DOI: https://doi.org/10.63056/jllsa.2.11.2026.435

Journal of Language, Literature & Social Affairs

journal homepage: https://scholarclub.org/index.php/jllsa

The Ravi is Dying and So Are We: Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor in Malik's #Spring Love #Pichal Pairi

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ARTICLE INFO

Received:
September 20, 2026
Revision Received:
October 10, 2026
Accepted:
October 23, 2026
Available Online:
November 05, 2026

Keywords:
Slow Violence, Speculative Fiction, Survival Environmentalism, Writer-Activists, Global South

ABSTRACT

This paper examines Usman T. Malik's #Spring Love #Pichal Pairi (2021) through Rob Nixon's concepts of slow violence and the environmentalism of the poor. It argues that Malik's speculative short story transforms South Asian folklore into a politically charged narrative form for depicting ecological degradation. Moving beyond existing critical approaches on Usman T. Malik's work that foreground postcolonial Gothic, genre conventions, and linguistic hybridity, this paper examines the short story as a point of convergence of South Asian folklore, ecological crises, and the gradual accumulation of violence across bodies, atmospheres, and societies. This paper traces Rob Nixon's conception of slow violence across three registers: The ecological degradation of the river Ravi, Farah's bodily and social marginalization, and the COVID-19 pandemic as a crisis exposing existing social, political, and economic and ecological inequalities. This paper also examines what Nixon identifies as the environmentalism of the poor practiced by marginalized communities in the Global South. In its analysis of slow violence, it also highlights the representational role of writer-activists to render otherwise imperceptible forms of violence visible. The paper demonstrates that Pakistani speculative fiction functions as literary mode of challenging obscure forms of violence and environmental injustice, while critiquing neoliberal imperatives of growth and progress.

1. Introduction

In recent years, Anglophone Pakistani speculative writing has emerged as a literary site where the multifaceted convergence of history, caste, class, gender, ecology, economics, and culture is examined. Conventionally, Anglophone Pakistani literature has focused on the trauma of Partition, questions of nationalism and postcolonial realities. However, in recent years, speculative fiction has emerged as one of the most innovative, dynamic, and politically significant genres in Anglophone Pakistani writing. Pakistani speculative fiction operates not as an escapist fantasy but as a tool to identify and question societal, political, bodily, and ecological horrors that exceed the representational limits of traditional realism. Employing tropes from horror, supernatural, science fiction, and climate fiction, Pakistani writers explore dispossession, trauma, displacement, ecological degradation, and political and economic instability. By using Islamic cosmology, local mythologies, and geographies, Pakistani speculative writers give voice to gradual, cumulative social, political and ecological tensions that are hard to notice otherwise. Sadaf and Kanwal (2024) note that many Pakistani speculative fiction writers use "Islamic cosmology and mythology in fantasy, but keep the stories uniquely anchored in the geography of Pakistan" (p.197). Pakistani speculative fiction in this regard becomes a culturally adapted or indigenized form of speculative genre to depict local realities. By obscuring the distinction

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between the real and the fantastic, the genre questions Pakistani society about its colonial past, ecological crises, urbanization, economic vulnerability, sexual anxieties, and religious intolerance. Hence, it works as an alternate epistemological mode to analyze and question which escapes direct articulation.

Existing research examines the genre through the perspectives of South Asian mythologies, aesthetics of decoloniality, localized techno futures, genre conventions, gender, transhumanism, Islamic cosmology, and Sufism traditions. These studies examine the speculative reimagining of local mythological elements to challenge the dominant sociocultural and political structures, while simultaneously challenging Eurocentric conventions of the genre and postcolonial realities. For instance, the studies of The Smokecense of Pluvistan (2020) by Nihal Khan emphasize how the work meticulously blends Islamic epistemology and Pakistan's linguistic diversity of in an imagined, post-apocalyptic, drought-ridden city to critique religious intolerance prevalent in Pakistani society. Similarly, Musharraf Ali Farooqi's work has been examined for its engagement with indigenous mythology and the syncretic nature of South Asian culture. Despite the growing scholarly attention to its socio-cultural dimensions, the ecological dimension of the genre remains insufficiently studied in existing literary analyses.

The ecocritical scholarship on contemporary Anglophone Pakistani writing extends to environmental crises, climate anxiety, ecological contamination, water shortage, deforestation, and rapid industrialization. However, it has been exclusively devoted to realist fiction. Pakistani ecocriticism links ecological crises with colonization and economic inequalities, underscoring that environmental devastation is deeply intertwined with political and economic structures. Environmental justice scholarship focuses on the unequal exposure to ecological devastation, examining which communities bear disproportionate harm and are ignored by bureaucratic and political institutions. For example, Mohsin Hamid's Exit West (2017) has been examined for the interconnected nature of political instability, fragmentation, displacement, and ecological destruction. Uzma Aslam Khan's Trespassing (2003) has also been highlighted for its explorations of the economic precarity produced or intensified by ecological degradation. Therefore, the realist fiction acts as the key corpus for Pakistani ecocritical scholarship while speculative fiction despite its ecological significance has received less critical attention. This imbalance has contributed to relative absence of critiques on the speculative portrayal of ecological degradation through myths, history, folklore, Islamic cosmology, supernatural otherness, and gendered experiences. Therefore, the intersection between Pakistani speculative fiction and ecocriticism is one of the underexplored areas in scholarship on Pakistani literature.

Usman T. Malik has emerged as a leading voice in Pakistani speculative fiction. His works introduce global readers to South Asian culture, folklore, mythology, and storytelling. His works, such as The Vaporization Enthalpy of a Peculiar Pakistani Family (2014) and The Pauper Prince and the Eucalyptus Jinn (2015), are some of the significant texts of Pakistani speculative fiction. They explore the interconnected nature of ecological harm deterioration, socioeconomic exclusions, and political complexities. Malik's #Spring Love #Pichal Pairi (2021) is a speculative short story that transforms South Asian folklore into a politically charged form to represent ecological degradation, class inequality, and bodily vulnerability in contemporary Lahore. This tale, set on the contaminated banks of the River Ravi during the COVID-19 pandemic, is a speculative reconfiguration of Pakistan's ecological crises, historical memory, and social divisions through supernatural otherness and transgenerational upheaval. The story reveals economic precarity, ecological degradation, and sociocultural violence accumulate gradually, remain unevenly distributed, and disproportionately affect marginalized communities.

Rob Nixon's (2011) scholarship lays bare the process of slow violence referring to the environmental harm which often remains invisible, difficult to recognize and gradually accumulate over time. It also underscores the significance of literary narratives which provide legible manifestation of the phenomenon of slow violence. Drawing on Nixon's (2011) notion of slow violence, the paper contends that #Spring Love #Pichal Pairi (2021) is a reconceptualization of ecological injustice as a steady, cumulative, and oppressive process. It is manifested through a myriad of factors, such as environmental degradation and pre-existing societal inequalities, which were deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The River Ravi, COVID-19 pandemic, and Farah's liminal body in the narrative all function as sites where sow violence is embodied. By bringing ecocriticism into dialogue with the Pakistani Anglophone speculative fiction, this study demonstrates how folkloric and supernatural forms can render slow ecological violence visible in ways that realist fiction and its criticism have largely been overlooked.

2. Literature Review

Research on ecological representation in Anglophone Pakistani literature has advanced along two broad, largely independent trajectories: one strand of criticism analyzes the ecological crisis in realist fiction, whereas the second examines speculative fiction through the interconnected lenses of mythology, decolonial theory and decolonial futurisms, largely overlooking the ecological degradation and the urgency of such questions. Taken together, these bodies of scholarship point to a common omission: neither has sufficiently theorized how speculative writing techniques can articulate the ecological violence as represented in Anglophone Pakistani writings. The first strand of research regards realist fiction as a primary literary medium through which Pakistan's ecological degradation has been examined in relation to capitalism, rapid urbanization, and systemic inequalities. Pirzadeh (2019) makes a significant intervention by asserting that fiction underscores the ecological vulnerability

resulting from the interplay of globalization and capitalism, while portraying violence and inequalities as endemic to day-to-day Pakistani life. Echoing similar concerns, Majeed and Bhatti (2024) contend that ecological crises and dispossession displace indigenous communities within their own homelands. Drawing on Rob Nixon's slow violence, they demonstrate how realist narratives render visible the cumulative, gendered, and structurally imperceptible forms of environmental harm. Ansar et al. (2025) advance this line of inquiry through a comparative analysis of No Place for Further Burials (2007) and The Blind Man's Garden (2013), insisting that slow violence is embedded both in bodies and ecosystems to such an extent that it becomes a normalized bodily and environmental condition, disproportionately affecting communities with no avenue of escape.

Ajmal et al. (2025) further advance this trajectory through two relatable works. The first classifies ecological justice and resistance, along with ecological crises, as a recurring concern of Anglophone Pakistani literature, while the second mobilizes ecostylistics to show that industrial pollution is encoded within the linguistic and stylistic structures of literary representation. Malik et al. (2025) place gender at the center of ecological inquiry. Through the analysis of Noor (2003), Thinner Than Skin (2012), and How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia (2013), they insist that women's bodies, unpaid labor, and linguistic expressions are intricately linked to ecological degradation and ecological precarity. This line of inquiry reveals the gendered cost of ecological vulnerability. collectively, this body of scholarship reveals a coherent methodological alignment along with a significant limitation. Across these analyses, environmental harm is theorized as inseparable from the intersecting structures of postcolonial power structures, gender, caste and class. Employing Rob Nixon's idea of slow violence, as a framework, they render visible the cumulative nature of environmental violence. The chief limitation of the existing body of scholarship is its continued reliance on realist representations. Pirzadeh's (2019) account places speculative fiction outside the domain of ecocriticism, and later studies have continued with the predominately realist focus. Thus, Pakistani ecocritical scholarship has largely concentrated on the realist fiction, leaving the ecological possibilities of speculative form underexamined

The second strand of research develops a different trajectory: it conceptualizes Pakistani speculative fiction as a significant generic and cultural articulation but pays relatively little attention to ecological questions. Kanwal and Mansoor (2021) contend that contemporary Pakistani Anglophone speculative fiction writers combine "mythological tropes" and elements from "popular Urdu genre tradition" (p. 244). It combines elements from folklore, Islamic cosmology, to respond to contemporary issues related to patriarchy, neocolonialism, gender disparities, and climate anxieties. Likewise, Khalid (2023) engages with Omar Gillani's sci-fi narratives through the lens of native slipstream. She recognizes indigenous speculative and futuristic techniques as a decolonial tool and positions the genre as a distinct, politically charged tradition, not merely entertainment. Nonetheless, much of this scholarship foregrounds decoloniality, hybridity, and futurism, overlooking how Pakistani speculative fiction can imagine alternative ecological realities.

The critical engagements with Usman T. Malik's work primarily focus on the genre conventions, its aesthetic, and use of local mythology. Zahra (2026) locates marginalized characters in Midnight Doorways: Fables from Pakistan (2021) as abject bodies, highlighting how violence, poor hygiene, and bodily disgust are sources to reveal postcolonial horror and bodily oppression. Rettino (2017) finds the aesthetic of the weird in Malik's work to signify the contradictions of the capitalist economy and unequal developmental outcomes. Rettino's analysis focuses on the blurring of boundaries between realism and the supernatural, which operate to confront social, economic, and political inequalities and urban imaginaries. As a whole, these studies converge around a shared interest in decoloniality, formal elements of the genre and its hybrid nature, while the ecological concerns remain undertheorized. Rettino's (2017) examination of irregular development, for example, considers economic vulnerability chiefly with respect to generic convention and aesthetic form rather than ecological violence. Similarly, Kanwal and Mansoor (2021) acknowledge climate anxiety as one theme from the thematic cluster, rather than treating it as a sustained object of critical analysis. Despite their continuous parallel development, these two strands of study have rarely intersected. On one hand, Pakistani ecocriticism has developed a refined analytical vocabulary to analyze slow violence, yet it remains confined to the realist fiction. On the other hand, the body of criticism on speculative fiction has developed an equally robust corpus on genre conventions, myth, decoloniality, and Pakistani futurisms while giving limited sustained attention to ecocritical undercurrents. This paper is positioned at the intersection of these two analytical and scholarly paradigms to examine Usman T. Malik's short story #Spring Love #Pichal Pairi (2021) as a speculative expression of Rob Nixon's slow violence. It maintains that the story's use of supernatural forms makes ecological violence perceptible in different ways unavailable to realist modes. To conclude, while Pakistani speculative fiction does recognize ecological concerns, ecology has not been treated as sustained object of critical attention. This research paper aims to highlight this rich ecocritical potential of Pakistani speculative fiction.

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper employs Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence, as developed in his seminal work Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor (2011). Nixon reframes the concept of violence by moving beyond traditional frameworks of violence that are typically associated with immediate attention and visibility. He argues that the certain subtle forms of violence are not instantaneous but may unfold gradually over the decades. This type of violence unfolds gradually across time and space in Nixon's view. He defines slow violence as "a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an

attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). Unlike spectacular forms of violence, such as bombings, and extensive extraction of resources, slow violence fails to attract immediate media attention. It remains largely invisible because its effects are cumulative in nature. Mass media privileges spectacle, immediacy, and dramatic magnitude. Some of the notable examples identified by Nixon include deforestation, nuclear disasters, climate change, dispossession, and displacement. These forms of violence are naturalized, politically neglected, and normalized. Slow violence remains largely invisible or unnoticed because it fails to fit into the temporal, bodily, and event-centered frameworks of media and politics. Slow violence is "not just attritional but also exponential", it functions as a "threat multiplier" (Nixon, 2011, p. 3). Toxic pollutants, rapid species loss, and greenhouse gas emissions do not simply accumulate but also intensify over time. Their harm goes beyond the hazards of initial exposures. This accumulative and exponential nature of slow violence makes it resistant to legal and political scrutiny. By the time its effects are visible, the original causes become hard to identify, trace, and challenge.

Nixon's idea is deeply intertwined with class dynamics, globalization, and neoliberalism. The victims of slow violence are predominantly impoverished communities that lack economic and representational power. Poor communities are "the principal casualties of slow violence" (Nixon, 2011, p. 4). These communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental degradation and ecological hazards. Under neoliberalism, the costs and impacts of so-called development is externalized, and they are borne by the local population. Nixon (2011) mentions Lawrence Summers' World Bank memo of 1991 in which he advocated for dumping "garbage, toxic waste, and heavily polluting industries" of First World nations into Third World countries to cope with "an inefficient global imbalance in toxicity" (p. 1). Nixon questions the double standards of environmental politics in the West. He proposes that Summers' suggestion had a "subsidiary benefit" that reveals the systemic nature of the Global North's environmental politics and the Global South's ecological slaughter (Nixon, 2011, p.1). This would pacify the discontent of environmentalists from rich nations who were opposing rich industrialists at home. This reflects marginalization at three levels. Residents of the Global South are disregarded as casualties, and political beings, as well as their own environmental concerns and customs, are ignored. To show the difference between different natures of environmental activism, Nixon borrows from Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier the difference between "empty belly environmentalism and full stomach environmentalism" (Nixon, 2011, p. 55). While affluent communities observe environmentalism from a preservationist and ornamental approach, marginalized societies approach it with a survival instinct. Nixon (2011) elaborates that impoverished societies "can seldom afford to be single-issue activists" (p .4). Their environmental politics are tied to survival itself. They face administrative structures, military forces and conglomerates while simultaneously struggling with financial insecurity and social inequalities. Therefore, their environmental politics is intertwined with questions of race, class, gender, and geography. It is not merely any generic environmental agenda but a part of a broader fabric of accumulated deprivation. Nixon (2011) further notes that "the poor" is a broad category encompassing extensive local variation, and poor societies differ by gender, race, religion, and ethnicity (p. 4). Hence, their activism is shaped by their local needs and demands. The environmentalism of the poor is made up of many improvised and local movements instead of a global one. He further adds that environmentalism was viewed as a neocolonial agenda in postcolonial societies; however, the environmentalism of the poor challenges the Eurocentric notions of environmentalism. It not only questions but also redefines the concept of environmental activism in the Global South.

Nixon (2011) relates the environmentalism of the poor and the lack of representational power to the issue of narrative representation. Because slow violence is spatially dispersed, it becomes challenging to assign responsibilities and seek legal compensation. Hence, victims remain overlooked and their suffering obscured. In this regard, representational power becomes a political and ideological necessity. According to Nixon, writer-activists play a vital role because they represent the slow violence that is often overlooked or deliberately ignored by the mass media and legal and political institutions. Writer-activists make slow violence comprehensible, politically visible, and emotionally compelling. Malik's #Spring Love #Pichal Pairi (2021) exemplifies Nixon's concept of the writer-activist by transforming the gradual ecological degradation of the River Ravi and the suffering of marginalized communities into a visible and politically significant narrative. Through supernatural folklore, bodily otherness, and the COVID-19 pandemic, Malik makes perceptible the interconnected forms of slow violence that dominant political and media narratives often overlook. His speculative storytelling thus demonstrates how literature can function as a form of representational activism, exposing environmental injustice and amplifying marginalized experiences.

4. Analysis and Discussion

#Spring Love, #Pichal Pairi (2021) narrates an unconventional romance between Raza, a journalist, and Farah, a pichal pairi, in the vibrant yet unceasingly decaying city of Lahore. Examined through Nixon's theoretical lens, the narrative emerges as multidimensional representation of slow violence in its essence. River Ravi, the homeless communities living in camps and tunnels on the eroded banks of the river, a deadly pandemic affecting a society divided along class and economic lines, and Farah's body all function as sites where slow violence accumulates across time and space. A pichal pairi is a supernatural female figure found in South Asian folklore. She is traditionally depicted with backward-facing and long hair covering her face. In most folklores, these figures appear as beautiful women who lure men and are eventually identified by their inverted feet. Usman T.

Malik (2021) transforms the traditional pichal pairi from a potentially threatening supernatural figure into a character through whom historical exclusion, environmental vulnerability, and social inequality become visible. He creatively employs the famous trope of South Asian folklore as a narrative strategy to shed light on the historical trauma and systemically entrenched inequalities that make certain sections of society more vulnerable to poverty, disease, and environmental hazards. In addition, his narration renders visible slow violence across three sites: ecological destruction and displacement associated with the River Ravi, bodily violence experienced by the marginalized communities as represented by the figure of Farah, and the COVID-19 pandemic as a social catastrophe, which exposes systemic inequalities.

Raza and Farah meet on the bank of Ravi "at the mouth of a secret tunnel" (Malik, 2021, p. 6). The central symbol of slow violence employed by Malik to depict ecological destruction is the river, Ravi. It is described as a "muddy gash in the face of Punjab, its water a urine-colored trickle" (Malik, 2021, p. 7). The description of Ravi as "muddy gash" and "urine-colored trickle" testifies to the environmental violence caused by decades of pollution, systemic neglect, industrialization, rapid urbanization, and diversion. These metaphors present the river as a wounded body, suggesting that ecological destruction resembles physical injury. It is noteworthy that this violence unfolds so gradually and persists for so long that it ceases to be recognized as violence. Nixon's concept of slow violence is particularly evident here. He argues that slow violence is "attritional violence" that "is dispersed across time and space" (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). According to him, violence is typically conceived as an event that demands immediate attention and "instant sensational visibility" (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). One of the most distinctive features of slow violence is its limited visibility within mainstream political and media representations which tend to prioritize sudden and dramatic events. Nixon argues that slow violence is not only corrosive but also exponential; it functions as a major catalyst for intensifying exiting conflicts: "it can fuel long-term, proliferating conflicts in situations where the conditions for sustaining life become increasingly but gradually degraded" (Nixon, 2011, p.3).

Ravi becomes the story's clearest embodiment of slow violence: its degradation is not sudden, spectacular, or easily attributable but has accumulated over centuries of urban expansion, pollution, and infrastructural neglect. The Ravi, once the jewel of the Mughal Empire, has now been reduced to a contaminated, swampy, turbid waterway. Malik's (2021) narrative actively juxtaposes Ravi's historical splendor with its modern-day ecological degradation. Raza describes these tunnels to Farah as follows: "Not only did they give embankment against the mighty Ravi of the sixteenth century, but they provided escape from scalding heat and quick access to the ferries should the Mughals face siege from enemy forces" (Malik, 2021, p.6). The Mughal's defensive infrastructure was designed to protect Lahore against Ravi's ruthlessness and unpredictability. In the narrative's present, however, the Ravi no longer poses the same threat. This decline in river's former grandeur and magnitude reflects the slow violence that has reduced it to a swamp. This transformation has both environmental and temporal dimensions, spanning centuries of gradual ecological destruction. The river, in this regard, becomes a sacrifice zone or a scapegoat for so-called development elsewhere. It bears the weight of Lahore's rapid urbanization and neoliberal developmental policies. Ravi's basin, as a result of centuries of cumulative violence, such as overuse of water and dumping of pollutants in the river, becomes a reflection of Lahore's infrastructural deterioration.

The cost of the Ravi's degradation is borne by underprivileged and marginalized communities living along it banks. Raza describes these communities as follows: "After exiting Ring Road, I'd noticed sickly-looking panhandlers—adults and children in rags tapping on car windows, slum dwellers. I had no idea how long they had lived here. Generations?" (Malik, 2021, p.7). These "sickly looking panhandlers" represent the human cost of ecological destruction which takes its toll on poor communities, ecosystems, and bodies. While wealthier groups benefit from neoliberal development, its environmental consequences are borne by the marginalized communities, as these communities lack the financial resources to protect themselves against such hazards. One of the most striking and disturbing images Malik (2021) uses to depict environmental devastation is "a buffalo wallowing in a stream that was once a river" (p. 6). The buffalo is a domestic animal typically associated with rural life and agriculture. It is wallowing in a stream that was once a river. He compresses ecological decline into a single image by placing the river's former identity against its diminished present condition. The river has been reduced to a trickle, a turbid stream in which buffalo wallows. By condensing a prolonged history of ecological destruction into a few powerful words, the narrative draws attention to the slow violence that often remains obscured from public view. His compressed imagery makes a prolonged environmental process immediately perceptible to the readers.

This critique of ecological devastation is further sharpened by Raza's description of Lahore as "an urban village foaming with concrete and traffic and smog that made your eyes water" (Malik, 2021, p. 18). Furthermore, Raza describes Lahore as a society stratified by wealth, "over-developed parochial town with its incestuous elite who all knew and fucked each other and played golf in private clubs on acres of green, even as the last tracts of nature available to fruit-wallas and chanay-wallas shrank with every passing day" (Malik, 2021, p.18). By juxtaposing the expansive green spaces of elite golf clubs with the shrinking natural spaces available to street vendors, Malik exposes how urban development distributes environmental benefits and burdens unequally across social classes. According to Nixon, neoliberal policies such as privatization, relentless extraction of natural resources, the expansion of free markets can produce both latent and manifest violence. These policies can also externalize the

ecological cost of development. The consequences of this violence are disproportionately experienced by impoverished communities who depend directly on local ecosystems, communities including fishers, farmers, slum dwellers, and Indigenous peoples. Thus, environmental violence operates across multiple interconnected dimensions. It is experienced at the intersection of race, class, imperialism, and gender. The marginalized communities like the ones in Malik's narrative "are the principal casualties of slow violence" (Nixon, 2011, p.4).

4.1. Survival-Oriented Care and Survival Environmentalism

Farah's activism during the COVID-19 pandemic can be understood as an example of environmentalism of the poor. Drawing on the distinction between the "empty belly environmentalism" and the "full stomach environmentalism" associated with Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier, Nixon discusses the idea of "environmentalism of the poor" (Nixon, 2011, p.5). Farah's recognition that the wealthy can isolate themselves while homeless communities face starvation exposes the unequal capacity of different social classes to withstand crises, linking her acts of care to the broader structures of vulnerability that Nixon associates with environmental injustice.

Farah's choice to stay in her locality during the pandemic constitutes an act of survival-oriented care. Her interventions can be interpreted as survival environmentalism because the communities that she works for experience multifold marginalization including economic precarity, persistent institutional neglect, and ecological deprivation. The unsheltered people residing along the bank of the Ravi inhabit an environment marked by uneven neoliberal development, structural neglect, and chronic contamination. The COVID-19 pandemic drastically exacerbates the already existing inequalities and serves to expose the cumulative violence endured by marginalized communities. Her activism extends beyond the immediate environmental concerns and encompasses support for the "homeless people who live around Ravi" (Malik, 2021, p.21). She observes, "They're going to starve when the rich shut themselves in their mansions. I have resources. I can help them" (Malik, 2021, p.21). Farah's concern for homeless people who live along the degraded banks of the Ravi underscores importance of survival-oriented, care-based activism that addresses the needs of marginalized communities. Her decision to stay outside during the pandemic is not a charitable one; rather, it arises from a sense of solidarity based on shared vulnerability. Nixon's environmentalism of the poor goes beyond formal political protests and methodical environmental drives. According to Nixon, the ecological devastations for impoverished communities are indivisible constituents of survival struggle. Hence, their reactions to ecological injustices often encompass methods that ensure communal survival, wellbeing, and economic stability. He further adds that "impoverished resource rebels can seldom afford to be single-issue activists", arguing that economic marginalization, social inequalities, and environmental devastations are inseparable. Two teenage boys who help Raza find Farah describe themselves as "river dwellers," and they say they know "water's secrets" (Malik, 2021, p.24). Malik highlights how the relationship of indigenous people surpasses that of Raza's journalistic approach. When Raza offers them money to find Farah, they refuse, saying: "If you're her friend and here to help, we'll show you the way" (Malik, 2021, p.24). This depicts Nixon's assertion that indigenous people's relationship to their ecosystems and those who advocate for the environmentalism of the poor is based on lived realities and knowledge. Farah's own living conditions are also an example of the vulnerabilities associated with the intersection of gender, class, and environmental conditions. She lives in a tunnel, "like a hobbit" (Malik, 2021, p.20). Her sister lives in a wealthy neighborhood in Karachi. Her tunnel has a musty smell and posters like "Rang De Basanti", 'Dirty Dancing", "Sadequain replica", and "collected works of Sylvia Plath and Parveen Shakir" (Malik, 2021, p.25). Her tunnel becomes a visual representation of class disparity and the multifaceted nature of slow violence.

Raza's social welfare endeavors further highlight the class dynamics of slow violence, as he observes: "The worker atop the bamboo scaffold at your uncle's plaza. The watchman at the house your father was building. The ditch digger who came once a week with your gardener. Society sweep. Raddi-wala. The woman who rifled through your trash, and her son, who swept the steps for a tip. The sun-darkened, cachectic faces of True Lahore" (Malik, 2021, p.23). The phrase "true Lahore" is simultaneously affirmative and ironic. The city depends on the largely unrecognized labor of these workers. Their bodies absorb the pollution, and their lives are affected the most by any catastrophe that disrupts the normal functioning of the economy. The lockdown implemented in response to COVID-19 further accentuates the ecological condition. Raza notices, "the sky, an impeccable blue Lahore hadn't seen in decades, simmered with brown cheel kites" (Malik, 2021, p.23). This highlights the long-standing atmospheric pollution and ecological harm that have become normalized. A clear blue sky appears extraordinary to Raza because people of Lahore seem to have forgotten what a clear sky looks like. Slow violence shapes not only ecosystems, communities, and bodies but also people's perceptions of environmental conditions. Although their actions may not constitute conventional ecological activism in the traditional sense, they nevertheless challenge the interconnected structures of environmental, economic, social, and political marginalization. Thus, the narrative suggests that the environmentalism of the poor can also be expressed through everyday care and collective solidarity.

4.2. The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Visibility of Slow Violence

The emergence of public-health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic serves to reveal the interconnected dimensions of slow violence. It emerged as an acute public health and social crisis and exposed pre-existing structures of inequality associated with slow violence while exacerbating existing social inequalities. It is not necessarily a manifestation of slow violence but rather functions as an indicator of environmental degradation, economic inequality, and institutional neglect marker. Malik (2021) illustrates that acute crises can expose decades of slow violence. The experience of marginalized communities during such catastrophes reflects the cumulative effect of prolonged deprivation, whether material or ecological. The structural vulnerabilities exposed by the pandemic accumulate gradually but often remain unacknowledged. Raza regards it as "rumors of a disease" (Malik, 2021, p.21). The inability to perceive the COVID-19 pandemic as an immediate medical and social emergency may reflect the limitations of dominant frameworks in recognizing violence that unfolds over extended periods. It is experienced as sudden because warning signs are not legible in dominant frameworks. Raza reinforces the observation by stating, "We thought we had plenty of time. Until we didn't" (Malik, 2021, p.21). While wealthier people retreat to their mansions, the poor communities are exposed to harm. They also bear the consequences of economic disruptions that were triggered by the pandemic. The narrative suggests that million were affected by the lockdown: "Victims of the house-lock numbered in the millions" (Malik, 2021, p.23). Farah contracts the infection while helping impoverished communities. Her body and her tunnel become symbols of accumulated violence. Her tunnel also evokes immortality. It suggests that slow violence operates through process of normalization and prolonged exposure. Her body embodies the cumulative effects of slow violence experienced by people at society's margins. The pandemic further intensifies these existing vulnerabilities.

4.3. Farah's Liminal Body as an Archive of Slow Violence

While Ravi and the COVID-19 pandemic act as the ecological and socioeconomic side of slow violence, Farah's liminal body embodies the historical dimensions. Nixon (2011) contends that slow violence is not only ecological but also historical and cultural. The bodies of marginalized communities act as archives for accumulated violence. Their bodies act as archives of misery, violence, exclusion, fear, and death. Farah's inverted feet, her existence as a refugee, her biracial heritage, and her discriminatory experiences make her body an embodiment of liminality and the cost that comes with it. Her inverted feet are not a direct symbol of ecological degradation; rather, they embody otherness and gendered exclusion. Malik employs her body as a metaphor to show how histories of disenfranchisement are embedded in bodies, transforming them into the archives of loss. Farah's lineage as depicted by Malik is particularly significant. Farah is half Afghan and half Abarimon. Her mother descended from a "Hindukush tribe Abarimon" (Malik, 2021, p.8). They are described in "Pliny the Elder's Natural History" as "swift and savage mountain people who lived alongside animals" and "couldn't be captured due to their tremendous speed" (Malik, 2021, p.8). Raza describes that a young Abarimon was captured by Alexander of Macedon, and she was unable to survive. Alexander's land surveyor Baiton said that Abarimons were only able to breathe in their valley's air and that "outside was poison to them" (Malik, 2021, p.9). Farah's response to this story highlights Nixon's argument that costs of exploitation are often externalized. She challenges this account: "Baiton, of course, was blowing smoke up his own ass" (p.9). She further adds: "The kid was likely ill and the account exaggerated. It had nothing to do with the air. Our ancestors were nomads, for heaven's sake" (Malik, 2021, p.9).

Nixon (2011) argues that ecological and bodily devastation experienced by marginalized communities is justified through naturalizing explanations like blaming natural causes such as diseases, the environment, and the climate. This externalizes the cost of human exploitation and political decisions onto something abstract like nature and biological health. Farah's response rejects this naturalization and insists on the ecological and political costs of suffering. Her father is a Parsi, and his ancestors moved from Eastern Iran to Afghanistan. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, the family moved to Pakistan. Farah's father realized: "When the Soviets invaded, my father knew the differently abled would be the first to get targeted" (Malik, 2021, p.9). This history of displacement from Iran to Pakistan across generations exemplifies Nixon's idea of "long dyings" (Nixon, 2011, p.2). Slow violent catastrophes don't unfold in a single episode but operate across generations, enduring displacement and dispossession. Farah's refugee status is a manifestation and continuation of centuries of displacement, devastation, and marginalization. Her backward feet are not a biological characteristic but an archival inscription of historical trauma. Malik's use of Farah's unusual body and her lineage extends Nixon's framework from ecological perspectives to inscribed histories, depicting how the prolonged effects of violence are experienced not only by ecosystems but also by the bodies residing in those ecosystems.

Farah reflects this trauma in the following words: "What woman, she said, hasn't spent her life compelled to look at the past, the baggage car of trauma that follows her—even as her feet march her forward" (Malik, 2021, p.19). This illustrates how trauma continues to shape the present and future. Malik's reimagining of a pichal pairi from a monstrous figure to an activist acts as a counter-narrative. By reimagining the folkloric figure, he challenges traditional representations of monstrous femininity as well as the normalized forms of exclusion. Her yellow kurta at Aurat March signifies her political engagement. As it declares, "YOU FEAR LOVEMAKING BUT NOT WAR-MONGERING?" (Malik, 2021, p.17). However, while advocating for marginalized

communities, she faces exclusion as well. Her placard reads: "LOOK AT THIS POSTER, NOT AT MY FEET" (Malik, 2021, p.17). A young woman tells Farah that she should not be here because she is not one of them. It suggests that even spaces of solidarity can reproduce exclusion. The arrival of the postcard at the end of the story signifies that the victim of slow violence achieves escape without necessarily attaining resolution.

Malik's narrative exemplifies Nixon's "writer-activists". Such writers employ literature, "to help us apprehend threats imaginatively that remain imperceptible to the senses" (Nixon, 2021, p.15). Writer-activists, through their representational powers, amplify the voices of marginalized communities and challenge the dominant narratives that environmental destruction. The narrative is a mixture of romantic interlude, journalistic piece of writing, and lyrical reflections. The fragmented narrative amplifies the scattered nature of violence and renders its cumulative effects perceptible. Hashtags used in the title bring disparate forms of violence into as social media trend.

5. Conclusion

This research paper examines #Spring Love #Pichal Pairi (2021) as a literary representation of the manifestation of slow violence across bodies, environments, and societies. By examining the short story through Rob Nixon's analytical framework, this paper challenges the predominantly aesthetic and genre-focused interpretations of Pakistani speculative fiction. This study argues that the short story is more than a tale of romance between a human and a supernatural being. It is a carefully crafted literary narrative that exhibits the slow violence that is rendered invisible by dominant cultural and political frameworks. This paper posits that ecological crises do not occur in isolation. Environmental harm is intersectional in nature. It operates at the intersection of race, gender, class, and geography. Through Malik's fiction, this paper examines the failure of mass media and politics to address slow violence and the limited political visibility of environmental harm. This paper distinguished between the nature of environmental activism carried out by rich and impoverished communities through Farah and Raza's activism during the pandemic. This analysis highlights the role of writer-activists to make slow violence visible through literary narratives that make it urgent and politically consequential. In conclusion, it advocates that Anglophone Pakistani speculative fiction offers a means of interrogating political, societal, and ecological stratifications.

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