

A Critical Appraisal of the Trope of Wilderness in *Red Birds*

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- Wilderness
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Abstract

*The research in hand endeavors to present a counter-narrative against the much-acclaimed West's conception of wilderness and seeks to inform the readers with an entirely new conception of wilderness that is in stark contrast to its Euro-American counterpart. The manipulative modes of communication and media hype have kept us blinded to view this trope according to our own geopolitical realities. So, this research is a modest attempt to represent an alternative view of wilderness that inculcates the imperialistic and neo-colonial brutalities in it. The ulterior motives under the garb of wilderness speak of lust to grab the natural resources of far-off lands and to displace the indigenous people in order to make the war mongers' capitalistic greed prosper with unprecedented speed. For theoretical framework, this research is reliant on William Cronon's *The Trouble with Wilderness* alongside Graham Huggan and Hellen Tiffins' *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. This research follows a qualitative research model and uses the technique of textual analysis to explore the desired objectives in *Red Birds* by Mohammad Hanif.*

1. Introduction

The West's preoccupation with the idea of paradise and a subsequent desire to find earthly heaven has been rampant in the annals of history (Nosan, 2008). The obsession with this idea took many forms in the past leading towards the idealization of a serene and ethereal piece of land. The degenerative epochs of the Industrial Revolution and mushroom growth of scientific advancements butchered the natural landscapes thus making them sterile and barren. All these advancements in the name of sustainable growth and development marred the natural magnificence ultimately penetrating the unfathomable desire of an untarnished land to the very core of advanced and cultured beings. Resultantly, these consequences aided in the germination of paramount affinity towards Wilderness (Buell, 1989; Mellor, 2014).

The trope of wilderness has been a significant player in the generation of American environmental consciousness. It is convenient to say that a considerable amount of American environmental paradigm revolves around this trope. Whether it is about the frontier myth or settler narrative, they both encompass this idea of a sacred and untrammelled piece of land in their very foundation. This concept of wilderness has also deeply embedded roots in the cultural and religious discourse of the West. This key feature has seen the evolution from its inception till now. Explaining the etymology of the word 'wilderness', Roderick Nash (2014) informs that this term originated from the word "willed" and shifted to "wild"; then it infused the word "deor" in it. Deor stands for wild beasts that are uncontrollable and ferocious. The first use of this word appeared in the "eighth-century epic Beowulf, where wildeor appeared about the savage and fantastic beasts inhabiting a dismal region of forests, crags, and cliffs" (p. 1). The word wildeor eventually reformed into wilderness thus depicting a place of wild beasts that are on leash without any constraint. With time the implications of this word started to expand and contain various explanations in its very foundation but more significantly it represented a place where humans lose their stable demeanour (p. 3). With the passage of time, nature writers tried to normalize this negative trope with their writings of experiences in those lonely landscapes. The works of Henry Thoreau, Barry Lopez, and Aldo Leopold are of significant nature regarding this. Afterwards, Romantics with the help of their acute love for nature tried to transform the emotions of awe and fear regarding these lands into a transcendental, and sacred emotional journey (Mellor, 2014). The emerging reverence for these specified pieces of land eventually echoed its voice in America's environmental activism thus resultantly forming the Wilderness Act of 1964. This legislation created a preservation system for the lands that fall in the category of wilderness definition. Greg Garrard (2004) states that wilderness is a place that signifies "nature in a state uncontaminated by civilization"; he further claims that it "is most potent construction of nature available to New World environmentalism" (p. 59). Now the American environmentalists are deeply engaged in wilderness conservation and preservation by making wildlife parks and harnessing boundaries to separate these regions from any accidental human trammelling. Though this initiative seems to be very pure and ecologically friendly, it marginalizes the voices of native sufferers who have been snatched off their homes and their basic rights of living and livelihood.

The Euro-Americans treated Wilderness as a sight of refuge devoid of any human trace. They considered it as sublime, untouched and primitive natural solitude that is in dire need of conservation. But this whole idea takes a new turn by considering the recent theoretical debates on the conflicting nature of this very concept of wilderness. The widely emerging postcolonial connotation of this trope seems to give it a new dimension by embedding the colonial and neo-colonial ideologies of imperial

domination in its very foundation. It can be hypothesized that the neo-colonial power dynamics and war tactics to expand the horizon of colonizers' neoliberal capital development produced not a sublime wilderness of refuge but a horrendous, devastated, sterile and desolate wasteland. This wasteland is impregnated with innumerable episodes of violence, treachery, and massive displacement of indigenous people.

1.1 Research Questions

- i. In what ways is the postcolonial conception of wilderness contrary to its Euro-American counterpart in selected Pakistani fiction?
- ii. How has Pakistani author interwoven the ideas of neo-colonial power politics and myth of development in the novel subsequently exploring their effects on native landscapes?

2. Literature Review

America's primarily yet paramount concern with the environment owes much to the works of John Muir, Henry David Thoreau, and Aldo Leopold. Moreover, the travel of President Roosevelt, 26th President of the United States in accompaniment of John Muir to Yosemite Valley in 1903 was a historical episode that gave an impetus to generate a new environmental awakening across America. During this journey, "Muir convinced Roosevelt to commit the federal government to the protection of the nation's natural heritage" (Minteer & Pyne, 2012, p. 1). Muir advocated for the formation of "nation's parks, which stood for the pristine and the preserved" (p. 1), thus restricting his activism and perceptions only to preserve the natural beauty. While on the other hand, Roosevelt's emphasis was on "rational use under the aegis of conservation" (p. 1) thus projecting a "state-sponsored conservation" (p. 2), completely imparting a politico-economic meaning to the environmental discourse.

The late twentieth century observed a remarkable ascent of US environmentalism. Thomas Robertson strived to locate this sudden surge in America's global role. He claimed that the 1960s was the era when US was tightly gripped in Vietnam War and also expanding its vista to various other regions. At this juncture, America propelled his theory of Think Globally. Under the garb of this theory of interconnectedness, America expanded its horizon to South Asia where India emerged as "a source of strategic minerals such as manganese, and a country strategically located near China, the Soviet Union, and the Middle East" and to satisfy her own political concerns, America started to patronize India in every way. He assisted this poverty-stricken land in the crucial years of the 1960s when India faced debilitating conditions in form of floods and famine.

History reveals that imperial and environmental paradigms always go hand in hand. Richard Grove (1995) emphasized that rather than being a homegrown attribute, it was the colonial expansion that necessitated the origin of environmental conservation ideologies. The British' interaction with new and unidentified flora and fauna of south Asian regions compelled them to take the assistance of biologists and ecologists to decipher this territory. Peder Anker (2001) also stressed the synergetic relationship that fostered between ecologists and British Empire as a requirement to manage these lands. Anker notes that these ecological advancements were necessary to manage resources and people on "the colonial estate" (p. 37) and to justify why they and not local inhabitants were capable to manage and administer the colonial resources.

The above discussion helped to view the American environmental concerns from a different perspective. The movement that started with preservation and conservation issues gained momentum in the post-war era. This movement definitely took inspiration from the British imperial legacy and fostered the former's ideas in its emerging field of environmentalism to gain the same strategic and economic benefits. Undoubtedly, this rapid environmental upheaval was due to America's expanding interest in far off regions of the world to cater for the needs of supplies and rising consumption.

The huge momentum that this wilderness preservation movement gained in the past years has activated the intellectuals of other regions to present a counter-narrative. This narrative incorporates a postcolonial dimension in it. Ramachandra Guha (1989) unveils the underlying facts regarding deep ecology's essential tenet 'Preservation of Wilderness'. He vehemently criticizes US environmentalism as it bespeaks only capitalist advancements and "proposes a militant defence of Mother Earth" (p. 1). Guha criticizes the American centeredness of this movement by claiming that it does not cater for the diverse socio-political and cultural realities of other regions. He claims that it is responsible for a "shift from an "anthropocentric" to a "biocentric" perspective (p. 1)". This shifting of perspective has led its followers towards an obsession with nature's preservation and conservation ultimately driving them towards "unspoilt wilderness, and the restoration of degraded areas to a more pristine condition" (ibid). He claims that the construction of wilderness is presented as an "antidote to modern civilization" (p. 4). Historian Samuel Hey (cited in Guha, 1989) explains that it's not in any sense an endeavour to turn back to pristine and primitive nature but "an integral part of the modern standard of living as people sought to add new 'amenity' and 'aesthetic' goals and desires to their earlier preoccupation with necessities and conveniences" (p. 4). Mukherjee also critiques this biocentric postulate while analyzing Aldo Leopold's work *A Sand County Almanac*. He claims that this work does not talk about the people who reside and toil on these lands. This work is completely devoid of any human projections and considers them only the hollow modernized beings "colonized by the virus of the marketplace" (Mukherjee, 23). This work gave an entirely new dimension to US environmental discourse where man started to be visualized as the destructor and intruder in nature. Parajuli (2001) highlights the nature/culture binary originated by Deep Ecology. He states that this dichotomy is deeply embedded in the Western conception of wilderness but it is foreign to peasant societies all over the world. For them, the wilderness has no such meaning as it is only a piece of land from which they derive their livelihood. Creating a boundary around these so-called sacred territories is to snatch the rights of natives from their own land.

Jennifer L. French (2012) strives to present a contradictory picture originated by transferring North America's environmental conceptions to Latin America. She claims that the transformation of primal negative aura associated with wilderness to a present subliminal level has played its crucial part in justifying the preservation of enormous areas as national parks which "intentionally or not erased the historical genocide of Native Americans from the cultural landscape by representing places like Yosemite National Park as pristine, uncontaminated, sacred space" (p. 158). French meticulously stabilizes her argument that expeditions of conquest have always been pivotal to transform the interconnected relationship of human and nonhuman nature that is exactly what has been done in the case of Native Americans. How they have been thrown into the game of global capitalism and slavery. How the landscapes have been marred under this garb and how they have been demeaned into invaluable beings.

The notion of universality associated with America's wilderness conception is also challenged by Kylie Crane. She exclaims that this prevailing idea of wilderness goes through a critical transformation, even when transposed to the immediate cultural neighbours such as Australia and Canada. The stories of valour and masculinity in one region change into the tale of defeat and dispossessions in the other (2012).

3. Research Methodology

This research explores the trope of wilderness in accordance with Pakistan's geopolitical reality. The data selected to conduct the desired research consists of the novel *Red Birds* by Muhammad Hanif. For theoretical framework, this research is reliant on William Cronon's essay entitled *The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature* (1996) and Graham Huggan and Hellen Tiffin's *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2015). The rationale behind fusing these two theoretical underpinnings alludes to the ecocritical dimension of this study with a simultaneous emphasis on a postcolonial context.

Cronon (1996) in his essay *The Trouble with Wilderness* alters this whole privileged conception of wilderness and claims that it is a human and cultural conception that varies from one culture to another. Cronon boldly claims that wilderness is no doubt an elitist concept that has given rise only to elitism and capitalism. By making wildlife parks and reservation areas it has become a money-making site and an excursion trip for the upper strata of society.

While Huggan and Tiffin's *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* (2010) is a persuasive study that talks about the communion of postcolonial and ecocritical agendas. This ample work is a great document generating a critique of imperial power systems and power structures. The authors claim that the presently deteriorating conditions of the environment in postcolonial regions can never be properly apprehended by eliminating the historical imperial regimes. They extend their argument by maintaining that the imperial systems of the past have come to an end but their extended offshoots in the form of capitalism, neocolonialism, and neo-liberalism have entangled the whole world in their vicious claws. These modernistic economic reforms by them are considered as the "reinvention of imperial tradition" (p. 1).

This research is descriptive in its nature so the qualitative approach is utilized to conduct this research. Textual analysis is selected as a tool to carry out this research work as it helps to evolve various interpretations to a single text just not confining it to a fundamental truth or perception.

4. Data Analysis

This section deals with the textual analysis of *Red Birds* written by Muhammad Hanif. This fictional work has the persuasive power to show the wilderness of third world countries. *Red Birds* is replete with pungent satire on the unrestrained lust of America to seize power and control of the whole world. It is the tale of a deserted and unnamed land that is inhabited by 'living dead'. The whole story progresses with alternate voices of characters namely Mutt, Momo, Ellie, Father Dear, Mother Dear, Lady Flowerbody and Doctor. The background, against which the story is set, is a US Camp with a hanger. The whole landscape is the representation of a barren wasteland. This land is devoid of any vegetation and animals except some goats. It is the after-story of bombardments and annihilation, furthermore a realistic portrayal of "geographical violence" (Said, 1993, p. 225).

The portrayal of landscape delineated in the novel bespeaks of all the cruelties and brutalities it has suffered at the hands of foreign masters. Though the novel is set in an unnamed place, it is undoubtedly akin to our own beloved land: the areas of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that have been destructed and bombarded by the US army to cleanse them up from any imminent danger. The destruction of land is comparable to the act of erasing identity as the colonized people share a deep bond with their respective lands. Furthermore, this land is the sole source of bringing them livelihood and "above all, dignity" (Fanon, 1961, p. 9).

The land portrayed in the novel is unquestionably the wilderness. The wilderness is devoid of any human beings because now the human-like species that lives there is more akin to senseless, lifeless objects who are just counting their remaining days of life aimlessly. These indigenous people have been transformed into submissive or imperceptible beings who just work as the domestic subjects of imperial powers (Pratt, 1985). The imperial forces have transformed them into dehumanized 'others' (Spanakos, 1998) and displaced the locals to the margins (Barry, 2012).

This place also tests human limits. The survival skills are a compulsion to stay alive here, so the novel also starts with the dilemma of survival in this unwelcoming land when Ellie, a US fighter pilot meets an unfortunate accident, crashing his expensive jet in a sandy desert. This was the very place that he came to bombard and eliminate from the world's map but accidentally, he himself fell on it. This place was like 'an endless sea of sand' (Hanif, p. 6) without any trace of life and habitation. Ellie wandered for almost six days in this vast peninsula and stated 'I can't see a single leaf of grass, not even dried up the bush. Earth is a hotplate that doesn't even allow for reptile tracks, even the scorpions seem to have abandoned this godforsaken desolation' (Hanif, p. 5). In his quest to find shade and something to eat he found a shabby hut and a pile of ash there. He sifted the ash to look for something 'of nutritional value' but to his utter dismay there was 'nothing'. He also viewed a 'big carter' which seemed to him 'the result of a thousand-pound bomb or a natural water reservoir that [had] dried up' (p. 10). This was the condition of this land that had gone barren with no presence of water and vegetation. Ellie himself proclaimed that there was 'no nourishment under that sand' (p. 58). Water that is considered the vital sign of life was scarce or more accurately to say 'absent' in this land.

Throughout the novel, Ellie termed this place as 'shithole' (p. 108), 'apocalypse' (p. 174), 'an open prison' (p. 177) and 'hellhole' (p. 182). This place was replete with 'annoying stillness' (p. 108). Ellie was disgusted with its 'desolate streets' (p. 26). This whole scenario alludes to Said's abstract geographical distinctions of Orient and Occident (1977), as the west is blessed to have the symphony of birds and other

creatures in their wilderness, but its counterpart is fortunate only to have the sole sound of the screeching alarm. The Orient is projected as a dangerous land and somehow, this binary relationship testifies to the colonial narrative “through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control” (1993, 225).

West adopts a somewhat lenient strategy to conserve the wilderness areas falling in their own territory. Though there also arises the outcry of marginalized and forcedly outcast natives, their voices are subdued under the huge proclamations of the sacred act of preservation and conservation. The conservation ideologies take a radical turn in the far-off territories. These territories are inhabited by evil, so it becomes somewhat necessary to be evil to fight with evil. Howard Zinn (2005) expounds on this historical violent demeanour of America where this nation takes this self-imposed responsibility of reformation and civilization upon its shoulders and does not even hesitate to resort to the options of violence and vehemence to accomplish his sacred task. So, for armed combat and conflict, the generation and production of war machinery become a compulsion. As modern “war has lost its well-defined contours” (Munkler, 2005, p. 3) so it diffuses and disseminates to the deeper parts of territory devouring the people and the natural landscapes (Gregory, 2011). War emerges as a significant tool firstly to alleviate boredom as well as to get rid of domestic affairs, secondly for recreation and rehabilitation, thirdly for championing the cause of conservation and preservation and last but not least for advancing capitalism.

Wars are originated under the garb of extinction of evil forces and to make the planet safer for the present and future generations. This is the agenda of America that he has been preaching and propagating under the justification of his intrusion in Middle Eastern, African, and Asian countries. But in reality, these Western monarchs imply this strategic “intervention” only to safeguard their own “national interests” (Kieh, 1992, p. 1). This agenda was also replicated in the said novel when Ellie confirms that he came to bombard this land as it was a ‘hideout for some of the worst human scum’ (p. 8). And undoubtedly it was the responsibility of Americans to restructure this geographical territory and furthermore ‘to take care of that bit of Mother Earth’ (p. 9). Ellie claims that he has been taught off and on to never indulge in overthinking ‘about your wounds, or your wasting organs, worry about Mother Earth because she really is gonna die’ (p. 15). This war machinery transforms the whole natural landscape into “militarized waste-scapes” (Deckard, 2015, p. 35).

As William Cronon (1996) had suggested in his article that the myth of wilderness entails in it the desire to put one’s own responsibilities at bay, to yearn for an ideal place lying at the farthest corners of the region just to escape one’s obligations. The same ideology was detected in Ellie’s obsession to go to missions and take up extra opportunities to fly from his homeland and to avoid his dwindling marital relationship. It contends the idea that there was no need to carry out a mission, but they would do it just for the sake of their pleasure and more probably to spend the time in an alternate reality. This was the depressing state of home affairs that urged him to keep himself busy in changing the “geographies of the world” (p. 165) and to indulge himself in thinking that he is doing a more pious and sacred duty of conserving the planet and fencing the wilderness from any actual harm. As he had professed it time and again that ‘the problem wasn’t too much time in the briefing rooms, the problem was too much time with Cath’ (ibid).

The conception of wilderness comes with the facilitation of elitist’s recreation. These areas offer the site of rejuvenation and amusement. The war also provided these opportunities in the form of Hanger built on the refugee campsites. All the area is turned into desolation and barrenness, but the hanger is firmly stood there with all its

glory and magnificence. Ellie also regarded hanger as an 'R&R facility' that is 'Rest and Recreation facility' (p. 190). It is a place of siesta for the pilots, relaxing under its domed exuberance. This place is rife with delicious food oblivious to all the wildness and wilderness around. Father Dear also observed the luxurious lifestyle of the hanger during her employment there. He used to recall all the liveliness and comfort in a nostalgic way after its shutting down. He could remember the presence of 'twelve thousand gallons in reserve fuel' (p. 196) while the community outside was deprived of this gold. He stated that 'There were eight types of bread on the buffet' (ibid) oblivious to the hunger outside. Colonel also termed war as a respite in this distant land. The proclamation of war and the subsequent ratification of delicious pancakes allude to the underpinning of recreation and respite under the garb of a horrific war. Ellie also asserted this recreation aspect by saying that 'It was always easier to bomb some far-off place than stay home and unload the dishwasher' (pp. 264-265).

There is no better prospect than warfare to vehemently advance the mechanism of capitalism. This novel also caters for these nefarious designs in an incisively humorous way. Many characters in the novel presented various perspectives on war and capitalism. Ellie while quoting Colonel stated that 'There is a war on and what is a war if not an opportunity, an opportunity to make up those extra points' (p. 6). From a soldier's perspective, war is an opportunity to raise the medals and ranks thus indirectly levelling up one's lifestyle and getting access to worldly opulent pursuits. Ellie also considers war as a prospect because what comes after the war is reconstruction and rehabilitation. White supremacists first destruct the territory, snatch every necessity of life, even tarnish the identity of people, and then do business on it. They send the therapists and psychologists to study the effects of horrible circumstances leashed by them, on the people's emotional and mental level.

The thing which startles is the embedding of war-torn cities into the convoluted fabric of capitalism. The destructed natives also capture the alluring essence of capitalism. Momo is the best example of it. He always thinks about the monetary benefits. The capitalistic tendencies seize the moral values from him when he starts making plans to flourish his Sand Global Project. According to this plan, he prospers the idea of reconstruction after the war and for reconstruction what is required, are cement and sand. And his place is rife with this commodity so he would sell it and make a profit from it. When his older brother gets the knowledge of his self-devised business endeavours, he reprimands him by saying that 'This sand is the earth you walk on, it's like selling your mother,' but he counter-questions him, 'what about all those countries that sell oil? 'Are they selling their mother's milk?' (p. 39).

It is the lure of shining vehicles and uniforms in the desert, that people entrenched in their own inferiority complex, start yearning to have all the bliss of their masters. It is the hunger and depravity that come to work. Albert Memmi (2013) has rightly expounded this very notion that the "deprivations of the colonized are almost the direct result of the advantages secured to the colonizer" (p. 10). In the novel, Father dear and Mother Dear send their beloved child to hanger under the prospect of financial stability but unfortunately find no solace. Instead, they are deprived of their beloved son. It can be rightly claimed that capitalism and deprivations go hand in hand. Capitalism creates a gulf between rich and poor. The rich get 'uniformed waiters serving them food in the middle of an ocean' and the poor while 'drawing pictures of pitchers and crows and sitting under an apple tree' remain busy in idle planning to 'acquire that yacht'(p. 17). War advances the capitalistic creed. It also provides cheap labour for the smooth functioning of war machinery and to avoid any grease and malfunctioning. War also initiates an endless chain of supplies because 'what makes a business great is not

production, not distribution, not HR, but a great supply chain'. It gives the prospects of businesses to flourish because every nook and corner of the war-torn city is filled with the imperial masters' commodities thus giving an impeccable boost to their own industries. Throughout the novel, we do not see a local thing. The whole area is replete with the US and UN supply chain. The people sit on a 'camping chair emblazoned with UNITED NATIONS FOOD PROGRAMME' (p. 107), travel in UN jeep, use the US army knife (p. 122). Momo wears a cap inscribed 'I heart NY' on it and terms it a token of ardent love and superiority as it gives him some kind of satisfaction. Mutt has a 'small sleeping bag with US ARMY SURPLUS NOT FOR SALE inscribed on it' (p. 109). Thus, there is no trace of local culture in the whole region as it has been replaced and wiped out by the imperialist's mark on even the smallest necessity of life. Richard Slotkin (1973) has termed this whole phenomenon as "regeneration through violence" (p. 5) because America reinvigorates its economy via all this carnage and exploitation.

The startling projection of characters as unnamed beings astounds the readers. Name is the identification and a revered aspect of any being. It denotes recognition and one's acclaimed self. This naming criterion segregates one individual from the other. But here all the characters are without name, without identity. They are addressed with the consideration of species such as Mutt or the relations such as Father Dear and Mother Dear. In addition to it, the other criteria to naming are any apparent physical attribute such as Lady Flowerbody because she always smells of fragrant flowers. Only three characters can be said to have names such as Ellie and Cath, thus alluding to their white supremacy. Momo is granted at least a nickname. That's maybe due to his mental and capitalist alignment with the masters and supremacists. This namelessness suggests the snatching of identities and nationalities thus humiliating the human species and vehemently throwing them to the lowest strata of nihilism and estrangement.

The conservation and the sacred cleansing politics never come in isolation. It must be shrouded in some appealing lure that could efficiently conceal the real capitalistic and neocolonial motives in it. The warmongering also came with the same championed beliefs. It highlighted the burgeoning but self-assumed responsibility of the West to clean the world from evil and brutes. To justify the wars, they raised the postulates of conservation as it was mandatory to save these lands from their own natives' exegesis. But to excel the boundaries was not a simple task in this developing world, so there was a compulsion to show oneself as the compassionate ally. America used the political strategy of financial support in favour of economically underprivileged countries just as bait to tend their governments under his feet. The promises of sustainable development were presented to hide the neocolonial power tactics and only to escalate the injustices thus profiting the elites only (Centeno & Cohen, 2013).

To preserve the territory portrayed in the novel, the same techniques were used when people were given lame assurances of progress and development. The description of the related incidents in the novel is an indirect attack on the bogus proclamations of betterment and advancement generated by the white masters. The justification to bring change in non-developed countries is elucidated by the episode of Mutt's brain-frying. Mutt describes the deadliest day of his life when he got severely bruised and battered by the massive electric shock from the pole that had been planted with a promise to deliver electricity in this farthest impoverished region of the world. As these kinds of gestures had always remained unfulfilled in the past so the labourers forgot 'to earth the pole, as they were sure from their past experiences that this whole pole-wires transformer business was just a showpiece to steal more money' (p. 157). But unfortunately, 'someone had a bout of seasonal goodwill and released the electricity'

(ibid) at the same time when Mutt was excreting the urine on the same pole. Electricity struck and his brain got fried. The conversion of an oasis into a wasteland was not an abrupt phenomenon but it was wrapped in a continuous process of sham development and slogans of progress and advancement. Momo suggested that ‘They stole it brick by brick. Foundations were dug up and every single bit of concrete, mortar was taken away, steel wires were pulled with bare hands’ (p. 13).

5. Conclusion

This research was initiated by the hypothesis that under the garb of much-popularized conceptions of conservation and preservation, America is playing a despicable game to strengthen its own hold in various places. The first research question dealt with the contrasting conception of wilderness, challenging the universality attached to this Euro-American trope. The above discussion reinforced this assumption that definitely Asian wilderness is entirely opposite to its Euro-American counterpart. This trope skillfully conceals the imperialistic brutalities in it. The analysis carved out a new dimension, terming this wilderness trope as an offshoot of neocolonialism and capitalism which under its attire gave the mandate to destabilize a running economy of the land.

The second question dealt with the analysis of the proposition of the myth of sustainable development in relation to this trope of wilderness. The findings suggested that certainly neo-colonial power politics was imbedded in this very trope which somehow legalized and accentuated the plundering of resources, environmental degradation and landscape deterioration of far-off lands thus creating a blood-smeared wilderness in the distant regions of the world. Immersed in his superiority complex and labelling himself as a champion of preservation and conservation, America played a filthy game in the far-off territories of the Middle East and Asia. The Asian wilderness that has been realistically charted out by Mohammad Hanif in *Red Birds* is startling to the core. The unnamed place presented here is the epitome of Asian Wilderness: barren, desolate, and fruitless. This land is objectified to the level as the humans walking on this land have also turned into inanimate objects. They are nameless beings, walking dead on this barren land. Being preservationist, American has played his part to alter the living territory into a dead land and has preserved this place from any human trammelling as no rational human is left out to advance and progress in these stagnant conditions. Now the starving beings inhabiting this place are dwelling on contaminated waste and have become a materialized being thinking about life in capitalistic strain such as Momo.

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