



**Gender and Environment: Predicament of  
Tribal Women of Pakistan in Jamil Ahmad's *The  
Wandering Falcon***

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**ABSTRACT**

Research on the predicament of women of Pakistan's remote tribal areas, has been little due to a number of reasons. From feminist theoretical perspective, this article focuses on pregnancy-related complications of these women, their being kidnapped, sold and raped while their tribes keep shifting from one place to another because of changing weather conditions. Through textual analysis of Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon*, this article examines how gendered positions of women are exacerbated by severe natural environment. It analyses female characters as situated in their respective socio-cultural and environmental conditions. It is found that these women are so profoundly institutionalised by the tribal patriarchy that they do not even consciously know of their predicament which has been compounded by environmental severities. This article contributes to highlighting the silenced voices of the tribal women in the region.

**Keywords:** Gender, environment, culture, tribal areas, *The Wandering Falcon*, Jamil Ahmad, Pakistan

## Introduction

There has been a plethora of studies, especially since the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, highlighting and analyzing women as having been defined, stereotyped and oppressed by patriarchy. Studies on comparatively increased vulnerability of women in regions affected by environmental degradation are also plenty (Yoo i–iii). Although one can find volumes of feminist literature focused on studying Pakistani women's subalternity and gender evolution (Zubair and Zubair 17; Saigol 1; Safdar and Yasmin 1; Safdar and Ghani 89; Jafar 35; Zia, 18; Kanwal 118), research discussing women's cultural oppression intensified by the intersection of severe natural environment is still insufficient. This dearth of research is more noticeable when it comes to the women of Pakistan's tribal areas, one of the most volatile, conflict-ridden, freedom-restricted and culturally fundamentalist regions of the world (Gunaratna and Nielsen 775; Grare 1–60). Jamil Ahmad's novel, *The Wandering Falcon*, adroitly presents the inside world of the tribal areas and especially depicts their women's marginalised condition which is worsened when the weather takes severe and hostile turns. Ahmad, before publishing this novel, had spent decades in the tribal areas serving as a public servant. *The Wandering Falcon* is an imaginative literary engagement of his decades-long first-hand experience in the tribal areas. Through a feminist interpretation of the conditions of major female characters as situated in their social, cultural and natural environmental contexts in the novel, this article discusses tribal women's repression. To investigate how their social and cultural positions intersected with the severe natural environment and landed them in their present submissive condition, this article analyses the different social aspects of their lives like their level and accessibility to education, health services, paid jobs, mobility and engagements. It also flags cultural aspects like traditional norms, belief systems and traditional status of men and women, and the ways their respective natural environments contribute to further exacerbating their oppressed conditions caused by the social and cultural factors.

A consensual definition of 'environment' is elusive as it varies between disciplines. Davis defines environment, in the context of health, as the surroundings or conditions that influence an organism (Qtd. in Wu and Lederer 420–21). These surroundings or conditions include everything that is external to the human, for example, the material, abstract, natural, social and cultural – affecting human health and behavior. There are such environmental factors which are modifiable or amenable to change, including, for instance, air and water pollution, man-made climate change, ecosystem change, chemical factors, safer

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water and sanitation facilities, agricultural methods, occupational and housing environments. However, there are other environmental factors as well that cannot reasonably be modified, for example, natural environments. This article is not all inclusive and, keeping in view its objectives, limits itself to the second category of the environment to analyze the effects of the natural environment on women in a society that is ultra-conscious of gender which, nevertheless, is a socially and discursively constructed transient concept attached with a biological sex (Butler 79–128).

### **Nexus between Environment and Patriarchy**

The connection between gender and environment has long been recognised and argued through different perspectives (Nightingale), ranging from essentialists who seek an inherent relation between women's supposedly protective behavior and environmental care to the post-structuralists who take it as socially shaped and contingent (Agarwal 120–25; Buckingham-Hatfield 1–10; Prüss-Üstün A and Corvalán 21–23). Studies have focused on gendered environmentalism, mediation by gender in the interaction between the human and the environment, impact of gender roles, responsibilities, or norms in shaping relations with the environment, sustainable development through targeting the relation between gender and environment, and gender difference regarding reaction to environmental hazards (Agarwal 119–58; Nightingale 165–85; Arnocky and Stroink n.p.). The nexus between gender and the degrading global climate has been increasingly explored to enable women to respond more actively and powerfully. In the context of Pakistan also, there are a number of studies examining, from the perspective of gender and psychological effects, the impact of deteriorating environment on women from Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, rural areas of Sind, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Yaqoob 93–104). However, analysis of the miserable conditions of women of tribal and nomadic clans in the tribal belt connecting Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran is rarely seen in such studies. Further, the nexus between the staunch patriarchal culture and the severe natural environment there has hardly been the central aim of much research.

Though the natural environment in itself is not biased against women, this article assumes it to have become so in its impact when it worsens the condition of women more intensely than men due to patriarchal social formations. Women, especially in the diehard and honour-bound communities like the ones of the tribal areas depicted in the novel, suffer from the severities of natural environment more acutely, not just physically but also psychologically, emotionally, financially

and sexually. This is because they have structurally been viewed as less capable, dependent, as well as a liability and property. Trained for domestic chores, they cannot properly respond to a hostile natural environment. Further, the hostility of the environment keeps them engaged in their household chores and does not leave them sufficient time to focus on their individual grooming. Whatever negotiated agency they may have achieved through their various tactics and struggles, faces the threat of return to patriarchal normativity due to natural environmental conditions (Safdar and Yasmin 1–12). Natural environment, being the cause of greater sufferings and return to normativity, is therefore taken as an ally of patriarchy to further subjugate women and worsens the misery that cultural mores have inflicted upon them. This article, instead of viewing nature through the theoretical lens of ecofeminism that presents both the environment and women as victims, sees it as a ruthless partner of patriarchy to intensify and exacerbate women's suppression.

The emergence of militants in the tribal areas over the past few decades has added to the intensity of the already restricted space for women. Maryam Bibi, a social worker, reported in a local newspaper, the *Express Tribune*, that she has met displaced women who were asked by security staff at refugee camps for sexual favors in exchange for food; she further adds that women also lived in terror in settled areas with Taliban domination, such as Tank district (M. Khan 1–52). The plight of these women is terrible. It will only change if men's mindset is altered (M. Khan 1–52). Quoting interviews of several local women from the tribal areas, another local newspaper the *DAWN* reports that "achieving socio-economic emancipation is often tantamount to death" (Sethna n.p.). Women are treated worse than dogs under *Rewaj* [customs system], explains a young woman from Kurram Agency who has been 'exchanged' through a *jirga* decision to settle a feud "[there,] women have been invisible and voiceless for centuries" (ibid). With an almost three percent literacy rate, mostly deprived of basic education and health care, considered as the honour of their family, women are usually "bought, sold, bartered and killed" (ibid). "Our women and girls want to go to school, but all they do is to collect sticks from the mountains and walk miles for water" (ibid). The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, in its provisional figures for the 2017 census, mentions the total population of the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA, now merged into the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018) as over 5 million with about half of them women (M. Khan 1–52). *The Wandering Falcon*, however, includes not just FATA but also parts of Baluchistan's tribal areas wherein the Balochis are fighting against the state of Pakistan. Although the wider

contemporary and historical situation and circumstances of the areas remain in the backdrop as a whole, this article narrows its focus to only the normative aspects which cause women's suppression and powerlessness while impeding their ability to lead in their connection with the environment.

Based on his notes, *The Wandering Falcon* was originally written while he was still serving in the areas but was actually published in 2011. It is a collection of loosely interlinked stories about the people and tribes of Balochistan and FATA, presenting "glimpses into a world of strict rules and codes, where the individual is of far less significance than the collective" (Shamsie n.p.). In this world women are sold like commodities, killed to save honour and culture and not considered worth consulting in decision making. These tribal areas of Pakistan, bordering Afghanistan and Iran, have dominated the news and opinion pages of the international media for decades in the context of the global war against terrorism. However, a few pieces of writing have revealed this mysterious world from inside as meticulously as the novel has done, bringing out "such wisdom and knowledge to writing about a terrain largely inaccessible to journalists and writers" (Peer n.p.). Mostly, it was Pakistan, the United States and Afghanistan that were involved in the power entanglements in the areas and focused on their respective political interests. The power politics paid little attention to the predicament of women. This article, therefore, discusses the patriarchal suppression of tribal women exacerbated by severities of natural environment through analyses of the lives of select female characters in the novel as situated in their respective social contexts, from a feminist perspective. In order to understand the entanglement of environment in the deplorable condition of women, it is imperative to have a close look at the various tribal cultures in this novel which is a collection of loosely interlinked stories.

### **Lashed by Nature and Poverty, and Bound by Honour and Traditions**

*The Wandering Falcon* presents compelling insight through Ahmad's intimate knowledge of the tribal cultures: the tribes' ways of living, norms, beliefs, traditions, political and economic systems and their revenges and conflicts. Ahmad had lived in these tribes in Quetta, Chaghi, Khyber, Malakand, Dera Ismail Khan, Swat, KP and Kabul. All the nine short stories, that is, "The Sins of the Mother", "A Point of Honour", "The Death of Camels", "The Mullah", "A Kidnapping", "A Guide", "A Pound of Opium", "The Betrothal of Shah Zarina" and "Sale Completed", share a commonality in their moving portrayals of the tribes' miserable living conditions of poverty, extreme weather, unbreakable customs and

norms, disconnection from progressive societies, lack of mobility-enabling infrastructure and education as well as their unmatched pride in their respective clan identity. What transpires in the first two stories, “The Sins of the Mother” and “A Point of Honour”, is that the Baloch are people with extreme pride and honour, which they cannot compromise on at any cost, even in their deaths. The stiffness and inflexibility of their cultural norms (especially, the ones related to women’s sexuality) matches the severity and intensity of natural weather conditions around, suppressing women doubly. When Gul Bibi elopes with her lover to escape from the norms that had bound her with her sexually impotent husband, her escape is impeded by the severe natural environment. While running away from her tribe’s men, she gets exhausted as there is:

No habitation for miles around and no vegetation except for a few wasted and barren date trees . . . , and no water other than a trickle among some salt-encrusted boulders which also dries out occasionally, manifesting a degree of hostility. Nature has not remained content merely at this. In this land, she has also created the dreaded . . . wind of a hundred and twenty years (Ahmad 1).

Gul Bibi’s attempt to defy the regulatory norms of sexual and marital relationships is hampered by the hostile and unfriendly natural environment which does not support the weak. The dreadful natural imagery represents and corresponds with the wrathful patriarchy of the tribe whose elders were running fast in her chase to hunt and make her a precedent for other women. While on the run and caught within ruthless nature, her eyes are “red-rimmed” and “swollen”, her hair is “matted” and her expression is “unearthly” and she is “huddled on the ground” (Ahmad 3). The couple is ultimately discovered and killed.

[T]he bodies [were dragged] a short distance away and entombed . . . separately in two towers made out of the sun-blackened stones which . . . provide testimony, to all who cared, about the way in which the Siahpad [a Baloch tribe] avenged insults (Ahmad 15–16).

The radical patriarchal killers make the couple a precedent for others who may dare to challenge and subvert their deeply entrenched norms. Nobody had cared, despite knowing it well, that the woman had eloped with the other man because her husband was impotent. Her father situates their murders in religion and their tribal norms by saying, “she sinned against the laws of God and those of our tribe” (Ahmad 16). Forgiveness or compromise in matters related to women’s sexual relations was unimaginable for them. This incident corresponds with the widespread and deep-rooted concept of hyper-sensitivity towards sexuality-related matters in Pakistan (Mumtaz and Shaheed n.p.; Gauhar 1–158; Alam 1–15; Shaheed 11). Living among ruthless, weather-beaten hills, barren date

trees and months-long dust and sand laden wind storms, these Baloch tribes had grown harshly strict and inflexible in their traditions and customs.

Every story in the text brings deeper insight into the tribal life style and culture. The Kharots (another tribe) spend their lives wandering with the seasons across borders between Pakistan and Afghanistan – a life style that has been going on for centuries but was now being challenged by the laws of the two nation states. The harsh, snowy winters on the hills of Afghanistan push them each year to the plains of Pakistan and then the pleasant summers there attract them back. Ahmad narrates, “a family [for them] denoted not only the man, his wives, and children, but also his dogs and a few chickens which the women generally insisted on carrying along with them . . . General (a tribe leader) was the unchallenged head of the entire tribe” (38). Ahmad gives an adept depiction of the position of women in the family by describing them as belonging to the male head of the family along with the children, dogs and chickens. They, as wives, are considered to be under the guardianship and ownership of their man without being taken as full human beings with intellect and ability. Responsibilities are clearly divided on the basis of gender. In a traditionally patriarchal society like Pakistan, familial or social responsibilities are culturally gendered and thus divided (Grünenfelder 70). “The men were busy unhitching the panniers from the animals . . . The women too were busy, cooking and milking the she-camels and sheep, or suckling their babies” (Ahmad 39). A man can have many wives depending on his sexual strength, signifying manliness, and his ability to pay the bride price. Having more than one wife is a symbol of masculinity. Leaving one’s tribe to live in a city or appealing in a government court for justice is considered a sign of effeminacy and disloyalty to his tribe. Women’s responsibilities include nurturing and caring which require affection, tenderness and staying within the private domestic spaces. Women are shown as enjoying jokes about the power and length of their men’s organs. The sexual potency and length of men’s male organ (penis) has come to represent to these women the masculinity and manliness of them (men). They have internalised the patriarchal concept of polygamy and seeing women as skin-deep bodies (Zia 296–310; Suleri 768). The gendered position of the women of the Kharots is rooted in their cultural normative structures which see a woman in her body, define her as property, silence her voice and render her invisible. The frequently changing weather conditions and the resultant migration of their tribes keep them dependent on their men without getting enough time to settle and get access to the world outside their men.

Living in extreme poverty, for the tribes of Mahsuds and Wazirs,

“survival is the ultimate virtue” (Ahmad 86). Generations-old bloody enmity between them is famous.

Nature has bred in both an unusual abundance of anger [and] enormous resilience. . . In neither community is any stigma attached to a hired assassin, a thief, a kidnapper or an informer (Ahmad 86).

The harsher the natural environment is, the more resilient and stiffer the patriarchy is in its concepts and actions to prescribe the space and roles of women. The men of Mehsuds and Wazirs are murderers, kidnappers and informers – the jobs that involve boldness, aggression, violence, physical power and cunning. They take it as their right to extort their sustenance from the people who live comfortable lives in the plains. Their women are usually seen as busy in caring for the land and children, collecting wood from forests and fetching water from rivers while the men are involved in fights, raids, kidnappings and robberies. Again, caring and nurturing are the main responsibilities of their women. However, even this task becomes hard for them when they have to walk miles into forests to collect wood and fetch water even when it is severely cold, excessively hot or continuously raining. The weather adds to their sufferings and hardships in the performance of normatively gendered household chores.

Afridi, another tribe, in Tirah, North Waziristan, is another name connoting pride, superiority and honour. The narrator reports, “Tirah was a land forbidden to anybody other than a true Afridi, and anyone who violated this unwritten injunction would be in serious danger” (Ahmad 107). The tribe believes that it is the Afridis who matter the most on the earth and the rest of the tribes merely provide the setting for them to shine and grow. They are proud of their legacy of war against the British Empire, regular raids on Peshawar and the terror that they have caused in the hearts of people in cities. They live in houses made of stone and mud, each with a tower and, all the time, keep their weapons with them. It is a land of strict norms where “imputation of immorality meant certain death, both men and women were careful” (ibid, 112). Their women travel miles, every day, to fetch water and firewood, in addition to herding flocks of sheep, goats or cows and looking after their kids. It is a land of mothers, daughters, sisters and or wives, but not of some woman who has a name or independent identity. Women, in this tribe, have been rendered invisible even in their names. Here, a woman, after her marriage, is strictly believed to be the property of her husband.

Sher Beg (the tiger), a major character in the short story “A Pound of Opium”, was once a key guide for mountain climbers who had come from across the world to conquer Tirich Mir which is the highest mountain in the area. It



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provided him with fodder both for his body and his pride. Tirich Mir was finally conquered and there were no more climbers with dollars. He then has to sell his eight year old daughter, called Sherakai which means the tiger's daughter, to a local prince for a pound of opium and a hundred rupees. Sherakai is 11 when she is married to another man. She has to face severe taunts from her mother-in-law because she has failed to give birth to a baby boy even after five baby girls. The tribes in upper Chitral have to shift every winter to the plains in other parts of the country and then come back in summer. One winter, Sherakai is kidnapped and sold in a local market while her tribe is on their way to move to the plains to escape the harsh winter. It is the men who sell her for her body and it is the natural environment that connives in it by creating such opportunities for them.

“The Betrothal of Shah Zarina” also portrays the mountains dwellers of the border area, who, while facing the constant torment of hunger, sell their daughters in the name of bride price. The topmost priority of parents regarding their daughters is to get them married off immediately after their puberty. “The negotiation about the bride price had been successful” and Shah Zarina is married off after one month (Ahmad 160). She is daily beaten by her husband. “In the morning, along with the bear, Shah Zarina would get her day's beating” (ibid, 165). When she runs away from her husband and returns to her parents to save her life, she is considered a hindrance in her sisters' prospects of marriage.

[T]he whole community mourned with her. The women visited her and cried, while she screamed and pulled her hair. The men met Fateh Mohammed [her father] and commiserated with his misfortune. They clucked their tongues sadly (Ahmad 165).

The whole community from her neighborhood mourns her separation from her husband. When she again runs away from her parents after overhearing their curse on her, she faces the following response from the society: “What are you doing, girl, walking by yourself at this time? There should be a brother, or a husband or father, walking beside you. A girl needs protection” (ibid, 167).

The last short story “Sale Completed”, in the novel, presents the notorious market Mian Mandi where Sherakai and Shah Zarina are sold along with countless other women, young and old.

Women, some little more than infants, some already on the threshold between middle and old age; some who laughed at their fate and others who never stopped crying. Some who appeared once and then vanished completely. Others came again and again, sold sometimes to one man and then to another. There were those who had run away from their husbands or their fathers and those who were running away from life (Ahmad 173–74).

Their sellers and buyers are all men, trading them as slaves and mistresses. Tor Baz (the wandering falcon), son (now a grown up man) of the Baloch/Siapad couple killed in the first short story, buys Shah Zarina as she looks younger than other women and is claimed by her seller to still have been a virgin.

Glimpses from each of the stories from different tribes are woven together to form a complete whole as they portray the poverty-stricken and traditional, honour-bound cultural lives of the tribal women living in severe natural environments. Chiefly constructed around tribal honour, pride, identity, norms and traditions, these cultures exhibit a paradoxical behavior towards their women, considering her a sign of honour while rendering her voiceless and invisible. She is the honour of her men. She does not possess honour in herself; and that honour, too, is contained in her sexual piety which, when turned against tribal norms, strips her of all honour. The tribal normative patriarchal cultures oppress their women, limit them to such roles and activities that are socially defined as womanly, and treat them as commodities and less than humans. In none of the tribal cultural practices presented in Ahmed's work, are women seen as having any decision-making power. What little agency they do manage to use, in the form of running away from their men or families, makes them land them again in the same patriarchal quagmire. These mute, speechless and powerless women become doubly oppressed when they have to abide by patriarchy, satisfy their husbands and give birth to babies while facing the harsh natural landscape as they work in the fields, fetch water, collect firewood and remain on the move from one place to another due to severe weather. Weather changes and their extremity bring them more oppression as they work to complement their cultural constraints.

### **The Environment-Culture Nexus: Adding Insult to Injury**

In the face of a natural calamity it is not the sex which matters the most, rather it is the cultural definitions attached with a sex which render it unable to successfully face such severe environmental turns. The patriarchal concepts which engender a body provide males with tools and knowledge essential for adapting to the environment. Women who are considered unfit are denied access to these skills thus keeping them untrained and powerless in the face of environmental upheavals. At the cost of their health and schooling, they have to travel for miles in harsh weathers to fetch water and collect firewood. The narrator in "The Guides", while on his way to the Afridi tribe, sees

[a] few girls [who] walked past with water pitchers on their heads to fetch water from some spring, perhaps miles away. They would make at least three

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trips during the day to get water for their menfolk, and yet find it within themselves to make another trip to refill the wayside casks which provided water for travelers . . . . We met parties of firewood collectors. These were usually small bands of women and girls who moved exceedingly fast so they could reach and occupy the best sites before the others did. The matrons walked in front while the very young girls – some of them hardly eight or nine years old – skipped along in the rear (Ahmad 113).

In summers, their job is comparatively less tormenting. However, the coming of winter heralds a season of real pain for them. They have to make preparations for it much earlier by collecting enough firewood to make it sufficient for the snowy and rainy weeks. But, water is something for which they have to travel almost daily. It is considered womanly to do such jobs. Doing some paid job or economic independence of a woman and going to school are alien concepts for them. It is not unusual that even eight or nine year old girls go along with their elderly women to forests for collecting wood and water instead of going to schools for education. These women have to travel miles for water, at least three times a day, in addition to taking care of their children and other chores in their homes. Covered from head to toe, while they travel in the harsh weather, they have to be careful not to show any sign of ‘immorality’ which means certain death in this land of high norms and honour. The local cultural indifference to the necessity of health centers for women adds to their misery when the weather is harsh. In “A Pound of Opium” the narrator observes,

Winter was coming earlier this year and the mountain people were all wondering whether to risk staying for a few weeks longer in their huts . . . or start moving . . . on their three hundred mile annual journey to the plains” (Ahmad 143).

The winter that starts early leaves the people indecisive. Although it is implicitly suggested in the story, this annual move to and fro from the plains proves arduous for the women who are pregnant or have recently given birth to babies, not to mention menstruating women. Each couple has to properly plan the time of pregnancy to not let it happen in the days of traveling. While the decision-making power lies totally with men even in such matters, women often suffer from ill health while shifting to the plains or returning to the mountains. There are instances of babies being delivered as well as infant and maternal mortality during migration. Sherakai is also one of those mothers who has suffered the pains of delivery and the death of her newly born due to these weather-caused shifts. She looks older than her twenty two years. Each year, she becomes pregnant. She gives birth to five baby girls, two of whom die while three remain alive. In the absence of any health care facility for mothers, “on the mountain, the survival

of the mother and child depended entirely on nature” (Ahmad 145). On the night before the morning when the tribe has to move on its annual journey, her unsatiated husband wakes up again and again for her. In addition to looking after his children, she is an ‘object’ that helps him satiate himself. In addition to these life risks and deterioration of health, women (culturally thought of as defenseless and attractive commodities) are kidnapped, raped and sold while their tribe is on the move. Sherakai is also one of such women. Her husband remarries and her mother-in-law feels relieved as Sherakai had not been able to produce a son even after five girls.

In “The Death of Camels”, a granddaughter of the tribal chief undergoes a difficult childbirth while the tribe is on the move from the hills of Afghanistan to the plains on the other side of the border in Pakistan in order to escape the chilly winter. The narrator notes, “his granddaughter . . . was resting after a difficult childbirth” (Ahmad 43). The tribe does not halt its move for the sake of the mother. Rather, it resumes its journey “early the [very] next morning, while it was still dark. . . A few stars were still visible in the sky when they left. . . The caravan was to cross the border that day” (ibid, 43-44). It signifies that women’s lack of voice and power in conjugal, familial, or tribal decisions in that patriarchal culture gets aggravated when there are environmental calamities.

The Siapad woman, in “The Sins of the Mother”, while on the run from her father and husband, cannot bear the severity of the scorching weather and lies “huddled on the ground [with] her red-rimmed swollen eyes [and] matted hair . . . . The unearthly expression on her face told the story clearly” (Ahmad 3). Already struck by the man-defined normative culture, she is doubly hit by the natural environment, loses her life, with a tower on her grave as a terrible lesson for the rest of the women in her clan. Raised solely to become a ‘good’, ‘pious’ wife and mother, she is untrained for the challenges outside the home involving life threats in harsh environmental conditions. On the other hand, the man with whom she has eloped is well trained and equipped to respond to such conditions.

Besides Tor Baz, the common link among all the stories in the novel is the cultural suppression of women which is further aggravated by the harsh environmental conditions. In the novel, what is prominent is the absolute absence of any educational, economic or political opportunity available for the tribal women to raise their consciousness for equality. There is a brief description of a school in one of the stories about North Waziristan, but, that, too, is in the context of whether the school should be demolished or not. It has been seen that the women are either staunchly defended objects of honour or just pawns in

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the patriarchal game of power. In such cultural situations, severity of the natural environment or climate degradation adds to their misery.

The tribal areas of Pakistan have shown little acceptance for the social and cultural transformation going on across the globe, especially in gender related norms and concepts. Perhaps due to serious risks for feminist researchers in these normatively stiff areas, research is mostly limited to only those tribal women who somehow came in contact with people from other parts of the country and exposed the conditions they were made to live in. Inaccessibility and turbulent situations there can also be other reasons. The ethnographic inside stories given in *The Wandering Falcon* portray the culturally and environmentally marginalised women of the tribes living in Pakistan along its borders with Afghanistan and Iran. Struggling in this rigid normative quagmire in the absence of any helping hand, they are seen meeting an unfortunate end. The little agency they exhibit to free themselves from cultural shackles lands them into a greater quandary. Efficacy of cultural norms runs the risk of social unrecognition and precarity, and the weather conditions around them are such that they make them depend on their men. The only roles women are seen performing throughout the novel are those of victims of honour-killing, producers of babies, vehicles to satiate their men's desires, covered bodies, looking after their homes, recipients of beatings and commodities for sale, etc. When they run away to escape these tortures, they face the stigma of having dishonoured their men and are, thus, socially outcast and even killed. Changes in weather bring them serious health and life threats as they are seen obeying their men's sexual desires, getting pregnant and producing babies while the tribe is on the move. It is their womanly job to travel miles, daily, to forests and springs for firewood and water, and they have to do it even if it is chilly or snowy. The patriarchal normative culture they are living in expects them to obey their men or else face severe consequences. Through feminist analysis of *The Wandering Falcon*, this article has attempted to raise the voice of the tribal women who are doubly bound – by both norms and the natural environment.

Though the political and social situation in the tribal region is undergoing changes after the recent revocation of FCR (Frontier Crimes Regulation) and its merger in KP (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province), cultural changes, especially those related to gender norms, are still too slow to be noticeable. Though the claim that the stories in the novel are an inside exposition of the situation of women in the tribal belt can be contestable (Ansari 152), it still holds water as similar findings and observations have been made by several other studies (M. Khan 8; Peer n.p.; Gunaratna and Nielsen 777; M. S. Khan 383). The predicament of

tribal women can well be visualised and related to through a feminist reading of *The Wandering Falcon*. The patriarchy in the novel has systematically dehumanised women, rendered them invisible and deprived them of the consciousness of their being a full human with equal rights. The hazardous weather conditions which trigger migration and drought exacerbate their misery. Though the tribal cultures may not be taken as monolithic as in some women are sold like commodity and in others they are taken as family-honour, what they do share among them is culturally entrenched dehumanisation of their women. In the absence of access to and opportunities of mobility and awareness, the women cannot make systematic agentive resistance.

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