

Andaman Island and the Historicity of Colonial Violence: An Ecocritical Study of Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*

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ABSTRACT

*This study engages with the historical understanding of colonial violence followed by environmental disasters during World War II on Andaman Island. In the mid-twentieth century, the residents of Andaman Island were caught up in a battle between the British and the Japanese empires. These colonisers enslaved the locals, grabbed their land, and pillaged the natural resources. Instead of learning from the indigenous people who had established a community without disrupting the balance of nature, they continued to distract nature and enslavement of the local inhabitants. This research examines a central theme of environmental violence inherent to the colonial project through the shared heterogeneous experience of the Aborigines. By employing the concept of 'environmental violence', this study critiques the violence sabotaged by British and Japanese colonisers to determine the changes in the lives of the fictional characters in Khan's novel. The findings reveal that Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* (2019) might be better considered the historical colonial violence and the rights of the Indigenous people on Andaman Island are the critical components of the activist campaign for the return of their culture, history, and lands. It further reveals that colonial violence is responsible for the perpetuation of recent environmental disasters on Andaman Island.*

Keywords: Andaman Island; colonialism; ecocriticism; historical; World War II

INTRODUCTION

The premise of postcolonial environmentalism should be traced in Uzma Aslam Khan's *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*, which reveals a deep understanding of the indigenous communities of Andaman Island. The text highlights how the indigenous people locate nature at the centre of their existence. Khan is one of the renowned women novelists in contemporary Pakistani English literature. She was born in Lahore and raised in Pakistan's most populated city Karachi. Being a tribal, she depicts the lives of indigenous people in the South Asian regions, drastically affected by environmental change in her writings. The travel experiences reflected in her writings account for an array of subjects, such as environmental vicissitudes of the contemporary age. An American Pakistani novelist Uzma Aslam Khan portrays the indigenous people of the Andaman Islands of the Indian Subcontinent before Independence. Set during World War Second, her novel depicts the British and Japanese military rule, which destroyed the indigenous inhabitants, their land, culture, and lifestyle. The importance of the postcolonial ecocriticism lens in highlighting the connections between colonial practices and stories of environmental violence cannot be overstated.

It explores capitalism's historical roots that address the voices of indigenous peoples on Andaman Island being silenced. Khan tells this story through the perspective of ordinary people, especially the powerless local indigenous people, rather than through political and social propaganda. Uzma Aslam Khan's latest novel, *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*, is set on Andaman Island between 1936 and 1946. The story revolves around two famous characters, Nomi, and her brother Zee, who live with their parents, Haider Ali and Fehmeda. All the family members live on Andaman Island, "Nomi and Zee are the two locals, born on South Andaman Island" (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 02). The story opens with the advent of the Japanese military everywhere in the Archipelago in 1942. It starts with a horrific event when one morning, Zee witnesses "the soldiers were everywhere, just standing around, carrying long guns and small satchels" (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 01). He believes nobody cares about them; they are still colonised under different rulers, first, the British and then the Japanese. He says, "The British have left. We are not free. We are now under the Japanese" (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 01).

Nomi and Zee left the "village and followed Aye (friend) and did not ask where" they were being taken. "They are far from the beach where they had started today, the one from where the twin islands Neill and Havelock could be seen" (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 48). Neil and Havelock are two parts of the Andaman Islands. These parts are rich in tropical forests, coral reefs, and unique biodiversity. Uzma Aslam Khan recreates the hopes and apprehensions of different groups of voiceless people from Andaman Island, which would have been a useless task if it had been managed purely through the analysis and documentation of the island. She depicts the miserable conditions of forced local workers who were constantly subjected to solitary imprisonment (how the locals were designed), torture, beatings, and force-feeding. Punam Tripathi, in her book, *The Vulnerable Andaman and Nicobar Islands* (2018), argues that "the Andaman Island... have completely transformed after the British occupied it in 1858. Today the population of... (the Island consists) primarily of mainlanders who were 'settled' ... are the aboriginal tribal population" (Tripathi, 2018, p. 304). Andaman is important in the national and historical imaginary of India's freedom struggle as the dreaded 'Kala Pani'. Its cellular jail and the tortures that Khan describes in the novel form the crux of the narrative and the story of its characters.

A historian like Aparna Vaidik (2010) also argues that "the history of the colonial encounter also demonstrates how colonialism produced, reordered, configured and negotiated spaces not simply domestic, familial and vocational but geographical and environmental as well" (Vaidik, 2010, p.188). Colonialism is inscribed at the heart of the island in the form of cellular jail, and also the names of the islands, and the political and geographical divisions of the island. These are important aspects of history and geography that ecocritical reading needs to take into account. The major objectives of this research are to determine how colonial empires contributed to the devastation of Andaman Island's natural environment and how World War II increased the causes of environmental violence on the island.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Iqbal and Mustafa (2022) use Homi K. Bhabha's idea in their study of 'double liminality' and 'double marginality' in Muslim women's narratives via the prism of postcolonial concerns. Their research findings highlight the obstacles that women's narrative voices had to overcome in India during the time of British colonisation. The researchers looked at the location and standing of

women on Andaman Island from the perspective of Bhabha's concepts of liminality and marginality to better understand the predicament of the colonial people there. In their research, Shireen and Sajid (2022) give readers the specifics of the torturous quinine pharmacological trials that were conducted and led to local deaths by using the 'Biological colonialism' theory.

Hence, their study reveals the specifics of the brutal testing of a new drug on Indians during British colonisation. Aamir and Khan (2021) argue using a post-memory transgenerational approach and the framework of modern trauma studies to pinpoint the traumatising experiences of political prisoners on Andaman Island. Using stories of silence and inherited memories, it examines how the transmission of trauma functions in the text to show the potential for productive political activism. In the context of trauma studies, which mainly emphasise psychoanalytical interpretations, their research highlights the potential for constructive theory and post-memory. According to Ambreen Hai (2020), post-9/11 geopolitics speak to concerns like state brutality and oppression, militancy, and the potential for cooperation despite differences. Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, in his book *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence* (1999), emphasises that the lack of natural resources has frequently led to violence in the present, and this trend is likely to continue as farmland, freshwater, and forest scarcities grow throughout many emerging nations in the next decades. Such natural scarcity plays a part in this kind of violence, which is frequently ambiguous and indirect. The author has demonstrated that the environmental scarcity of resources causes substantial numbers of conflicts and wars across the globe. Mahesh Rangarajan, in *Environmental Issues in India: A Reader* (2009), argues that a stable, unchanging, and balanced ecosystem has never existed. Such changes in the landscape were important in human history much earlier than the rise and fall of colonial empires and the conquest of wars. The literature reviews mentioned above indicate the themes of Postcolonialism, Memory studies, Trauma studies, Feminism, Biological colonialism, and Studies in Post-9/11 literature regarding Uzma Aslam Khan's work. The academic world is yet to consider her novel as raising many contemporary concerns related to the environment.

Also, there has been scant research conducted from the perspective of postcolonial ecocritical study, which has been undertaken to perceive ecological justice and colonial environmental violence by an increase in the catastrophe of the natural environment and its effect on the indigenous people of Andaman Islands. Some recent research deals with female voices, militarism, identity crisis, gender issues, and class conflict between different strata of society. Based on actual historical events, the novel of Uzma Aslam Khan has immense scope for research from a postcolonial ecocritical perspective as the novel's characters embody various natural encounters. Since the existing research is limited, it becomes challenging for readers and researchers to understand and explore Khan's mind and art from a new perspective.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Postcolonial ecocritical discourses have thematised the emerging issues from "colonial relations and their aftermath" to engage in the environment and the relationship between colonial powers "covering a long historical span" (Shohat, 1992, p. 99). Such historical investigations, emphasising the links between the British and Japanese empires, global development, and the environment, made it "possible to perceive a new kind of concern for the environment emerging in the postcolonial era, one attuned to histories of unequal development and varieties of discrimination" (Vital, 2008, p. 90). Many literary critics worldwide have drawn great attention by revealing the

natural world in literature. Under the umbrella term of ‘ecocriticism,’ this research focuses on the narrow terminology of postcolonial ecocriticism, environmental violence, and historical struggle evidence of Andaman Island. Some critics in the field of postcolonial ecocriticism are Rob Nixon, Gayatri Spivak, Lawrence Buell, Frantz Fanon, Ursula K. Heise, Bill Ashcroft, Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, whose critical formulations help us to achieve a better theorisation on the discourse of colonised communities on Andaman Island and their environment. Frantz Fanon, the prominent critic of postcolonial ecocriticism, argues that “for a colonised people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity” (1965, p. 43). Rob Nixon, too, opines that “environmental research” (2011, p. 145) and the epistemological divisions between postcolonial and ecocriticism must be overcome to distinguish between the environmental realities of postcolonial lands and their histories. Critics like Greg Garrad’s *Ecocriticism* and Lawrence Buell’s *The Future of Environmental Criticism* demonstrate great awareness of ecocriticism’s historical narrative and understand that the indigenous people faced great environmental pressures under colonial regimes while disposing of lands and preserving nature. Postcolonial theorists have faced the real environmentalist imperatives, among other political issues in postcolonial nations. In the colonial capitalist growth style, such violent behaviour towards the environment and other people is commonplace. The historicity narrative of colonial materiality practices “to reduce indigenous peoples to a set of referential points against which settlers define themselves to claim the present and the future for colonisers”. (Fosbury & Tanaka, 2023, p. 09)

Postcolonial ecocriticism has begun to improve the enlightening of the terms of colonial genesis while continuing to highlight the rulers’ discriminations and environmental cruelties. The importance of paying attention to the “histories of colonial violence” (Majeed et al., 2021, p. 01) ingrained in the earth is emphasised by postcolonial ecocriticism. Ecocriticism has emerged from literary studies in response to how critics view humans and non-humans and its role in literature. The environmental policies of colonial powers were based on the notion that the environment could provide income in addition to being preserved and protected. The growth of postcolonial ecocriticism has raised awareness of historical power dynamics, increased interest in postcolonial texts, and focused on imperial contexts. Although it has typically been prominent among other critical approaches, ecocriticism has always been a wide, distinct, and regionalised movement, according to Lawrence Buell, and is “less a monolith than... a course of discrepant practices” (Buell, 2005, p. 11). Because of the close interconnected relationships between historical environmental violence and postcolonial ecocriticism, this critical theory fills the gap between mainstream eco-movements and literature. The present study of this novel is a reflexive index in achieving the main research objectives by applying Postcolonial ecocriticism discourse analysis as a framework to critically analyse the relationship between the indigenous people of Andaman Islands and their land, culture, history, and local environment as discussed in this text *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali*.

METHODOLOGY

This article uses postcolonial ecocriticism as an analytical perspective to analyse Uzma Aslam Khan’s novel *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019). The main data collection method will be a close reading of the text. Khan stresses the importance of highlighting the history of colonial violence embedded in the Andaman Islands. Postcolonial ecocriticism

theorises the relations between human power and subjectivities by adopting the complex methodologies of mainstream ecocritical research. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin point out that “the easy assertion, for instance, that the postcolonial field is inherently anthropocentric (human-centred) overlooks a long history of ecological concern in postcolonial criticism” (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, p. 03). Given the global focus on environmentalism, it is surprising that ecocriticism or the struggles of the local populace, has shown great interest in global environmental literature. Additionally, the methodology of this research work looks strong by adding the theoretical concept of postcolonial ecocriticism, which was addressed by numerous theorists and historians like Rachel Carson (environmental scientists), Ramachandra Guha (historians and environmental philosophers), and mainstream ecocritics like Lawrence Buell, and Rob Nixon are also contributing to address major historical environmental problems on Khan’s novel. Moreover, this study examines the extensive reading with the help of major secondary sources used by the following historians and geographers, like Punam Tripathi’s *The Vulnerable Andaman and Nicobar Islands* (2018), Aparna Vaidik’s *Imperial Andamans: Colonial Encounter and Island History* (2010), and Ujjal Singh’s (1998) *Political prisoners in India*, who have made significant contributions in exploring Andaman Island’s colonial history and geographical location. Many other literary critics, such as Ursula K. Heise and Huggan and Tiffin, write on settler colonialism and have described a form of injustice and violence that is inherent to the experience of colonisation, even in some instances of the novel where indigenous people have lost their connection due to the obligation of rules of violence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

HISTORICAL STRUGGLE OF COLONIALISM AND THE RAVAGES OF WORLD WAR II

The study of this novel investigates “the complex cycle of cruelties unleashed by colonialism” and “the effectively brutal nature of any war” (Fernandes, 2014). The island suffers natural exploitation, injustice, and misery from local victims. It also displays deep suffering that “results from the vast and deep destruction wreaked by the tides of history” (Fernandes, 2014). Khan demonstrates her striking ability to capture the pain, loss and exploitation of humans and nature by the effects of war:

The next day, a bomb nearly struck Army Headquarters in Haddo. It killed an inmate . . . a man locked inside decades prior for reasons no one remembered. He bled to death, believing that the view of the sugarcane plantation opening before him through the blasted wall was of paradise.

(Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 268)

At the height of World War II, the island’s residents were caught up in the battle between two foreign empires: the Japanese and the British. The picturesque beauty of the Andaman Islands conflicts with the ravages of war, the horror of prison life and the harsh effects of British colonisation. Haider Ali was doubled homicide by the British government and transported to Andaman Island. After his jail term, he is given a hut to live in. This story is about three central characters, Nomi, Zee and their friend Aye and a web of threads between them and their families. There is an undeniable thread connecting the Indian and Burmese inhabitants with their colonisers. Nomi and Aye grow up during the Japanese occupation suffering violence and a persistent threat of more violence. The critical approaches of Khan’s work suggest a productive resolution to the tension between the colonisers and colonised through critical approaches such as “synthesising

postcolonial and ecocriticism” (Watts, 2008, p. 253). When the Second World War began, the British administration on Andaman Island decided to evacuate all the British and Indian civilians to the mainland after realising that they could not defend the islands against the “Imperial Japanese Army” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 169). The “Local Born” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 75), who lived permanently on the islands, have no connections to the mainland and have chosen to remain there. The Japanese attacked the native’s forces, leaving “thousands of their soldiers were dead. Thousands of Indian soldiers in the British Indian Army were dead too” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 334). The period of Japanese colonial was the time of World War II and was a period of environmental disaster which was “characterised by the fortification of Andaman Island..., continuous air raids, famine, and injuries and killings” (Tripathi, 2018, p. 47).

THE STRUGGLE OF LOCALS AND THE ROLE OF NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS

During the first half of the twentieth century, the struggle against British rule gradually became a mass movement involving large numbers of tribals, peasants, and women. Through the British government’s decision to start the penal settlement, a large number of peasants were deported to Andaman Island. The movements, like Non-Cooperation, Khilafat, and the “Indian independence movement” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 271), broke out against the rebellion of the British government. So, the increase in nationalist movements against British colonial rule added another factor to the existing goal of the penal settlement. It was a unique condition where the “colonial authorities seemed apprehensive of confining the nationalists on the mainland where they could spread their dangerous ideas” (Singh, 1998, p. 51).

Aye looked completely different from others; nobody had ever seen her before in an Andamanese traditional attire. Though the locals have questions that “he might have come from one of Andaman homes, about which all Local Born children had been taught at school” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 75). The novelist draws our attention to the history of a British prison colony on Andaman Island through the character of Aye, “who had witnessed their construction, said the Homes were built to confine and improve the islanders, the way the jail was built to confine and improve the convicts” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 75). The Andaman Island is the “only territorial part of India to have been occupied by a non-European power” (Roychowdhury, 2020). The British had imposed exploitative control over the entire country at that point, and the natives of the island raised their voices of nationalism against the colonisers. After landing on the islands, the Japanese went into a rage and started killing, destroying, and stealing anything they could get their hands on. Japanese forces “landed on Andaman Island on March 23, 1942, and the next three to four hours gained complete control over the area” (Roychowdhury, 2020). Before the British and the Japanese rule, Andaman Island was much explored by Malay Pirates who had “captured the aborigines and sold them as slaves in the courts of Siam and Cambodia” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 53).

Long before Andaman Island became a part of independent India, “rumours began that the British would be leaving, as the locals had not believed the islands could keep existing without them” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 62). The aboriginal tribes, including the Sentinelese and Jarawas, were losing contact with nature. As the British started converting the islands into penal colonies, hundreds of tribals “died of dysentery, malaria and scurvy” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 54) and influenza from outside contact. The significant development changes in the eighteenth century exploited the island’s natural resources where such penal settlements were established. The aborigines of the islands were targeted by white men based on different social castes and

racism, including “the early settlements of Blair and Cornwallis, the British had robbed, raped, and murdered the islanders for one hundred and fifty years” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 56). The Andaman Islands are very close to Burma and the Indian subcontinent. During colonisation, the area was reserved for political prisoners against oppressive colonial government rules. With the invasion by these colonial governments, “the Japanese had destroyed all records of their occupation and many of the jail records, too. After the British reoccupied the island, they had taken away whatever they could find” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 365). Both colonial rulers set up their rules and regulations; accordingly, they exploited natural resources and destabilised the ecological balance of biodiversity. The Andaman-experienced characters in the novel succinctly and emotionally describe the phenomenon of these arrivals.

The character Susumu Adachi is a Japanese man who works as a dentist in Aberdeen Square. He starts developing a deep knowledge of different regional cultures, histories and languages like “Urdu, Hindi, and English”. He knew the “history of islands, as he counts 330 small islands in an entire Archipelago” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, pp. 52-3). The British constructed a Cellular Jail for political and criminal convicts from the islands who were against them. In the present day, it is regarded as Andaman’s first and foremost national pilgrimage. During the period when anti-colonial nationalists were tortured, humiliated, and imprisoned in Kala Pani jail; the prisoners began to chant, “Long live the Revolution!” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 133). The British colonisers—built Kala Pani Jail for the local prisoners on the island; the prisoners were subjected to their means to clear “the jungle and building roads” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 26). When the Japanese took over the control of the Andaman Islands from British rule during the Second World War, the inhabitants started believing that they might end up accepting autonomy. The Indian National Army controlled the central part of the Andaman Islands, “headed by Subash Chandra Bose” (Fernandes, 2014), but the administration over the islands was only nominal. By the “middle of 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose, a prominent leader of the Indian independence movement, had become the INA’s leader” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 271). In reality, supremacy was implemented by “the Japanese forces so brutally that they caused the residents of the islands to develop a deep hatred both for the Japanese and Bose’s army” (Fernandes, 2014).

CAPITALIST WORLD AND NATURAL HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS LIVES

The postcolonial world consists of aggressive changes towards the growing phase of capitalism, sometimes called globalisation. However, Postcolonialism has been primarily concerned with examining “the process and effects of and reactions to European colonialism” (Ashcroft et al., 1995, p. 88) from the late century to the present day in the form of neo-colonialism. It affirms that “capitalism is often held responsible for the exploitation of nature” (Rahman, 2021, p. 317). During colonial times on Andaman Island, the rulers started connecting land to other parts of the world and “building a new road through the jungle” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 184) to make the trade successful. Khan expresses concern about the “postcolonial critic’s ability to challenge capitalism that has seen the rich growing richer and the poor becoming even poorer” (Maxwell, 2009, p. 16). Adamson and Davis their edited book *Humanities for the Environment* (2018), emphasise that:

The consequences of capitalist economics, such as deforestation, water pollution, and the clearing of land for large-scale agriculture and urbanisation, generate immediate disruptions in ecosystems, ‘rapidly’ rendering them very different from what they were like before, undermining Indigenous knowledge systems and indigenous peoples’ capacity to cultivate landscapes and adjust to environmental change. (p. 92)

The indigenous people on the Andaman Islands have sometimes been entirely different from the other natives of the region, and they play an important role in the contribution of current environmental debates. The colonisers spent a few years and started working to exploit the local forest greenery and deforestation to increase the sources of capital income. “They had overseen the building of roads and several footpaths through the jungle, an increase in food production” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 241). The critique of current globalisation uses capitalist development and industrial managerialism ideologies to reshape the globalised world. In the wake of the colonial invasion, the indigenous people of Andaman Islands and their “relations to the earth and the possibilities they presented were subject to this crime of concerted eradication in favour of extractive industries, industrialised food and agricultural systems” (McGiffin, 2022, p. 02). The intersections between indigenous lives and other earthly mechanisms, as well as the inseparability of human repression from the exploitation of the environment from a historical violence perspective, were the main topics of this novel’s critical analysis. This study helps us to explore a “number of trajectories that have emerged at the historical moment in the development of South Asian postcolonial ecocriticism” (Rahman, 2021, p. 317). The critical study of this novel will help us to understand the wide variety of terminology (expressions used in relation to a particular subject) such as “First Nations” and “Aboriginal” (The University of British Columbia, 2009) available to articulate the relationship between indigenous communities and their local environment and how colonial rules and war affect it. Rob Nixon argues that “violence occurs gradually and delayed destruction that dispersed across time and space” (2011, p. 02). The examples seen in the novel are deforestation, construction of roads, climate change, and “the radioactive aftermaths of wars” (Nixon, 2011, p. 02) on Andaman Island by the interception of British and Japanese colonisation.

COLONIAL VIOLENCE: THE HISTORICITY AND EXPLOITATION OF INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENT

The worst environmental crisis in the history of the Andaman Islands was mainly brought on by human activities during the British and Japanese colonial administrations. The coloniser’s notion of “controlling and fighting the other is realised by simplistic oppositions in which the Western are portrayed as the liberator of the oppressed other” (Hussain & Mishra, 2023, p. 106). On the contrary, their exploitation of natural resources established new colonies creating capitalist development, destroying natural habitats and deforestation. Such devastation resulted in the loss of various natural vegetation on which the indigenous people mainly depended, leading to starvation which “became widespread; hundreds of people are thought to have been deported to an uninhabited island to grow food. Many perished.

It is estimated that two thousand Indians died due to Japan’s occupation of the Andamans” (Fernandes, 2014). Khan’s portrayal of the interrelationship between environmental change and lived experiences of indigenous peoples during World War II sheds light on this historical fiction to probe into the instance of environmental catastrophe and its consequences. Khan’s *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* incorporates a double-time narrative framework—the plot construction in the mid-twentieth century on Andaman Island and the novel’s publication in the twenty-first century. This story addresses the questions of historical environmental violence and the representation of time frame in two distinctive ways. Its reflective nature traces the background of the present environmental crisis to colonial practices of natural resource exploitation, mining and practices that persist in the twenty-first century. The characters are from different nations and religious backgrounds: Nomi and Zee are Muslim, Shakuntala is Hindu and Christian, Aye is a

Buddhist, and Dr Singh is a Sikh. The woman prisoner is uncategorised and unnamed. Loka is indigenous; all these characters are from India, Pakistan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh. Loka tells Aye an astonishing story about the traditional culture of the past:

When his sister had been alive and her husband, too, Loka would go with them to hunt cicada grub in the forest ... they were called and roasted on a low fire in a wrapping of leaves . . . tell stories about their ancestors, who fought the outsiders and were free. The wars would not have happened if two entities that should not have come together had stayed apart.
(Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 120)

From an eco-historical point of view, the enormous spike in colonialism across the island in the aftermath of the war demonstrates how the environmental crisis reinforced the local bondage economy even as the European powers sought to destabilise it. Understanding the term “environmental violence” (Nixon, 2011, p. 41) is helpful in knowing the different dimensions of violence. However, it is “not only physical violence, let alone collective physical violence, but is also structural violence” (Galtung, 1969, p. 169). The current degradation of Andaman Island has some common historically rooted crises, like social inequality, political injustice, industrial development, and the effect of World War II. The war began with the clash between “Tianjin and Beijing have fallen” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 36) in 1937; it was the first significant movement of the Second Sino-Japanese War and may be considered the first battle of WW II. The central conflict rose with the “unsatisfied need for resources and the increase in demand will, in all likelihood—as any resources scarcity—cause an increase in violence, conflict and war” (Zimmerer, 2014, p. 267).

The war gradually started spreading to other parts of Southeast Asia; as Khan clearly mentions, “the war is coming to Southeast Asia, and the British seem to consider these hidden islands the safest place to be” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 36). Environmental violence frequently appears in the different fields of the category under the broad term “Environmental Humanities” (Heise et al., 2021, p. 01). Khan draws our attention to the history of the British penal colony on Andaman Island, which covers eleven years from 1936-47 when British rule in India ended. Khan’s tortuously intertwined narrative in this novel shows the different classes of characters and their experiences of the brutality of various occupiers. A much-needed work of historical environmental fiction, it deals with the prison colony of the Andaman Islands that the British government established:

These islands stood as a symbolic hell of British tyranny, where our freedom fighters were treated with inhuman torture. The return to the Government of Free India of the Andaman Islands, the first part of India to be liberated by the Japanese Army from British rule, has infused new hope in our fight for freedom.
(Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, pp. 271-72)

Environmental violence is the natural state of colonial rule in the novel; those living in these prison colonies continue to suffer under the oppressive and dominant regime. Furthermore, the violence to the environment, which “seems intrinsic to the dominant model (British and Japanese), is also associated” with environmental violence, which “depends on nature for drawing sustenance for themselves, their families, and their societies” (Shiva, 2016, p. xiv). The distinctions and divisions on Andaman Island are on a narrow line of indigenous roots, races, and nations. It formulates that “environmental discrimination on the basis of colour, race, caste, origin, income, cultural difference and unequal distribution of environmental risks” (Sharma, 2019, p. 1019). This environment of violence is not limited to the jail premises; it gradually permeates the island in a way that many people sacrificed their lives under colonial oppression. A historian like

Ramachandra Guha has observed multiple connections between war and environmental destruction. Ecocritics like Greg Garrard have pointed out that the “capitalistic forms of production” (2004, p. 28) are built upon the interconnected exploitation of human and non-human nature and the effects of “global capitalism on indigenous peoples and their environments” (Rahman, 2021, p. 321). The multiplicity and ubiquity of “environmental violence worldwide call for a scholarly effort to identify the standard drivers and possible defence strategies for vulnerable environments” (Barca, 2014, p. 538). Environmental violence emerged as a challenging concern for ecocritical activists and theorists in the historical study a few years ago. The postcolonial world of writers and activists like Nixon and Carson shed new light on the environmental history of the “Second World War” (Carson, 1964, p. 153) era. Rob Nixon’s concept of ‘Slow Violence’ is essential to the emerging sub-fields of ecocriticism; he acknowledges the strong bond between environmental history and ecocriticism. Furthermore, the scope of ecocriticism could be brought to the forefront through a postcolonial perspective, as “the most startling feature of environmental literary studies has been its reluctance to engage the environmental repercussions about imperial practices” (Nixon, 2011, p. 33).

Khan bemoans how colonisers cut down the mangrove forests around Port Blair to destroy local vegetation and extract fuelwood to meet their domestic needs; she makes her character reminisce, “The tall mangrove tree was there” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 118). It represents a typical tropical ecosystem, including prehistoric forests surrounded by mangrove swamps. The mangrove forests are self-sustaining, renewable, and covered by lush green habitats, forming a diverse regional field of sustainable biodiversity. The excessive exploitation of mangrove forests in the Andaman Islands due to large-scale infrastructure development has resulted in lower coastal fisheries production. The ecosystem of these transcendent trees is threatened by over-exploitation and the conversion of wetlands to “aquamarine water” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 118), so the importance of mangrove planting marks a symbol of protection and regeneration. Several infrastructure projects have been proposed in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to boost tourism and development. These substantially transformed islands could cause a loss of biodiversity and hurt the indigenous people in the environmentally sensitive zone. The first incident began in the late eighteenth century when the British Indian government decided to colonise Andaman Island:

The Malays ruled the islands till the mid-eighteenth century when the East India Company came in search of an outpost for their fleets. The man they sent, a lieutenant of the Royal Navy, Archibald Blair, was to obtain information about the aborigines; make a detailed survey of the three main landmasses; examine the soil for possible cultivation; collect samples of flora and fauna; and gauge the depths of waters.

(Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 53)

In 1789, “Lieutenant Archibald Blair carried out a survey”, whose results were used to help us to understand the “first colonial settlement” (Romulus & Zai, 1986) on Andaman Island, the settlements that relocated to the island of North Andaman because of its superior harbour. Some parts of India, Burma, and Malay are characterised by extensive hilly terrain, and coral beds are mainly covered by flora and fauna, besides tropical evergreen vegetation. The Andamanese were the first victims of oppressive colonial rule, which also destroyed the local environment in the name of development. Port Blair and many other settlers from India, Burma and Mauritius stayed for almost a year. They partly cleared the forest, “and a few structures were built, such as the jetty in Aberdeen, the barracks and crude cottages like the one assigned to Susumu San. It worked; at times, if not, the aborigines were left alone, shot, or taken to Calcutta as slaves” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 54). Aroosa Kanwal, in an interview with Uzma Aslam Khan, discovers the individual characters’ close connection with nature and how these characters are not disappointed

with the natural world. She remembers Haider Ali's, gardening, rain, and farming while living with aborigines and having a close relationship with humans and non-human beings. Furthermore, she also asks questions about the threats of World War II and how the effects of war are well defined in the novel; In this regard, Uzma Aslam Khan's responses are quite apt:

Nature is a primary character. Nomi, the prisoner, and the other characters—are part of it, not separate entities. It is not something I was striving for; it is just how I work. I don't work well with abstractions. I said earlier that the physical world tells the emotional truth. This is because the physical world is home. Our only home brings me back to your second question about how war is defined. Every man-made war is a war on the planet. And only a story—not a textbook or newspaper—can make us feel the horror of abusing our human relationship with non-human beings. To pull just one example from the book, it is one thing to say that the Second World War caused indigenous people to lose a primary food source. It is another to show the extreme historical and cultural damage and displacement caused by the world war. (Kanwal, 2019)

The novel further shows the disparities between the indigenous people and the complicated history of the British and the Japanese invasions of Andaman Island under their colonial rule. The original population of Andaman Island consists of local indigenous people, that is, tribal people. They have lived there for centuries, protecting local natural resources and preserving evergreen biodiversity. These aborigines are “the true security guards of the islands” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 165). Khan's novel plays a critical role in “re-establishing native expressions, cultural heritage, local histories, and geographies of marginalised communities” (Hussain & Mishra, 2022, p. 684). However, the British settlers changed the demographic locations, and because of their colonial rule, they disrupted their “geography, topography, fresh water sources and native tribes” (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019, p. 168).

CONCLUSION

Thus, the aforesaid discussion reveals that the novel *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* (Uzma Aslam Khan, 2019) advocates the encouragement of indigenous communities' rights and is a vibrant component of the historical struggle for restoration and freedom over colonial rules on Andaman Island. This article captures and extrapolates the environmental violence and underlines the historical struggles of the indigenous people of Andaman under the effects of wars. The in-depth study of this novel exposes that colonial capitalism is responsible for the exploitation of land and resources as well as for discrimination based on race, class, origin, and cultural differences on Andaman Island, as portrayed in the novel. Uzma Aslam Khan emphasises the devastating impact of colonial history on Andaman and its indigenous communities. The analysis of this historical novel looks backwards at the specified history and its current debates on environmental violence and crisis. *The Miraculous True History of Nomi Ali* sheds light on Khan's increased responsibility and awareness of the ecological crisis made worse by colonialism's prevailing rule. Khan highlights the need to thoroughly examine colonial dominance over living and non-living things on Earth. Finally, this research finds out that the postcolonial environmental literature helps us better comprehend the transnational and transtemporal processes that have contributed to indigenous communities' historical and cultural diversity on Andaman Island. This research is a vital assertion of Indigenous people's rights as well as a dynamic element of the ongoing activist fight for restitution and sovereignty over Indigenous culture, history, livelihoods, and lands. The paradoxes in this novel serve as an example of how difficult it is to portray settler colonialism's metamorphosis while still looking into new horizons of environmental justice and resilience.

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