and economic pressure in a conflict-prone area. The subjugation of nature exposes women to numerous types of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual assault, human trafficking, child marriage, and other atrocities. Gender inequalities in understanding, mobility, decision-making, and resource availability contribute to women's lower survival and increased risk of injury during disasters. The aftermath makes it harder for women and girls to get help and assistance, which puts

their recovery, livelihoods, and general well-being at risk. This creates an endless cycle that makes them more vulnerable to catastrophes in the years to come.

The goal of queer ecofeminism is to challenge the binary paradigm by promoting respect for people of all gender identities, including men, women, and those who identify as "third" genders. This involves questioning the idea of otherness. Examining the relationships between oppressed groups and those in power—usually male authorities—who shape social and legal structures to further their agendas is the main goal of studying queer ecofeminism. Thus, explaining the links between various oppressed groups and comprehending how they are marginalized constitute a central emphasis of queer ecofeminist research. Majumdar's story addresses marginalized persons at different junctures. It centers on three separate but related people who are working to improve their conditions inside a large and complex social structure. The author explores people's fruitless battle against powerful, uncontrolled institutions and questions the influence of society on them. Jivan, who fights for her life but is ultimately assaulted by the legal system, public opinion, Islamophobia, and society's psychological need to assign blame for the tragedy, is of course the first example of this. The second illustration is Lovely, who appears to be the sole figure on the verge of overcoming her social exclusion. Lovely remained resilient despite years of pain, rejection, and prejudice even though she is on the path to fame, she keeps thinking about those who did not have equally good luck in their quest for independence, such as Jivan and Azad. The third example is PT Sir. He succeeded but at the expense of his morality, which led to regret and internal conflict. The story of PT Sir demonstrates how achieving the highest social position frequently necessitates sacrificing one's morality and integrity. Although *A Burning* is set in India, the concept is universal; people constantly battle society, regardless of where they live.

Gaard is against needless industry and development as they worsen the condition of the environment (137). India has many natural resources, and mining has helped to stabilize its economy. However, there are negative environmental repercussions as well, such as pollution, soil erosion, and de-forestation, conflict between humans and wildlife, and loss of biodiversity. Large areas of land must frequently be used for mine development, which typically results in the disturbance of once-unspoiled natural environments. Because of mine building, large areas of habitat—typically forests—are lost (Widana). The high number of people who are

moving to, residing in, and working near the mine further compounds the detrimental effects. The corporation wanted to mine the coal-rich terrain near the Kurla mines, so Jivan and her family were forced to leave their neighborhood. She had a challenging life and was unable to get immediate assistance from the government. To evict them from their houses government-run institutes used weapons against their justified protest. Their houses were raised to the ground. Walls and roofs of their shelters were coming down on their heads, the rising dust causing them to cough. The government promised the people to provide them with houses in the city and for the time being, they resettled in a town a few kilometers away from their village.

#### **4.6 Interconnection of Oppressed Characters**

According to Gaard, oppression of all the oppressed groups are interconnected. Oppression of nature in turns affects women and especially queer. After when Jivan left her home because of the capitalists project of mining the agricultural land, It was Jivan's first ever experience of living in an apartment so she was very happy and felt proud of her new house but her happiness did not last long as the area lacked necessities of life because of the poverty. Jivan's father was unable to work because of his backache issues, so she took her to the hospital where like any other government hospital his father was not properly treated and taken care of. When she questioned the doctor, he got angry and said that for some people an ant's bite is also severe pain. They started living in an area where there was no clean water available. Jivan and her mother had to go to the tube well five times in a row to fetch water. Instead, they decided to complain about the rusty water coming from the faucets by visiting the water supply department. However, the officer rudely asked them to revisit after two to three days. Jivan and her mother meekly protested by saying that they have frequently visited the place, but still, they are unable to get a clean water supply. Jivan pleaded with him, explaining her father's condition, and describing how she and her mother suffered while carrying water from the tube well to their home. They being women were suffering because of the nature degradation directly or indirectly related to the lives of all oppressed groups.

In novel, nature's degradation is portrayed not only as a backdrop to the unfolding human drama but also as a metaphor for the societal decay and the harsh realities of life in contemporary India. The novel is set in a world where the environment, much like the lives of the characters, is under constant pressure, deteriorating under the weight of corruption, poverty, and social injustice. One of the



primary ways nature's degradation is depicted in is through the descriptions of the urban landscape. The novel is set in the slums and overcrowded areas of Kolkata, where the environment is marked by pollution, overcrowding, and neglect. The protagonist, Jivan, lives in a low-income neighborhood where the air is thick with smog, and the rivers are polluted with industrial waste. This degradation of the natural environment mirrors the degradation of the moral and social fabric of society. The characters are trapped in this environment, just as they are trapped in their social circumstances. For example, when Jivan is falsely accused of being involved in a terrorist attack, the urban environment around her reflects the chaos and decay of the legal and political systems. The polluted, overcrowded city serves as a metaphor for the corruption and injustice that permeates the lives of the characters. The lack of clean air and water is paralleled by the lack of justice and fairness in society.

Another significant element of nature's degradation in the novel is the symbolism of fire. The novel begins with a train fire that becomes a central plot point, and fire is repeatedly referenced throughout the narrative. Fire, in this context, symbolizes destruction—not just of the physical environment, but also of lives, communities, and hopes. The fire that consumes the train is a representation of the fiery rhetoric of nationalism and extremism that consumes the country, leading to further social and environmental degradation. The fire also represents the uncontrollable forces at play in the characters' lives. Just as the fire spreads uncontrollably, so too do the forces of prejudice, hatred, and corruption. The destruction caused by the fire is irreversible, much like the destruction of the environment and the characters' lives. The smoke that lingers in the air after the fire is a constant reminder of the damage done, much like the lingering effects of environmental degradation in the polluted city.

Jivan along with her family shifted to a slum, a government-promised area from where her downfall began. Upon reaching there, she was disappointed but to run her house she started a job. In her free time, she used to teach Lovely English, which would help her in her acting career. Jivan at her workplace developed a bad habit of smoking. One day she was smoking a cigarette on a Kolabagan railway station to avoid being seen by her mother. Suddenly she heard two splashes of thunder and after that, she could see nothing but fire moving from one compartment to another and the people helplessly striking the iron bars of trains to get out of the train. She immediately ran from that site and upon reaching home, posted videos and questions on social media

that brought her misfortune. This incident is very similar to the Godhra train incident that occurred in 2002 in India and the killing of a political leader in 2012. The Godhra Railway Station was approached by the Sabarmati Express transporting approximately 1,700 pilgrims who were returning from an organized meeting as part of its plan to construct a Ram temple on the disputed site of the Babri Masjid. According to India Today, a minor brawl erupted at the Godhra station between pilgrimages and tea vendors, most of whom were Muslims. In November 2012, the founder and leader of a provincial rightwing party died, and Bombay shut down for the entire day to commemorate his passing. Shops, marketplaces, and highways were directed to close without warning, and residents mostly remained indoors out of fear and acceptance. In reaction, a young woman posted a Facebook comment condemning the shutdown, and another individual liked it. Both were imprisoned. According to a report, many of those imprisoned for internet speech were recent smartphone owners, more than half were Muslim, and almost all were extremely poor (Padte).

Jivan was also a Muslim girl and she was accused of planning this incident with a Pakistani Muslim boy. Religious identity is used to exploit people. According to Gaard, persons who claim to be representatives of the Christian God have been involved in human trafficking throughout history. In the process of gaining money under the Church's banner, the Knights Templar fought wars and killed a great deal of people. Before the Renaissance, cases of witchcraft were convicted and hundreds were executed, allowing the government to take their possessions for their benefit (137). The dominant power controls the media, and it carries out the ideas of the powerful, whether it is the man or the state system. The hegemonic powers use the media in various forms to improve their public image. Jivan then finds out that when she shared her political opinions on social media, she received no help at all as they see Jivan as an opportunity to create a scapegoat; she is an easy target, easy to make a major suspect. The interrogator asked her about how the terrorist contacted her and initiated the attack plan. Later, Jivan regained her voice and asserted her innocence in the courtroom. In the prison, Jivan is not even allowed to see anyone. After a few days, she was provided with a lawyer who was not a trustworthy one. She asked the jail manager to help her in hiring a lawyer of her own choice who would be more sympathetic, Pernandu Sarkar. He listened to Jivan's story and recorded it although it was not allowed in Jail. He promised her that he would share her honest story in the newspaper but he exploited

her in the worst possible way. When Jivan looked at his article in the newspaper with the heading, “I THREW BOMBS AT THE POLICE”: A TERRORIST TELLS HER LIFE STORY” (Majumdar 145). She realized that he had manipulated Jivan’s entire story. She read it repeatedly and Umma madam- a jail in charge taunted her because she had tried to stop her from secretly meeting and trusting lawyers. “This is what happens when you do secret interviews without permission! Do another! Do ten more! See how much they help!” (Majumdar 145).

According to Gaard, the oppressed are often suppressed using political narratives (137). Now, PT sir and Lovely were the only hope Jivan was left with. PT Sir, Jivan's old physical education teacher, was very nice to her and had once helped her out when she was a student. When PT Sir, saw Jivan's face on the news, he was taken aback. She was a student of his, and he recalled her as hungry and introverted, but exceptionally talented in athletics. PT Sir, feeling cheated because Jivan never acknowledged him for his care or assistance, quickly accepted Jivan's guilt. He is then encouraged to pursue a career in politics. PT Sir first assists other members of his political party with links and errands, but as Jivan's trial heats up, PT Sir grabs a chance for a fresh beginning as a political crony. PT Sir gave up his morality, preferring faith in the promise of the party to individual freedom and fair trial of Jivan. To strengthen the Hindu agenda and to win elections, Bimala Pal, a political leader of a right-wing party used PT sir against a Muslim girl Jivan. She even invited PT sir to her political gatherings and visited his school. PT Sir's wife tried to convince him that Bimala Pal was only curious about where the "terrorist" went to school, but the following morning PT Sir received a call from the party to join yet another event. To excel in his political career PT sir sacrificed the life of Jivan. In the courtroom, she was very excited to see PT sir, when he told the court about her intelligence and sports activities and how he used to help her with food. Jivan thought it would aid her in proving her innocence but she felt her chest getting heavy as PT sir told the court that he had tried to help her, by encouraging her and by providing her food, but Jivan left the school after matriculation as she failed to perform well in the exam. Then after the train incident, he saw her on the TV as an accused. Perhaps she got involved with criminals after quitting school. To strengthen his political position and to acquire power in society, PT sir did what was against the principles of morality.

Jivan was hopeful upon learning of Lovely's testimony in court, as she believed it would exonerate her from the false accusations. She was particularly pleased at the prospect of Lovely's involvement, as she knew that the actress's fluency in English would be beneficial in the trial. However, despite Lovely's efforts to assist Jivan, the court did not accept her testimony as evidence, because she was a Hijra. This decision put Lovely's career at risk, but she was willing to take that chance for Jivan's sake. Later, when Lovely was offered the opportunity to work in a film produced by Sonali Khan, she was initially hesitant to accept, as she feared it would jeopardize her relationship with Jivan. Nevertheless, she decided to go forward with the project, believing it would be a chance to display her talent and bring attention to important social issues. Unfortunately, the filmmaker decided to cancel her role due to Lovely's involvement with Jivan, and the producer expressed concerns about her attachment to the case in the future.

Jivan, Lovely, and nature are three interconnected entities that symbolize the calamitous consequences that can befall marginalized individuals entrapped in a web of oppression. Jivan, a native of the impacted region, was forcibly evicted from her ancestral home as the relentless pursuit of profit destroyed the environment through unchecked mining. Her life took a distressing turn as she found herself embroiled in baseless allegations, culminating in an execution through a heart-rending hanging. Lovely, a transgender person confronts her challenges in seeking recognition and equality in this backdrop. Her genuine empathy for Jivan, another victim of social injustice, nearly jeopardized her promising career. Lovely's courage in fighting for justice puts her employment at risk in a society still grappling with prejudice and discrimination. In the framework of Gaard's, queer ecofeminism, it becomes critical to identify not just the oppressed but also the oppressors themselves. Majumdar skillfully depicts these oppressive groups, portraying them as a group that includes politicians, corporate executives, law enforcement, respected institutions such as courts, and the media. Together, they work to protect and enhance their interests through this alliance.

Majumdar uses the degradation of nature as a powerful metaphor for the social and moral decay that permeates the lives of the characters. The polluted urban landscape, the symbolism of fire, and the exploitation of rural areas all contribute to a sense of inescapable degradation that mirrors the characters' struggles with injustice, poverty, and marginalization. The novel paints a bleak picture of a society where both

the environment and the people are being degraded, with devastating consequences for all.

## **4.7 Resistance of the Oppressed Groups**

### ***4.7.1 Trans Resistance against Heteronormativity***

It is imperative to note that there is no biological differentiation between genders, and individuals should be classified based on their ability to perform. It means that the innate capabilities of persons determine one's role rather than predetermined societal expectations based on gender. The chosen novel features a transgender character named Lovely, who is often viewed as an outsider in society, but her actions and performances demonstrate that she is not only a perfect woman but also a successful actor. Unfortunately, transgender individuals are often treated as aliens and they faced numerous challenges because of discrimination, including limited educational opportunities, inadequate medical care, depression, unemployment, alcoholism, hormone pill misuse, cigarette usage, and difficulties related to adoption and marriage. The Constitution mandates equality in all sectors, yet it is seldom implemented in practice.

Transgender individuals face widespread persecution, abuse, and discrimination from various segments of society, including close friends and family, as well as the public. This daily adversity is a result of the fact that transgender individuals are not accepted or embraced by society and often feel devalued and excluded. The novel's protagonist, Jivan, is a teacher of Lovely, a transgender individual, to help her improve her English language skills. Lovely, like the other members of the hijra team, faces many challenges in her life, including a lack of a definite identity. However, she strives to create a sense of self through her actions and deeds. The text describes an event in which Lovely and a group of hijras, accompanied by their guru, visited a residence to bless a newborn baby. However, they were subjected to a prolonged wait at the door, which eventually led the mother and child to step outside and call for them. After some time, the mother allowed them inside but appeared to be concerned about their presence. Despite this, Lovely was able to bless the child, while the other hijras were being offered the child money. The text also mentions Lovely's strong attraction to a person named Azad, with whom she shares a deep connection and a promise never to be separated. The text describes her feelings towards him in a way that resembles a wife's

love. Her relationship with Azad makes her a complete woman. Her biological gender is irrelevant. Her actions are typical of a young woman who is at the same time ambitious and romantic. Lovely wants to be an actress one day. She, like any other aspiring young woman, enrolls in an acting class. She wishes to perform in front of a large crowd. Mr. Debnath is her acting coach. Lovely's abilities are praised, and he encourages her to strive for her career. He approaches Lovely about playing the lead in his future film. Her teacher then expresses his desire to sign Shah Rukh Khan as a Hero. Lovely is pleased to find out. She has always wanted to work on a film with Shah Rukh Khan. She hoped that not all of her hard work to pay off, but that happened. Shah Rukh Khan neither is cast in the movie nor is the Lovely given a role. Lovely did not give up and kept working hard. She continues to act in her drama class and stays focused on her goal. She contacts Mr. Jhunjhunwala, a casting director, and asks him to cast her in a film. Her acting coach is supportive. Mr. Jhunjhunwala first ignores Lovely, but her perseverance and determination pay off in the end. Her ambition and acting abilities convinced a film director that the actress had immense potential. Her practice videos become viral on social media, and everybody praises her abilities. Her biological sex is unimportant. What is important is her performance. She would not have arrived where she is now if she had not worked hard and shown her abilities. She would have lived her life like any other transgender person. She could have complained and cried her entire life. She took the opposite route and showed her ability. Her stage performances established her as a genuine woman. Lovely will always be remembered as a heroine. Her biological identity has been transformed because of performativity. Lovely is transgender, but she does not believe in biological sex. She demonstrates that she is fully deserving of the title "true woman." Her acts of performance allow her to be classified as a woman. She falls into a relationship with Azad and aspires to marry him as a virgin. She takes acting classes and eventually becomes a successful actor. In the film, she convincingly performs the character of a mother. She is excluded from society in a variety of ways, yet she has excellent intellect, great a sense of humor, and a strong sense of self.

#### ***4.7.2 A Will to Live: A Form of Resistance***

Ragini is also from the Hijra family. She, like numerous other Hijras, has to deal with a lot because of her transgender status. She cannot visit the doctor with the same convenience as others. She goes to the surgeon when no one other is expecting him,

and the doctor shuts the door so no one else knows. Otherwise, he would face societal opposition, and no other client would want to visit his clinic. Furthermore, the doctor dislikes her. The doctor does not address her politely and seeks to talk her out of the operation. He claims he does not use anesthesia since he hates them. The doctor becomes enraged and scolds Lovely after she requests numbing medicines. Despite his pain, Ragini remains determined, but the procedures upset Lovely. Ragini's mouth bleeds and blood pours out. She seems to be dead because of her suffering. She, on the contrary, refuses to give in to the situation and opens her eyes after a few seconds. After a few days of agonizing torment, she dies. Due to her transgender identity, her death has no societal ramifications. No one cares about hijras since they are considered outcasts. No one in the family has the right to criticize or protest against the doctor. People even do not listen to them and talk about them.

#### ***4.7.3 Wanting a Better Life: An Act of Resistance and an Act of Hope***

##### ***4.7.3.1 Jivan's Resistance Against Patriarchy***

It suits well to Jivan's life who was the only girl that passed her matriculation from the entire locality. She helped her father and mother to run the family. To support her home and to rise from the ashes of poverty, she had to quit her education. When she moved to a slum, she wanted to change her life from a lower class to a middle class. She once encountered a man and was intimidated by his city accent and personality. She was determined to be like him, with his perfect clothes, polished shoes, and elegant voice. She hoped the city would grant her the same prosperity as he had. She found out later that he was a member of the middle class and not as wealthy as she had initially thought. She believed that one day she would raise herself from this poor life to a wealthy life, as she felt proud of having a middle-class friend who gave her cookies at a birthday party. It made her proud and hopeful that one day she would be middle class too. In an attempt to fit in with the upper classes, she started smoking and got a smartphone. She was eating more chicken now than cabbage, so she had made progress. A big step forward was, when she used her own money to purchase a smartphone with a large screen. It was a smartphone that she had paid for in installments but it had a screen that flickered now and again, and she paid off the credit whenever she could. All the same, she was connected to a world larger than her little neighborhood using this gadget.

Jivan was a kind and hardworking girl who was always willing to help people like her even more marginalized. She started teaching English to Lovely who is even more stigmatized than she is. When Jivan was imprisoned, she rejected the government-appointed lawyer and asked her mother to hire a more trustworthy lawyer who could tell her truth to the entire nation. When her house was being demolished, along with her family she resisted with the poor weaponry they had by then, the urine and feces bombs. She is someone who had a serious aim and she was driven to achieve it, who desired things that should be simple, like an ongoing supply of water to her home or having an area to live that is not endangered and does not need to be protected from demolition, which Jivan is unable to provide. She has to struggle for these things all the time and is beaten by the social institutions that are supposed to help her, such as the water supply board and the lawyer assigned to her by the courts.

#### **4.8 Nature's Resistance Against Capitalism**

Gaard has narrated how capitalism commodifies nature and absorbs it into its value circuits. She has also argued that the ideology that sanctions oppression based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology that sanctions the oppression of nature (137).

In *A Burning*, nature's resistance to capitalism is portrayed through the degradation and exploitation of the environment, symbolizing a silent yet profound pushback against unchecked urbanization and industrialization. Capitalistic pursuits in the novel lead to polluted air and water, loss of green spaces, and urban overcrowding, reflecting the prioritization of profit over environmental well-being. Nature, however, subtly resists this exploitation by highlighting the unsustainable consequences, such as polluted living conditions and diminished resources that harm both the environment and the people dependent on it. In the novel, urban pollution and environmental decay represent capitalism's consequences, pushing the marginalized—like Jivan and Lovely—further into socio-economic hardship. Nature, through its degradation, becomes a metaphor for resilience, showing that while it may suffer under capitalism, the resulting environmental crisis underscores the need for balance and an end to exploitative practices. This degradation stands as a warning of capitalism's long-term impact, underscoring nature's capacity to disrupt and push back, albeit subtly, against capitalist systems that prioritize profit over people and the environment. In novel, physical nature resists degradation primarily through the ways it sustains communities,



asserts its presence despite urban encroachment, and symbolizes resilience in the face of exploitation and neglect. The narrative, set against the backdrop of an increasingly industrialized and politically charged society, emphasizes both the struggles and quiet resilience of nature amidst urbanization, pollution, and human intervention.

Nature plays a foundational role in the lives of marginalized communities depicted in *A Burning*, especially those in lower socioeconomic strata who depend on natural resources for their daily survival. For instance, community members living in impoverished neighborhoods often rely on access to rivers, forests, or small gardens to gather resources or food. Although nature is threatened by urban development, its continued presence sustains these communities, symbolizing a quiet form of resistance.

In the face of systemic oppression, the natural environment becomes a silent provider, subtly pushing back against capitalist encroachments that aim to undermine local ecosystems and, by extension, the communities that rely on them. Urban expansion is portrayed as relentless in the novel, threatening the environment by prioritizing economic growth over sustainability. Despite this, nature maintains a symbolic presence, refusing to disappear entirely. This is evident in small but meaningful details: patches of green that survive between buildings, birds nesting in crowded cities, or rivers flowing alongside railway tracks despite pollution and littering. These elements indicate that, while nature may be compromised, it persists, adapting to the circumstances forced upon it. Through these portrayals, nature's resilience emerges as an act of defiance, symbolizing how it "fights back" simply by existing amid human-induced degradation. It resists through survival, demonstrating that it cannot be entirely eradicated, even by an environment increasingly dominated by human interests.

The novel highlights how urbanization, pollution, and industrialization harm the natural world, affecting air and water quality. Polluted rivers, smoke-filled skies, and unclean air are not just signs of environmental neglect but also "protests" by nature, as its degraded state directly affects human health and well-being. This resistance manifests in nature's inherent interdependence with humans; when it suffers, humans suffer. Through the consequences of pollution, nature sends a clear message, resisting by making its degradation impossible for society to ignore. This serves as a form of natural protest, warning humans of the repercussions of unsustainable actions and drawing attention to the necessity of preserving the environment. The novel's description of nature being harmed yet continuously adapting, pushing back through

regeneration, symbolizes a cycle of destruction and rebirth. The resilience of natural spaces, even as they are threatened or reduced, serves as a reminder of nature's enduring strength. This cycle illustrates the concept that while nature can be degraded, it also has the capacity to recover, resisting complete annihilation.

Despite pollution or environmental degradation, small green spaces or flora in urban areas signify resistance through regrowth, suggesting that nature, although scarred, holds the potential for renewal. Nature's degradation in the novel also serves as a witness to the socio-political upheaval affecting marginalized groups, like women and LGBTQ individuals. Nature's resilience becomes intertwined with the struggles of these characters, who resist against oppressive forces. By refusing to vanish in the face of exploitation, nature reflects the characters' endurance, with its resilience echoing their determination to survive despite societal constraints. The resistance of nature in this way can be seen as a form of solidarity with the novel's marginalized figures, a subtle but powerful statement of interconnected endurance across both human and environmental spheres.

The resistance of physical nature against degradation underscores the novel's broader themes of resilience, oppression, and survival. Nature's persistence, its ability to sustain communities, adapt amidst urban expansion, protest through pollution, and regrow, reflects both a literal and metaphorical resistance. This resilient stance aligns with the endurance of the novel's oppressed characters, collectively signaling that while society may attempt to control and exploit both nature and vulnerable populations, both retain the power to resist and, ultimately, endure.

#### **4.9 Synopsis of the Novel *Annabel***

The story opens with a prologue. It is hunting season, and blind gunman Graham Montague, along with his young daughter Annabel, floats on a canoe. While on the raft, the young girl saw a caribou on the shoreline. "The white caribou stands still, in a patch of sunlight between black tree trunks, staring at the man and the girl inside the vessel" (Winter 6). Amazed by the beauty of the caribou, Annabel slips into the water while the hunter is asleep. She imbalances the boat to reach the animal, and both end up dead. Annabel's death takes on symbolic meaning when we discover that both Annabels, that is, the one in the boat with a blind father and the hermaphrodite Annabel/ Wayne, are dead—one because she violated his father and the other because his parents decided to

conceal his gender identity. The myth is also symbolic of the caribou, the sole member of the deer family in which antlers develop on both males and females. This caribou represents the appearance of the hermaphrodite, Wayne Blake/Annabel. This highlights the central theme of the intersex books. The story takes place in the tiny fishing community of Labrador, in an icy environment. This land has a deep metaphorical meaning, reflecting the protagonists' lives throughout the story. The people who live in this village hunt for half their lives. This location highlights how challenging it is to live in remote areas.

*Annabel* tells the story of the raising of an intersex child in a small Canadian community, exploring the inner struggles and eventual acceptance that the child and parents went through. In 1968, Jacinta Blake gave birth to a child in a tiny Canadian community with unclear genitalia, while her husband, Treadway, was out trapping. Thomasina, Jacinta's friend, is the only other person who saw the delivery. When Treadway arrives, he determines that the child should be reared as a male, despite Jacinta's and Thomasina's initial desire to allow the child to live in its natural state. The first person to notice that this baby is different is Thomasina, who carefully tugs at the blanket to reveal both the male and female genitalia: a single testicle, labia, and vagina. Described as a "true hermaphrodite" (Winter 236). They name him Wayne. Jacinta had a difficult time deciding what to do and eventually agreed to take Wayne to the hospital to undergo surgery and began taking hormones to become more like a boy. This was a significant change for Wayne, and it was something he would have to continue doing for the rest of his life. After a tragic canoeing accident, Thomasina lost her husband and daughter. She subtly called Wayne, the name of her late daughter, when they were alone. As their relationship grew, Thomasina took on the role of mentor to Wayne, giving him life lessons and entertaining stories. She left the village after completing her studies, but Wayne was still able to learn from her as his devoted teacher.

When Wayne was a small boy, he had a stomachache and bloating, so Thomasina had to take him to the hospital. She also took on the job of Wayne's instructor, leaving the community to pursue her degree. When she could not get through to his parents, she drove him to the hospital herself, which caused her to fire. Treadway was also in the hospital, where it was learned that bloating is caused by a build-up of menstrual blood. To treat this problem, doctors drain Wayne's blood and alter his hormones. However, Thomasina and Treadway were horrified by this event and kept it

a secret from Jacinta and Wayne. Jacinta experiences depression because of pressure on her relationship with Treadway. After Thomasina leaves, Wayne's secret remains secret from others. Thomasina stays in touch with Wayne by sending him postcards. Wayne develops into a well-rounded person who is unaware of his uniqueness, as he gets older. When Wayne says that he wants a swimming suit like the one TV synchronized swimmers wear, Treadway tells him no. Jacinta secretly buys the required outfit for him. Aspiring opera singers Wally and Wayne become friends in school, and they share a love for singing on a fort bridge built by Wayne. They are unaware that one night, Treadway smashes the bridge, because he is afraid of their bonds. After this encounter, Wally pulls away. Feeling guilty, Treadway covertly restores all of Wally's misplaced music sheets. During their adolescent years, Wally and Wayne attended a party with other teenagers. Unfortunately, Wally has an accident that damages her voice cords, which deeply disturbs her and makes her stop talking to him. Over time, Wayne discovered that during a medical incident, he was a hermaphrodite, a unique being with both male and female genitalia. This finding revealed that he could become pregnant when his first menstrual blood was removed during a previous medical operation. Equipped with this novel insight, Wayne resolved to go from his residence in search of self-discovery. Wayne decided to undo the hormonal and surgical treatments he had, and he experienced dramatic bodily changes without telling the locals. When Wayne trusts in a coworker about his illness at a vulnerable time, it sparks an evil assault from his coworkers, who are harsh and curious. Following this experience, Wayne confides in his initially cold father, who subsequently becomes receptive to and accepts him for the person he is. Wayne's father made a visit to harm the individual who carried out the brutal attack because he was determined to see justice served. Wayne embraced his actual self, freed from the burden of a long-kept secret, and Jacinta felt relieved. She no longer bore the weight of the hidden truth since she is a mother to a boy and daughter. In a letter to Wayne, Thomasina revealed that she knew who he was from the start, giving him the loving nickname "Annabel." Wayne is relieved to learn this and feels honored to be called that by her. Wally, who has undergone vocal cord surgery, is eventually reunited with Wayne with Thomasina's help. Wally might not have been able to pursue her ambition to become an opera singer, but she can sing today. Wally was not shocked to learn Wayne's identity, but she was happy to have him back in her life. Ultimately, the family reconciles, as Wayne accepts who he is, and the long-kept truth is revealed.

#### 4.10 Wayne/ Annabel's Double Oppression

The intersex story *Annabel* describes the difficulties that an intersex person and their family face in this socially created environment. It is believed that an intersex person experiences double oppression—one from within related to their identity and one from their outside world, where societal norms and expectations lead to discrimination. Winter reflects this in the life of Wayne Blake, who rises above them and attempts to build his path. As depicted in Winter's *Annabel*, people with intersex anatomy do not meet the requirements of being able-bodied because their sexual anatomy is seen as strange or ambiguous. However, these people do not follow the normative guidelines of heterosexuality, as their physical characteristics do not always match their assumed sex and the gender of parenting. As a result, the person experiences social stigma from a culture that does not value or acknowledge their uniqueness, and they grow estranged from their own body, which they are unable to fully understand. Ambivalence in the gender identity of intersex characters results from the urge to express personal liberty and feelings while adhering to norms of normality. Winter's Wayne Blake was born in early March 1968 at Croydon Harbor on Labrador's southeast coast. Over his youth, he progressively knew this truth: he was an actual hermaphrodite. The physician described his condition as having every quality that boys and girls have, but almost entirely of each. When Wayne's mother, Jacinta, brings him to Goose Bay General Hospital as a baby, Wayne's true duality is revealed. To determine whether the infant should be reared as a boy or a girl, a phalometer—a small silver ruler with a 1.5 cm mark on it—was used. “Dr. Ho showed her the gauge. It barely grazes one and a half centimeters” (36). Wayne struggles to figure out where he fits into society. Despite being raised as a boy, Annabel, his female counterpart, is always around. As his parents and local community, see his multifaceted body—neither male nor female—as a challenge to social norms, language conventions of self-identification, and the assumed natural laws governing life on the fringes of the Labrador wilderness.

##### 4.10.1 Hegemonic Masculinity: A Tool of Oppression

Males have always been the figures of authority and women are the subject of subordination (Ourkiya). In the past, society has frequently seen males as the dominant gender and associated women with the traits of subordination and restriction. Individual characteristics are therefore dictated by biological makeup. This is in line with the

dominant norm, which states that heterosexuality is essential to the formation of hegemonic masculinity. It stems from the idea that identifying with one's sex will "ensure" that the corresponding gender associated with the genitalia will draw attention from the other sex, thus maintaining the norm. Moreover, there is a general inclination to believe that women are softer, whereas men are seen to be naturally more aggressive. People live in a highly established culture in which they are expected by society to conform to preset behaviors that are in line with their natural gender, with males expressing masculinity and women embracing femininity (Garlick).

To some extent, hegemonic masculinity has been linked to the concept of patriarchy. However, the presence of women is the key distinguishing aspect between the two ideologies. Patriarchy is commonly associated with the exploitation and suppression of women's bodies and minds, which prevents them from freely expressing themselves. Women, on the other hand, play a crucial role in hegemonic masculinity, surrendering to and submitting to how men present themselves in society. They may disagree, but this does not change the fact that men make decisions.

According to the theoretical framework presented by Gaard, it is very important to recognize oppressors along with the oppressed. In *Annabel*, Treadway intends to bring up his infant son, Wayne, in a manner that embodies conventional manhood. In other words, the impact of extreme masculinity and patriarchal customs molds the course of gender in their lives. As the dominant person, Treadway forces his ideas about masculinity on the child. This is seen from the numerous discussions between Treadway and Wayne about Wayne's conduct, which is expected of a conventional boy. This emphasizes the notion that gender is the creation of society.

Jacinta may have thought about having a daughter when their child was born, but her lack of self-assurance and unwillingness to face Treadway makes her dreams less realistic. Her current state of confusion and uncertainty makes it difficult for her to make big choices that might change their child's life. Treadway is determined by rearing his child as a man, despite the uncertainty expressed by Jacinta and Thomasina, the reliable neighbors who know the truth. After making this choice, they consulted Dr. Simon Ho to remove the female genitalia. Given that part of his job is to create a distinctly masculine anatomy, Dr. Ho might be seen as a symbol of hegemonic masculinity in this context, which sustains the order of masculinity in Labrador, a town

with a population of fewer than 300 people. The protagonist is forced to undergo surgery to hide his gender identity and live under one because of fear of conventional norms being destroyed, highlighting the goal of building a believable manly physique to assure the baby's comfort inside his psyche and in the views of others. This emphasizes the social effect on gender formation. Allowing Jacinta to raise an infant on her terms is not a display of compassion or empathy; rather, it conforms to the underlying concept of hegemonic masculinity. Dr. Ho used a deft and deceptive strategy to persuade Jacinta to accept the proposal. Following an examination of the baby's manly phallus length, the doctor suggests to Jacinta that the infant be reared as a boy.

Nature/culture dichotomy as said by Gaard can be observed over here. As the culture changes because of development and modernization, it affects nature. Annabel never wanted to change her gender as desired by society but wanted to live life under what nature has made her. As a result, Jacinta succumbs to grief and admits that her husband's decision was better. Despite her dissatisfaction with the selected course, Jacinta's schizophrenia worsened daily. She struggles with the mental conflict caused by suppressing the truth regarding Wayne's initial physical anomalies, despite her intention to reveal it. Furthermore, she is unsure how Wayne would respond to the news, and Jacinta suffers because of her son's hidden secret.

#### ***4.10.2 Neglecting Gender Autonomy***

Treadway committed himself to rearing his child into a figure capable of easily fitting in and operating like any other youngster in Labrador, knowing of Wayne's special demands. The small Labrador community embodies the societal pressure to conform to binary gender norms. Wayne's divergence from these norms may elicit fear and rejection. Therefore, his father was fulfilling his duties by directing Wayne to sections of the home regarded more "manly," where physical power was required to do jobs, such as in the basement and log cabin. Treadway had a strong antipathy to the idea of his child adopting femininity. As a result, even when it came to expressing emotions, masculine continually took precedence over feminine. Wayne, for example, elected to stay silent about the blisters on his heels after a leisurely walk with his mother. "Until the blisters formed on his ankles. (49). Wayne kept his suffering to himself, understanding Treadway's expectation that he toughens up and endure discomfort until

the walk was over, and Treadway secretly applied the ointment. Wayne had to remain watchful even within the boundaries of their house. He was aware that his father expected him to exhibit a serious, matter-of-fact manner, and he quickly learned to do so. Even though it did not represent his true nature, Wayne did not mind conforming to this expectation, knowing it was the norm. As a result, Wayne acquired exceptional flexibility within the limits of his own family, recognizing the very different dynamics while dealing with his father and mother. When Wayne was a little child, Thomasina would constantly call him by the name deceased daughter, Annabel. Wayne did not give it much attention as he saw it as a cutesy gesture, like how his mother and father used to refer to him as "Blakey" and "little man," respectively. Because of this, he was fine with Thomasina referring to him as Ambel even though she meant Annabel. Treadway, on the other hand, disliked the name when Wayne informed him about it since the word Amble has a feminine ring to it. This struggle between Wayne and Annabel symbolizes the conflict between societal expectations and natural diversity.

Thomasina represents a brave defiance of the traditional conceptions of masculinity that Treadway attempts to instill in his child. With the help of her close friend Jacinta, she carried out her covert strategy with accuracy and persuasiveness, functioning softly right under everyone's nose. Treadway discouraged his child from participating in a synchronized swimming competition on television, telling him that he should instead play hockey. Treadway expressed disappointment with Wayne's chosen sport, directing him to something he thought was more appropriate. This event reveals the carefully expressed stereotyped statements inherent in the psyche of a standard alpha person like Treadway. Wayne experienced a separate facet of himself in his dream—a female whose clothes revealed his feminine side. While green represents nature and its connection to Mother Nature, red is just a color that many females love for its compelling and luxurious charm. Wayne's attempts to reach out to Annabel and encourage her to stay were useless. Wayne was deeply troubled by their intimacy and separation. Wayne struggled with the inner anguish of adhering to cultural ideals of manhood daily but felt alienated from the archetype that entails lifting rocks or finding satisfaction in the frantic action of backhoes. This oscillation between hegemonic masculinity and suffering can be understood in this way.

According to Treadway Blake, for the system to function and endure, everything must be one. Wayne understood, for example, that his father was correct. "Anyone from



Labrador called vegetables by their single name. Cabbage, Turnip, Carrot. No matter how many individual specimens” (Winter 80). Treadway had a similar perspective on human nature. Men, to him, were all one man. Similarly, Treadway had a similar feeling in his childhood, which made him happy when he discovered that his child wanted to build a fort by the river. When he heard Wayne's concept, he was overjoyed to the point where he offered to assist with fort construction. To sum up, people who exhibit complicit masculinity benefit from acknowledging patriarchy. Wayne was therefore very thankful for his father's willingness to assist in the construction of his fort. However, he was not shocked—or even demoralized—until he learned, that Wayne intended to use his fort as a place for Wally and him to meet. Wayne had recently made Wally his best friend at school, and since they were spending so much time together, they thought it would be fun to build a fort and hang out doing what they liked most. Wally desired to continue singing, but Wayne focused on symmetrically designing bridges; Treadway believed that it was abnormal for a young child to think. He delicately folded the brocade and placed it next to Jacinta's stack of repairs after removing it from its place. He did not intend to cause damage; rather, he wanted to dismantle what he saw as an impediment to his son's normal growth. Treadway believes that his son's involvement in some activities is impeding his ability to develop in a "normal" way, as evidenced by his decision to tear down the brocade. He therefore has no regrets since he uses the excuse of shielding his son from delving deeper into an unrestrained lifestyle to justify his actions. Treadway attempts to make it up to his kid by bringing him a puppy since he feels ashamed of what he did, which makes Wayne feel completely disgusted. Treadway was very happy when Annabel/Wayne constructed a bridge with the help of Wally. He thinks of it more as a masculine project but after Annabel decorates it with lights and curtains; he dismantles it as if it were Wayne's fantasy of feminine side. Wayne grows emotionally distant from his father because of the destruction, while Jacinta retreats even more within herself. The father seems to be impacted by the systems of knowledge, power, and authority. Because of the hyper-masculine world he lives in, he suppresses his newborn baby's true nature, which is intersex, and raises him as a boy instead of letting him live as he desires.

## 4.11 Women's Oppression

In *Annabel* by Winter, the character Jacinta Blake experiences various forms of oppression, which are intricately tied to her environment, societal expectations, and personal relationships.

### 4.11.1 Gender Roles and Expectations

Jacinta's oppression is deeply rooted in the rigid gender roles and expectations of her time and place. As a woman, she is expected to conform to the traditional roles of wife and mother, which limits her autonomy and self-expression. Societal pressures to maintain these roles often overshadow her aspirations and desires. Men and women have different everyday tasks that they must complete to live in harmony and maintain their status order. Typically, as it may sound, men are expected to support their families financially, while women are expected to take care of the home and be capable homemakers. Women in the novel who are skilled in ice fishing, making caribou leather sandals and strategically stacking wood to keep it from falling over participate in these pursuits, while their significant others are out of the trap lines. "Women would have known exactly what was needed for any typical birth" (Winter 7). Women in the Labrador are tasked with guarding the fort at home, while the males go hunting and trapping. Because Croydon Harbor's winters are quite lengthy and must provide for and feed the family, they must be skilled at doing everything. According to Winter, marriage lacks a clear division of roles. The women of the cove were queens of the inside rooms, painting sills, and pelmets, and cleaning carpets, while the males were typically kings outside their homes, ruling over lawns, sheds, and fences. It is made very apparent that women are assigned to take care of the house, which may symbolize them, whereas men have power over nature, which may represent women. In other words, men rule everything, both inside and outside the home. Treadway, though, has always been a man of nature; he would prefer living alone outside his house more than with his family. In the novel, the writer states that he had sworn to love her, and Treadway was devoted to his wife. Nevertheless, he was enthralled with the core of the wilderness, and he loved that primary refuge more than anything did. Treadway was happiest in the great spaces of his magnificent wilderness, where hunting was the primary activity. He is no longer bound by the restrictions on ordinary domestic life; instead, he feels liberated and free. He has a strong attachment to Croydon Harbour; in

fact, he considers the house to be his wife's property and the area where the waves changed direction to be his, to be passed down to any son who came after him.

#### ***4.11.2 Decision Making and Lack of Support***

Jacinta's relationship with her husband, Treadway, is marked by a power imbalance that reflects broader patriarchal norms. "It was not fair, she felt, to treat people as if they were finished beings. Everyone was always becoming and unbecoming" (Winter 29). Treadway's traditional views on gender and his authoritative approach to their family life constrain Jacinta's ability to make independent decisions, especially regarding the upbringing of their intersex child, Wayne/Annabel. Treadway's insistence on raising Wayne as a boy, against Jacinta's more nuanced understanding of their child's identity, creates a significant source of conflict and emotional turmoil for her. They lack communication while making decisions with each other in the time of crisis. When their child is born with both male and female genitalia, Treadway decides on his own, without consulting his wife, to name the infant boy Wayne.

Treadway was a native Labrador, unlike Jacinta. He continued his father's tradition of maintaining the traplines and had a deep connection to the rugged landscape. In contrast, Jacinta arrived from St. John at the age of eighteen to teach at a small local school. Living in a remote and insular community exacerbates Jacinta's sense of isolation. The lack of support networks and the conservative nature of the community make it difficult for her to find allies or resources to help her navigate the complexities of raising an intersex child. This isolation heightens her sense of oppression, as she struggles to reconcile her own beliefs and instincts with the expectations and judgments of those around her.

"Father and son suffered from backed up, frozen love and this ate Jacinta's heart" (Winter 157). Jacinta's oppression is also internal, as she grapples with her own conflicting emotions and desires. Her love for her child and her recognition of Wayne/Annabel's unique identity clash with her fear of societal rejection and her husband's disapproval. This internal conflict leads to significant emotional strain, as she feels torn between her maternal instincts and the oppressive forces that seek to dictate her child's identity and her role as a mother. Despite the oppression she faces, Jacinta demonstrates resilience and a quiet form of resistance. "She imagined its male and female halves as complementing each other, and as being secretly, almost magically

powerful” (Winter 22). Her deep empathy and understanding of Wayne/Annabel's identity challenge the rigid norms imposed on her. Through her subtle acts of defiance and her unwavering love for her child, Jacinta embodies a strength that defies the oppressive structures around her. Her journey reflects the broader themes of the novel, highlighting the struggle for identity and acceptance in the face of societal constraints.

#### **4.12 Nature's Relation with Oppressed Characters**

In the novel, the village of Labrador, Canada is depicted with vivid descriptions of its harsh and unforgiving weather, which plays a significant role in shaping the lives and experiences of the characters, particularly Wayne/ Annabel. Extremely cold temperatures and heavy snowfall characterize the village. Winter dominates much of the year, with long, dark months and relentless blizzards. The remote location of Labrador contributes to its harshness. The village is isolated, with limited access to the outside world. This isolation is mirrored in the lives of the characters, who must find ways to cope with their solitude and the starkness of their environment. The harsh conditions of Labrador serve as a powerful metaphor for Wayne's internal struggles and the societal challenges he faces. Just as the village is isolated by its geography and weather, Wayne feels isolated by his unique condition. Born intersex, he is caught between two identities in a society that only acknowledges binary roles. The cold, isolating landscape mirrors Wayne's sense of being trapped in a world that does not understand or accept him fully. Therefore, the dual nature of Labrador's environment, being both beautiful and dangerous, reflects Wayne's dual nature. His intersex identity is portrayed with sensitivity, highlighting both the beauty of his unique self and the difficulties it brings. However, just as the seasons in Labrador change, bringing moments of thaw and renewal, Wayne undergoes personal growth and transformation. The harsh winters give way to spring, symbolizing hope and the possibility of change. Wayne's journey is one of self-discovery and acceptance, mirroring the cycles of nature in his homeland.

Similarly, the birth of Wayne/ Annabel is described in the novel after the scene of white caribou standing still between black tree trunks with a beam of sunlight. Annabel and her father saw in a canoe on a lake that is surrounded by the snow, she badly wanted to touch that animal but the effort ultimately caused the death of Annabel and her father. The white caribou that has separated from the herd standing on the edge

of the lake metaphorically represents the life and identity of Wayne/ Annabel. This caribou symbolizes the sense of isolation and the struggle with identity that Wayne/Annabel experiences throughout the story. Much like the caribou, Wayne/Annabel is set apart from others, existing on the margins of society due to being born intersex. The caribou's whiteness can be seen as a representation of purity and rarity, mirroring Wayne/Annabel's unique and singular nature. The lake's edge symbolizes a boundary or threshold, reflecting Wayne/Annabel's position between two worlds: the masculine and the feminine. Just as the caribou stands at the boundary of the lake, Wayne/Annabel navigates the liminal space between genders, never fully integrated into either one. The separation from the herd underscores Wayne/Annabel's feelings of being different and not wholly accepted by those around them. This imagery evokes a sense of solitude and the internal conflict that Wayne/Annabel face in reconciling their dual identity. The caribou's stance at the lake's edge highlights the character's constant negotiation with their identity, poised between acceptance and rejection, belonging and exclusion. As Queer ecofeminism emphasizes the interconnectedness of all life forms and critiques the binaries imposed by patriarchal and heteronormative societies, Gaard argues for the recognition and acceptance of diverse identities and experiences, both human and non-human. Through this perspective, the white caribou can be seen as a representation of nature's diversity and the beauty of difference. The separation from the herd highlights the pressures of conformity and the marginalization faced by those who do not fit into established norms. Wayne/Annabel's journey mirrors the caribou's, as they navigate a world that often fails to understand or accept their true self.

While the primary focus of the novel is on the character of Wayne and his journey as an intersex individual, there is a slight theme related to the impact of European missionaries on Canadian land. They aimed to introduce Christianity to the Inuit without disrupting traditional practices like hunting and clothing manufacture. They established missions near Inuit settlements but had limited direct interaction. To improve contact, they engaged in trade, offering goods like iron and tobacco. This trade integrated the Inuit into a global market, shifting their economy and altering their relationships with the environment. Their year-round presence led to changes in Inuit settlement patterns, separate housing, "old- concrete-block buildings," ( Winter 186) powerful hunting instruments, and increased reliance on European goods. Before that,

the Inuit used lightweight summer skin tents for easy mobility, adapting to the seasonal migrations of animals like caribou. Hunting caribou in late summer was crucial, providing meat and skins for winter clothing. The entire village participated in the hunt, while others fished or hunted seabirds to prepare for winter. In late fall and winter, Inuit built small villages of subterranean sod houses near harbors, made from stone, bone, wood, and sod, to shelter multiple families. This transformation, driven by mission and trade, shifted Inuit subsistence from traditional practices to producing goods for the European market.

The Inuit had a special spiritual connection with the animal they were about to hunt and had a strong belief that the soul of the animal and their livelihood are interconnected, even they gave animalistic features to the weapon they used to hunt the animal. They believed that only those animals let themselves be hunted if they felt that the hunter would take care of their soul after death, but European activities significantly influenced Inuit sacred practices, particularly through the introduction of new materials and technologies like guns and nets. When Annabel and her father went to hunt caribou, they had a gun to kill it. These changes altered Inuit hunting strategies and their spiritual connection to the environment. Another example of this imperialism is the clear-cutting of forests and the destruction of wildlife habitat. This practice is depicted in the novel with the character of Wayne's father working as a forester. The loss of biodiversity resulting from this activity is significant, with animals being driven to extinction or near extinction like caribou.

The remote and harsh landscape of Labrador is not just a backdrop but also a significant force that influences the inner lives and actions of the characters. Labrador, with its vast wilderness and isolation, mirrors Thomasina's inner strength and resilience. Thomasina is one of the few characters who sees the uniqueness in Wayne/Annabel (the protagonist) and accepts it. Her ability to understand and accept Wayne's intersex identity is shaped by her experiences with the harshness of Labrador, where survival requires adaptability and a deep understanding of the complexities of life. Thomasina's husband was lost in a boating accident, a tragedy that is a direct result of Labrador's unforgiving environment. This loss could have hardened her, but instead, it deepened her empathy. She becomes a nurturing figure for Wayne, suggesting that her experience of loss in Labrador has taught her to value the uniqueness of life in all its forms. Similarly, Jacinta's character is deeply influenced by the traditional values of

Labrador's community, which are rooted in strict gender roles and norms. Labrador's nature, both beautiful and brutal, symbolizes the rigid societal expectations that Jacinta grapples with as she raises Wayne. The environment reflects her internal conflict between adhering to traditional norms and embracing her child's uniqueness. Labrador's traditionalism is evident in Jacinta's initial desire to raise Wayne as a boy, suppressing his intersex identity to fit societal expectations. The natural world around her, with its clear divisions between male and female roles (like the separation of labor in hunting and homemaking), reinforces her struggle. Jacinta's reluctance to accept Wayne's dual nature mirrors the environment's resistance to change.

Both Thomasina and Jacinta interact with the duality of Labrador—its beauty and brutality—and this duality is mirrored in Wayne's identity. Thomasina's acceptance and Jacinta's conflict can be seen as responses to the dual nature of the environment they inhabit. "People are rivers, always ready to move from one state of being to another" (Winter 29). Labrador's Beaver River, which can be both life giving and deadly, represents the duality within Wayne. Thomasina, who has come to terms with the unpredictability of nature, sees this duality as a strength. In contrast, Jacinta, who is more bound by the community's need to control and categorize, sees it as a threat to Wayne's safety. The small, tight-knit community of Labrador, shaped by its environment, plays a role in forming the characters' identities. The people of Labrador, living close to nature, develop a collective mindset that deeply influences both Thomasina and Jacinta. The environment they live in— a place where deviation from the norm is met with suspicion or rejection shapes the community's reaction to Wayne's difference. Thomasina's willingness to defy these norms, likely influenced by her life in this harsh environment, shows her strength. Jacinta's initial submission to these norms, despite her internal struggle, illustrates how deeply the community's values have influenced her.

The relationships between characters in *Annabel* are often reflective of the natural world around them. The way Thomasina and Jacinta relate to Wayne is symbolic of their relationship with the environment of Labrador. Thomasina's nurturing relationship with Wayne can be seen as akin to a careful gardener who understands the land and tends to it with care, allowing it to flourish in its way. On the other hand, Jacinta's relationship with Wayne is more like a farmer who tries to impose order on the land, struggling to control it according to preconceived ideas of what it

should be. Labrador is more than a setting; it is a force shaping and reflecting the characters, particularly Thomasina and Jacinta. Thomasina's resilience and acceptance of duality are aligned with the unpredictable, harsh nature of Labrador, while Jacinta's internal conflict is a product of the community's traditionalism, rooted in the same environment. The interplay between the characters and the natural world of Labrador underscores the novel's exploration of identity, acceptance, and the constraints of societal norms.

## **4.13 Resistance of Oppressed Characters**

### ***4.13.1 Wayne/ Annabel Resistance against Heteronormativity***

Despite Wayne's mixed gender, he is forced to play the masculine gender. In this situation, a traditionalist father forces his child to exhibit what he perceives to be masculine features for his child to grow up as a man. Wayne resists this patriarchal attitude by embracing their female identity as Annabel. They (Wayne/Annabel) start to recognize their feminine side more by adopting new gender identification as a woman despite having spent their early years acting like a man. The alteration occurs gradually, and outward manifestations like hair, cosmetics, and attire serve to define the shift. The protagonist begins changing their appearance, and makeup is the most obvious manifestation of this. "He had his mother's eyeliner on" (Winter 203). Considering this, Wayne/ Annabel confesses their wish to use makeup to look more feminine and the perception that wearing makeup is a feminine feature is socially created. Putting on makeup, however, is the protagonist's means of perceiving themselves as a female owing to their battle with their face's masculine traits. Wayne/Annabel emphasizes the significance of this transition as wonderful. The protagonist's family laments their decision to live as a female, but they consider the length of their hair and how they have not cut it recently because they did not want to. Additionally, Wayne/Annabel's gender identity transformation is facilitated by the specious attributes of clothing; they choose to buy women's clothing to project a female identity. They came across a "woman's sweater" in the mall and wanted to put it on because they were curious how the sweater would look on them. Wayne/Annabel's identity transition highlights the cultural construction of gender, although Wayne defied the patriarchal framework by embracing their feminine side. Wayne/Annabel expresses a wish to acquire a brilliant orange bathing suit comparable to Elizaveta Kirilovna's, rather than regular swimming trunks,



and expresses a strong desire for this exact swimsuit more than anything else expresses in the world. This indicates that despite their father's decision to keep Wayne/Annabel's gender as male; they exhibit interest in the characteristics of women, question the binary opposition of gender identity, and reject gender classification. As the protagonist is a "true hermaphrodite" from birth, possessing nearly all aspects of both the male and female bodies, their body itself defies social conventions and categorization of gender as male and female. Wayne's acceptance of his intersex identity as Annabel symbolizes resistance to transphobia and the quest for authentic self-expression.

#### ***4.13.2 Women's Resistance against Hegemonic Masculinity***

Their neighbor, Thomasina can also be seen as a symbol of resistance who is portrayed as an unconventional and brave woman. She did not wear a black dress at her husband's burial and did not go inside the church to attend the final rituals of her husband and daughter. She remained outside of the church to deny their dismissal and by comforting herself that they still exist. She did not even wear a Sunday hat with a satin band, or a black hat made of green, or lavender felt. She was wearing her regular coat. She is also a symbol of compassion and understanding. She quickly admits Wayne is intersexuality when faced with the contradiction of being among the first to realize that the infant is equally male and female. She chooses to reject gender classification by giving the mixed-gender child a female name. Unlike others, she does not see Wayne's intersex condition as something that needs to be fixed or hidden. She names the child Annabel in her mind, symbolizing the potential for dual identity and the acceptance of both male and female aspects. Thus, by offering them a female name she opposes the prevalent norms of gender classification. She emphasizes her opposition to the required gender distinction at school by stating that Wayne/Annabel does possess "the presence of a descendant of the child of Hermes and Wayne Blake's "Aphrodite, Hermaphroditus" (Winter 131). Thomasina serves as a symbol for the author's refusal to conform to gender norms because she consistently recognizes the protagonist's hermaphrodite status, which reveals gender norms as social constructs. She becomes the secret keeper of Annabel's identity. She provides Wayne with books and support that nurtures his hidden feminine side. This support helps Wayne navigate his complex identity, even though it often puts Thomasina at odds with societal expectations and norms. Thomasina faces her struggles and sacrifices in the shape of her being fired from her school. Her support for Wayne/Annabel puts her at odds with the community and,

at times, with Wayne's parents. Despite this, she remains steadfast in her belief that Wayne should be free to explore both sides of his identity. Throughout the novel, Thomasina subtly challenges the rigid gender norms of her time. By embracing Wayne's dual identity, she embodies a more fluid understanding of gender, contrasting sharply with the binary views held by most of the other characters. Her quiet defiance highlights the oppression faced by those who do not fit neatly into societal categories.

Similarly, despite the oppression she faces, Jacinta demonstrates resilience and a quiet form of resistance. She supported her intersex child in a society that demands conformity to strict gender norms. Her acceptance and nurturing of Wayne's identity challenges the patriarchal insistence on rigid binary gender roles. She resists societal pressure to raise Wayne as a boy. While her husband, Treadway, insists on a male identity for Wayne, Jacinta quietly nurtures Wayne's feminine side. She exhibits a deep empathy and understanding towards Wayne's struggle, often prioritizing her child's emotional well-being over societal expectations. Her deep empathy and understanding of Wayne/Annabel's identity challenge the rigid norms imposed on her and stand in stark contrast to the patriarchal emphasis on conformity and repression of individuality. Through her subtle acts of defiance and her unwavering love for her child, Jacinta embodies a strength that defies the oppressive structures around her. Her journey reflects the broader themes of the novel, highlighting the struggle for identity and acceptance in the face of societal constraints. Both Jacinta and Thomasina have dissolved the dichotomy of self/other by embracing the feminine side of Wayne. Thomasina's daughter Annabel is also one of the female characters who has violated gender expectations. According to Winter, close to the hunting season Treadway and other men of Labrador left their homes and families to go hunting, and so did Thomasina's husband Graham Montague, and daughter Annabel to navigate the river in a white canoe. Therefore, Annabel is a girl who goes hunting by denying her gender role as it was the duty of men to conduct the responsibility of hunting for their families.

#### **4.14 Conclusion**

*A Burning* and *Annabel* are profound literary investigations of the various layers of identity crises inside the queer experiences of characters such as Lovely and Wayne. Both stories expertly deconstruct the complexities of heteronormativity, revealing its widespread impact on people navigating their real selves. The novels analyze patriarchal ideas thoroughly, providing a critical viewpoint on the cultural systems that

maintain gender conventions and stereotypes. Furthermore, they highlight the connectivity of oppressed groups by highlighting the common struggles of marginalized populations. These novels are notable for their depiction of resistance among oppressed groups, with a special emphasis on the determination of queers, nature, and women. Harm to the natural environment is also a theme of both novels. Land mining and hunting introduce much more harm to ecology. These novels are more than just stories; they are mirrors that reflect the complexities of identity, oppression, and the persistent attitude of resistance in the face of challenges.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have summarized the main findings and concluded the discussion. The concepts of Queer ecofeminism and Transphobia have proved effective in the analysis of Majumdar and Winter's *Annabel* and *A Burning* respectively as they seem to convey similar ideas laid out by Greta Gaard in her essay and Christopher Shelley in his book. Both writers have highlighted various social injustices in their respective Indian and Canadian societies. In the exploration of *Annabel* and *A Burning*, the research has revealed significant parallels in the portrayal of oppression and resistance among marginalized groups, particularly women, queers, and nature. Both novels though rooted in different cultural and geographical contexts—Canada and India—highlight the pervasive impact of patriarchy, heteronormativity, and capitalism on these groups.

In *A Burning*, Jivan's journey highlights the harsh realities faced by women under patriarchal and capitalist structures. Her wrongful accusation and subsequent persecution for a crime she did not commit underscore the intersectional oppression that women, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, endure. The legal system, manipulated by powerful men, becomes a tool of oppression, silencing Jivan and erasing her identity. Similarly, in *Annabel*, Thomasina and Jacinta are emblematic of the struggles faced by women within a rigidly gendered society. Jacinta, as a mother of an intersex child, challenges the expectations imposed on her by a patriarchal society that demands conformity. Thomasina, too, wrestles with the societal pressures to mold child into a binary gender, even as her maternal instincts push her towards acceptance and love. The oppression of queer individuals is starkly portrayed through the characters of Lovely in *A Burning* and Wayne in *Annabel*. Lovely, a transgender woman faces societal rejection and violence in a society that refuses to acknowledge her identity. Her struggle is emblematic of the broader challenges faced by queer individuals in India, where legal recognition is often overshadowed by social stigmatization. Despite this, Lovely resists through her unapologetic assertion of her identity, using her voice and presence as acts of defiance against a society that seeks to erase her. Wayne, born intersex and raised as a boy in *Annabel*, embodies the conflict between individual identity and societal expectations. The pressure to conform to a

binary gender identity forces Wayne to suppress his true self, leading to a life of internal and external conflict. His journey towards self-acceptance is fraught with challenges, as he navigates a world that is deeply uncomfortable with gender fluidity. Wayne's resistance is quieter, rooted in his eventual rejection of societal norms and the embrace of his full identity, challenging the rigid gender binaries that dominate his world.

The degradation of nature in both novels is intricately linked to the oppression of marginalized communities. In *A Burning*, urbanization and pollution serve as metaphors for the destruction of both the environment and the social fabric. The relentless pursuit of economic growth, driven by capitalist ideologies, results in the degradation of air and water, which disproportionately affects the poor and vulnerable. The novel illustrates how environmental degradation is not just an ecological issue but also a social justice issue, with the marginalized bearing the brunt of its consequences. In *Annabel*, the natural world is depicted as a space of both violence and refuge. The hunting symbolizes the exploitation of nature for human gain, mirroring the exploitation of women and queer individuals. The wilderness, however, also represents a space of resistance and resilience. These characters resist their oppression through acts of defiance—Jivan's refusal to accept her unjust fate, Jacinta's protection of her child's identity, and Thomasina's eventual acceptance of child's unique existence. Their resistance, however, is not without consequence, as they face alienation, social repudiation, and in Jivan's case, the ultimate punishment. Yet, their stories highlight the resilience of women in the face of systemic violence, challenging the structures that seek to suppress them. The resistance of women, queer individuals, and nature against heteronormativity and patriarchy is a central theme in both novels. Jivan, Thomasina, Jacinta, Lovely, and Wayne each find ways to resist the oppressive structures that seek to control and define them through gender performativity and accepting identity as an intersex. Their resistance is not always overt, but it is persistent, challenging the societal norms that seek to limit their identities and their lives.

The significance of choosing novels from different countries—Canada and India—lies in the ability to compare and contrast how similar themes of oppression and resistance manifest in distinct cultural landscapes. This comparative study underscores the universality of these struggles while also highlighting the unique cultural and societal influences that shape them. By examining these novels side by side, the research illuminates the global nature of these issues, suggesting that the fight against

patriarchy, heteronormativity, and capitalism is not confined to any one nation or culture but is a shared struggle across the world.

Through the analysis of the selected novels, it can be concluded that a dimension of inspiration and hope is added by the resistance of oppressed groups, which shows what may happen when people stand up to repressive regimes. *Annabel* and *A Burning* invite researchers to participate in a deliberate and introspective investigation of identity and societal expectations, serving as a monument to the transformational power of narrative. The purpose of research is to support and make policies for oppressed women and queer individuals, by prioritizing inclusive and intersectional approaches that recognize the unique challenges they face. Policies should ensure equal access to education, healthcare, and employment, alongside legal protections against discrimination and violence. Empowerment through community-based initiatives, representation in decision-making, and awareness campaigns can amplify their voices. Simultaneously, protecting nature from degradation requires integrating environmental justice with social justice, promoting sustainable practices, and enforcing regulations that curb exploitation of natural resources. By addressing the interconnectedness of these issues, a more equitable and sustainable future can be fostered.

## 5.1 Recommendations for Further Research

Further researches on *A Burning* and *Annabel* can benefit from the application of various literary theories, each offering a distinct perspective on the novel's themes and characters. Both novels can be researched through Postcolonial Theory. It offers a lens to explore the marginalization and resistance of oppressed individuals in contexts shaped by colonial legacies. Postcolonial theory, particularly Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern, provides a framework to analyze how the voices of marginalized groups—women, queer individuals, and other minorities—are silenced or distorted within dominant narratives. In *A Burning*, Jivan, a Muslim woman from a lower socio-economic background, represents the subaltern subjected to systemic oppression, media manipulation, and judicial injustice. Lovely, a transgender character highlights the intersectionality of caste, gender, and class oppression. Similarly, in *Annabel*, Wayne's intersex identity confronts the cultural and societal norms of heteronormativity and binary gender expectations, while women like Jacinta and Thomasina navigate patriarchal structures. A postcolonial reading underscores how these characters'

struggles for identity and justice reflect the broader dynamics of marginalization in postcolonial and neo-colonial contexts.

Moreover, postcolonial theory interrogates how colonial histories contribute to environmental degradation, socio-political hierarchies, and cultural erasure. Both novels resonate with eco-critical concerns, portraying the exploitation of natural and human resources in ways that mirror colonial extraction. In *A Burning*, urbanization and environmental neglect align with the erasure of marginalized voices, while in *Annabel*, the harsh landscapes of Labrador serve as metaphors for resilience and resistance against normative structures. By linking human and environmental oppression, postcolonial theory illuminates the interconnectedness of colonial power structures with gender, class, and ecological exploitation. This approach not only emphasizes the subaltern's resistance to systemic marginalization but also advocates for inclusive narratives that challenge hegemonic power dynamics. This includes examining how patriarchy influences the female protagonist's challenges and the construction and deconstruction of gender roles within the narrative. *Annabel* can be analyzed through psychoanalytical theory by exploring the psychological struggles and identity formation of the characters, particularly Wayne/Annabel. Freud's theories of the unconscious, repression, and psychosexual development can shed light on Wayne's internal conflict as an intersex individual navigating societal norms and parental expectations. Jacques Lacan's concepts of the "mirror stage" and the construction of identity through language and symbolic order can further examine how Wayne's sense of self is shaped and fragmented by external forces like family, gender norms, and cultural pressures. The novel's focus on parental influence, especially Jacinta and Treadway's contrasting approaches to Wayne's identity, aligns with psychoanalytic concepts of the Oedipus complex and familial dynamics. This approach reveals the deeper psychological motivations, conflicts, and transformations within the characters. Critical Race Theory provides insights into the portrayal of race and ethnicity, particularly in relation to social justice, discrimination, and power dynamics between racial groups. By studying the experiences of minority characters and the systemic racism they face, this approach can reveal how these issues are addressed or critiqued in the narrative. *Annabel* can also be researched by analyzing metaphorical expressions. These theories can offer a unique lens to uncover deeper meanings and insights into both novels, making them a rich text for further scholarly exploration.

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**National University of Modern Languages, Rawalpindi**

**Faculty of Arts and Humanities**

**Department of English**

**A Queer Ecofeminist Study of Majumdar's *A Burning* and Winter's *Annabel***

Scholar Name: Huffsa Ajmal Program: MPhil English Literature

Registration No: 32Mphil/Lit/Rwp/S21 Supervisor: Ms. Firdous Irshad

**Findings of the Study:**

***A Burning***

- Oppression of Women: Tied to socio-political realities
  - Oppression of Queer: Compounded by poverty & social stigma
  - Nature's Degradation: Urbanization, Industrialization, Pollution.
- Resistance of oppressed characters:**
- Trans resistance through gender performativity
  - A will to live: A form of resistance
  - Wanting a better life: An act of hope and resistance

***Annabel***

- Oppression of Women: Under control of hegemonic masculinity
- Oppression of Queer: Influence of heteronormativity
- Nature's Oppression: Metaphorically linked to the oppression of women and queer reflecting themes of control & exploitation.

**Resistance of oppressed characters:**

- Wayne/ Annabel embracing female identity
- Women Resistance by rejecting gender classification

## **Conclusions/Implications:**

*A Burning* and *Annabel* expertly deconstruct the complexities of heteronormativity, revealing its widespread impact on people navigating their real selves. The novels analyze patriarchal ideas thoroughly, providing a critical viewpoint on the cultural systems that maintain gender conventions and stereotypes. Furthermore, they highlight the connectivity of oppressed groups by highlighting the common struggles of marginalized populations. These novels are notable for their depiction of resistance among oppressed groups, with a special emphasis on the determination of queers, nature, and women. Harm to the natural environment is also a theme of both novels. These novels are mirrors that reflect the complexities of identity, oppression, and the persistent attitude of resistance in the face of challenges.

## **Future Research Recommendations:**

### ***A Burning***

- Postcolonial Theory
- Eco-feminism
- Critical Race Theory

### ***Annabel***

- Psychoanalytical Theory
- Postcolonial Theory
- Metaphorical Representations

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**REVIEW OF FORMAT CERTIFICATE**

It is stated that the scholar **Ms. Huffsa Ajmal (Spring 2021, MPhil English Literature)** has correctly formatted their document as per the guidelines of **NUML, Rawalpindi** in the final draft of the MPhil thesis titled *A Queer Eco feminist Study of Majumdar's A Burning and Winter's Annabel*

Name of Focal Person: Dr. Zainab Younus

Signature of Focal Person: 

Date: 09 December, 2024

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**SUPERVISOR CERTIFICATE**

It is stated that the scholar Huffsa Ajmal has incorporated all the changes which were suggested by the Thesis Defense Committee in the final draft of the MPhil thesis titled:.. A Queer Ecofeminist Study of Majumdar's *A Burning* and Winter's *Annabel*.

I have ensured that all the suggestions have been incorporated in their essence.

Name of Research Supervisor: Firdous Irshad Khan

Signature of Research Supervisor:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: December 4, 2024.