

Environment as an Aesthetic Paradigm in Uzma Aslam's *Thinner than Skin*: An Ecocritical Reading

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ABSTRACT: *This research scrutinizes the aesthetic shift of Pakistani-American writer towards the natural landscapes and environment of Northern Areas of Pakistan to signify a soft image of this country in the world, and to dismantle the Western ideology of Pakistan as a safe haven for terrorists, or a war-torn country. This qualitative research paves its way through theoretical domain of 'Environmental Aesthetics'- the relationship between human and environment with reference to beauty, a sub-branch of Ecocriticism with the dominant concepts of Emily Brady's imaginative engagement and perceptual imagination, and Arnold Berleant's Aesthetic Engagement, what in Husserlian's term is called 'intentionality', or 'embodied experience' by Merleau-Ponty to analyze Uzma Aslam's *Thinner than Skin*. It is done while highlighting the aesthetic value of environment-green beds, vibrant weather, and natural landscapes of Northern areas. Novel develops its magnificent tale around the natural landscapes of mountains, valleys, rivers, glaciers, and above all the welcoming people of this region. The main rationale of this research is to explore not only the healthy sense of beauty, but also highlight Pakistan as a safe haven for foreigners, and tourists. Moreover, it aims at valuing the paradigm of aesthetics and to appreciate the natural beauty- steppes, glaciers, mountains and valleys against the consumer culture, militant encroachment, and capitalists' approach towards these areas resultantly bringing ecological crises. Hence, this research concludes that Nature, landscapes, and environment have a connection with sensory perception and participatory engagement for an enlightened living, and actuate people to appreciate visual aesthetics (nature, beauty and artistic taste) which makes their surroundings an urbane and exuberant place to live.*

Key Words: Natural landscape, Environmental Aesthetics, Perceptual Imagination, Aesthetic Engagement

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Uzma Aslam Khan, a promising Pakistani-American writer deals with Nature through dynamic representation of lakes, winds, mountains and fireplace which echoes the voices and complex emotions of her characters, and well-knitted plot of the novel shows her concern for motherland, a pivotal concern of the most of the migrants. Khan's stance at representing Pakistani landscape as the heaven of beauty, lush with greenery and variety of trees is significant and needs appreciation when culture, nature and landscapes have been misrepresented in most of the Pakistani-English writings. This work highlights the impact of natural landscapes and beauty on the lives of not only of local people, but also the foreigner and tourists and stimulates the people to value and appreciate aesthetics which makes their surroundings a courteous and boisterous place to live. Similarly, it establishes the importance of the Himalayas and the Kaghan valley which, with its beauty, have inspired poets, musicians, painters, videographers and photographers through the ages.

Plot of the novel revolves around two major characters, Nadir and Farhana. Nadir, a Pakistani Nature photographer with his distinctive concern in landscape photography is residing in America with a struggle for identity, and is asked by the government officials to bring an obnoxious picture of his country- Pakistan. Instead of watching the landscapes of the Northern areas captured earlier, they ask, "where are the beggars and bazaars that resemble your culture?" (Khan 12). Americans have perceived Pakistani culture as ugly and shattered, its areas as war torn and full of misery, and bazaars full of beggars showing poverty, in overall a dismal picture. Farhana is studying glaciology- study of glaciers and ruminates that Pakistan has the largest number of glaciers as compared to any other country. She contends Nadir to visit Pakistan because she also thinks that Nadir knows to communicate with glaciers, as his utterance of these words show, "galloped, groaned, cracked and crept" (14). Their journey from Karachi to Peshawar is full of wilderness, glaciers, mountain ranges and what reader can call - piercing beauty.

When we look upon the geographical boundaries of this northernmost territory of Pakistan, Gilgit-Baltistan- a precious beauty of landscapes, we know, it was referred as the Northern area of Pakistan in the beginning. It links with Azad-Kashmir to the South, linking Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the West, the Wakhan corridor of Afghanistan to the North separating Russian independent state of Tajikistan from Pakistan

and Azad Kashmir, and Indian-administered state of Jammu and Kashmir to the Southeast of Pakistan. From all these dimensions it gets clear that nature is dominant there in all its aspects.

Nature and human beings are intricately linked. Nature has the elements of beauty and appeals human beings' sensory perceptions to admire that beauty. On the other hand, Environmental aesthetics establishes the connection between human-beings and nature with reference to beauty. Environmental aesthetics "reflects philosophical issues concerning the aesthetic appreciation of the world at large", and so "the field extends beyond the confines of the art world and our aesthetic appreciation of works of art" (Carlson & Berleant 11). Environmental aesthetics is different from traditional aesthetics and includes a number of empirical works related to human aesthetic experiences of environment and can be expanded on three scales. First includes wilderness, rural landscapes, cityscapes, and shopping centers etc. Objects which are included in environmental aesthetics on second scale are based on size, like mountain ranges, farms, backyards, living rooms and country side places. Third scale ranges from exotic to mundane what can also be called extraordinary to ordinary or supernatural to natural objects. So, it can rightly be said that aesthetics of everyday life are included in environmental aesthetics, while, in cognitive and perceptual dimensions can be called environmental experiences. As human-beings inhabit an environment, whose boundaries are the horizons or the highest point of their perceptual field, so aesthetics of appearance are more appealing to these human perceptions, hence, they achieve the highest point of admiration by these perceptual five senses. Highlighting the importance of aesthetics and to value it, Environmental philosophers- Ned Hettlinger and Sheila Lintott have divulged deep rooted links of aesthetics with ethics and also highlight Environmental education as necessary for ethical and esthetic paradigms, while, further arguing that valuing aesthetics might bring a positive support to ethical perspective towards nature (Hargrove 45).

Berleant, while uttering his own perspective about aesthetics, criticizes the Traditional Aesthetic approach, devised by Kant which dichotomizes the subject and aesthetic object, and to whom, nature is controlled because of apex of its beauty- an idea opposite to Hegel, who takes art as the peak point of beauty. In Berleant's concept of Aesthetic Engagement, the boundaries between the subject and aesthetic object get collapsed through participation (total functioning of five senses) in the

environment that can be termed as total involvement. Moreover, aesthetic engagement focuses on active participation, sensory immersion and embodied appreciation. Berleant also explores aesthetics scope of human- environment connection on theoretical and concrete terms, and takes environment not only a setting but as fully involved, integrated and continuous with human beings. He maintains aesthetic experience as contextual, based on human “engagement”- the fundamental quality of environmental perception (Berleant 29). On the other hand Brady’s Imaginative Engagement has various roles with their pre-determined roles and assimilates with other parts of Aesthetic responses like emotions, senses, interest or disinterest and a pluralistic approach to knowledge. She considers close connection between perception and imagination as both are faculty of mind and senses (Brady 38).

Rather than simply enumerating different aspects, the argument benefits from some form of structure into this literature review to get an idea what type of researches have already been done on this novel, and which are the dimensions unexplored yet. This section of research is important in order to show the reader the existing gap, and to fill this gap, I have picked present dimension for this research- which not only justifies the idea of research as an innovation, or addition into existing knowledge, but furthermore provides validity to the selected work.

Thinner than Skin has been reviewed as the narrative discussing the impact of colonialism on northern borderlands of Pakistan expanding its horizons to discuss geopolitics, environmental concerns and gender roles with an eye-catching prose. Further it takes into account the joys and tragedies of the people living there. While, talking about writer, it is praised that she tells story in a classic manner, a style dissimilar to any other Pakistani- English writer. (Khan webpage)

Sethna (2013) takes its story as a tale of identity and love affair set among the beauty of Northern land and its hospitable Gujjar people. She takes this tale as a combination of love and grief- love for the land, and grief over its loss; loss of beauty and integrity by the attacks of dark forces. She probes into what can be termed as private realm of the characters. She heightens her imaginary perception and puts the beauty of Malika Parbat as follows,

“She treks with her readers through the mountains and talks of how many had gazed at the reflection of the

Malika Parbat from the banks of Lake Saiful Maluk, created by the mountain's snowmelt, and that "if you let your imagination soar, far in the distance to the north-west of the Queen appeared a tiny fragment of what might have been the most photographed and feared peak in the Himalayan chain: the Nanga Parbat, Naked Mountain." (Khan, in Sethna webpage)

Every beauty is feminine to the writer. Sethna considers, this beauty of the north borderland has been wounded by the terrorist activities and this land, now, has problems for the immigrants when they get back to their country. Some researchers have taken this novel as a feminist text highlighting their issues, and how to cope with them while living in a patriarchal society. Khan develops her female characters not as fragile but they are depiction of power and resilience in a male dominant world. Tolle also reviews the same while writing that the novel presents a number of examples of strong and dynamic Pakistani women like Mariam's powerful narrative, when she talks about the evisceration of a goat to her daughter who in return asks about her own skin, if her own skin is as thin as of a goat's? Mariam retaliates, "No, it is thinner"; and remarks further, "if a goat can be shred so easily, so could a woman" (124). So, in order to make her daughter powerful, Mariam mentions, "Mariam's daughter must grow a second skin to protect the thin one, but that second skin should remain hidden, so that the first skin works.

Hussaini (webpage), while highlighting the environmental consciousness criticizes the mounting urbanization and its terrible impact on local communities and natural beauty- hallmark of Northern areas and an alluring substance for tourists and foreigners. These metropolitan areas are displaying a shift towards industrial expansion resultantly bringing decay of natural environment, human communities and culture. In this way, this fiction serves the purpose of preserving the nature and showing resistance against the imperialistic insolence of global industry to observe environmental justice in postcolonial societies for their sustainable growth.

This work takes its theoretical framework from Environmental Aesthetics a sub-branch of Eco-criticism, by taking the concepts of Aesthetic Engagement given by Arnold Berleant and of Aesthetic Engagement and Perceptual Imagination developed by Emily Brady. Berleant, a well-known author of aesthetics, especially the aesthetics of environment

explained the concept of aesthetic field while relating it to different arts like landscape, music, film, dance, environmental design and architecture, which unveiled the active participation of sensory organs what Berleant termed as “Aesthetic Engagement”. His idea of esthetic engagement reinforces the active connection or merging of art and appreciator, a connection that eradicates the dichotomy of subject and object and makes it one, and holistic. He puts aesthetic engagement as follows:

Aesthetic engagement rejects the dualism inherent in traditional account of aesthetic appreciation and epitomized in Kantian aesthetics, which treats aesthetic experience as the subjective appreciation of a beautiful object, instead, aesthetic engagement emphasis the holistic, contextual character of aesthetic appreciation. (Berleant 174)

In this way, aesthetics of engagement promotes going beyond or transcend normative binary of subject and object, thus, reducing the distance between appreciator and appreciated, bringing an amalgam of total senses of the appreciator with the latter, for the nature or art or the both. Second important thing in this process is experience, experience with a phenomenological approach (Berleant 238). While erasing the dichotomy between subject and object, “disinterestedness”- a traditional aesthetic virtue is the concept of no existence for Berleant, which, otherwise, Kant considered a basic requirement for getting aesthetic experience, with an idea of setting aside the practical or personal interests in the object of consideration, while he thinks that the notion of disinterestedness brings distance between subject and object (Berleant 229). In this way, disinterestedness becomes the traditional notion having connection with Kant only, and what Berleant thinks that key of the Kantian notion might lie with the ‘sublime’ which puts a person in a position of wonder, reciprocity or modesty.

On the other hand, Emily Brady (1998) elaborates the intricate connection between perception and imagination in the aesthetic response which resultantly provides some help in differentiating appropriate from inappropriate imagining. She is also of the view that perception helps our faculty of imagination. Imagination, along with perception provides a framework for aesthetic appreciation different from other environmental values- environment of human beings, natural world and of other species.

She takes neo-Kantian position on two proportions. On the one hand, she is of the view that past knowledge is not required for the aesthetic judgment; and, on the other hand, she appeals to disinterestedness as a guide for aesthetic appreciation. Brady calls her account Integrated Aesthetics, conceiving the aesthetic appreciation as characteristically guided both by the subject and the object as contrast to Berleant (Brady, 34). Imagination is based on four dimensional models of exploration, projection, ampliation, and revelation. The first is the closest to perception leading towards possible result; the second involves the ability of "seeing as" and involve the self into natural scenes, third reaches the imagination's inventive powers and their short-lived qualities by the inclusion of narrative images with which we shape an object; and through the fourth, we reach new-revealed understanding of aesthetic experience (Brady 120).

This qualitative research uses the methodology of textual analysis for the possible interpretations of the text, with its theoretical framework of Environmental Aesthetics. It uses Berleant's concept of Aesthetic Engagement- involvement of a person with the aesthetics of the surroundings while blurring the difference between subject and object, and also highlighting the repudiation of the traditional concept of disinterestedness; as Berleant is of the view that aesthetic engagement transcends these traditional approaches of binaries and disinterestedness. On the other hand, Emily Brady's concepts of imaginative engagement and perceptual imagination also serve as lens for the detailed analysis of the selected text. *Thinner than Skin* by Uzma Aslam Khan has been taken as primary text, while theoretical books, articles, and material from archives and different e-libraries is secondary data needed for the analysis of aesthetic engagement through perception, imagination, engagement and experience of the nomads and foreigners alike to value the paradigm of aesthetics.

Description of the abstract quality- beauty of art and nature is not a candid approach, but it needs intact system of five senses, active mind and a heart full of proclivity to give words to picturesque magnificence engraved in the Northern areas of Pakistan. Northern Areas- setting of Uzma Aslam's novel *Thinner than Skin* are magnificent, full of captivating beauty, with alluring lakes, gigantic mountains, majestic pine trees, rich fruit orchards with fresh cherries, forests, beautiful rivers and enthralling glaciers. These areas show rich traditional culture and norms which is not affected by modernity, and these nomadic people are

innocent, environment friendly, hospitable, and with organic lifestyle. Beauty is an idea among the ideas; human-beings give worth to in this world. Muir wrote, “Everybody needs beauty and bread...where nature may heal and give strength to or can nourish body and soul alike” (in Brady 67).

The novel starts with the description of the wind which shows narrator’s interest towards nature, “Now the wind carried a similar foreboding not in the shape of a scent but of a wingbeat, and the lake froze in anticipation” (Khan 1). Here, in the beginning of the novel Maryam shares her view about the wind of Northern areas and its impact on other natural objects in the surrounding. It is breeze in the beginning, as depicted, “the air began to ring with bells as faint yet bright as stars” (Khan 3), carrying the clue of season with this portrayal. Khan’s all characters, Nadir, Farhana, Maryam, Kiran, Ghafoor and Wes remain moving around Northern areas in a way that they provide a backdrop to the reader and reader feels that he/she is also taking journey with them. Writer describes the beauty of the land with the help of central character Maryam, who feels things delicately and remains moving along the shores of the lake, and busy recalling her past. There seems a continuous connection between nomadic people and these areas, who are not only mesmerized by the presence of lake, but Himalayan mountains, river Kunhar, and lush green trees around these mountains also are the source of endless pleasure and peace.

Khan is experienced at showing the land ethics and harmony of local communities of northern areas with that of nature. It is true to say that nature talks to them and they talk to nature what Berleant terms as Aesthetic Engagement with no distinction between subject and object, because of total engagement or total involvement. In this novel, her selection of the title of chapters and dominant natural imagery are the evidence of her pleasant attitude towards nature. There are a number of textual references where role of the appreciator shows total involvement with the aesthetics of this land of beauty. “Frozen lakes” (Khan 1) one of the hall marks of these areas along with snow fall adds to the aesthetic skills of the viewer who probes into nature about the existence of lakes among the mountains. “It was the snow melt of the two peaks that created the lake”, (Khan 02) adds to the previous idea of the frozen lakes that how they were created. Nature acts as a facilitator though to make clear the natural happenings in the surroundings, yet, it is close observation of human beings along with their reflective curiosity in

aesthetics that give such an impeccable depiction. Narrator makes the idea clear, how perception supports the faculty of imagination, when adds, thick sheet of the mist in the sky made its reflection in the lake. It is the description which shows the perceptual qualities of the aesthetic object, as well as the power of imagination of the participant mingled up for direct aesthetic appreciation. Further, calm surface of the land and clear sky are the examples of aesthetic details which add to the Berleant's concept of Aesthetic engagement and meanwhile highlight the engagement of the appreciator. Perceptual imagination works to appreciate nature here, especially, River kunhar gives the characters' independence and an active environment to think about their personal activities and relations. Here, Nadir, not only thinks about Farhana, but also is stunned by the moonlight, the current of the swishing water, and shady trees like sheltering huts. It provided a perfect atmosphere to take sunbathe in the morning (11).

Writer chooses her characters that are in harmony with nature just like the local communities of Gilgit- Baltistan region. Farhana's interest in natural scenery, presence of rivers, and high mountain range glorifies the purity of the place that binds people and nature. Fresh air gives her pleasant sensation. Glacier melts and passes into river which narrator tasted again and again; here the word tasted refers to Berleant's aesthetic engagement, which is only possible, when five senses are intact. River, part of nature, here part of beauty as well due to attractiveness of its water is told by the pronoun "her", as all beautiful things are feminine to the narrator. Kaghan valley in frontier province- a landscape of upright wilderness is full of lush alpine forest- another symbol where viewer can appreciate nature, while keeping on working the perception and imagination among this beauty. Nadir and Farhana- the focal characters of the novel, the former, interested in American landscapes, gets bewildered when American agent, during interview asks Nadir to bring a glum picture of Pakistan, the beggars and dirty bazaars- a sullen culture overall. They mention further that Americans know about their trees already. They also know 'East' as wild and unsafe place to visit. According to Western Ideology, this (beautiful) land has become terrorism-stricken area, where terrorist activities has taken lives of poor people and their children are reduced to begging only (27). This comment of showing poor culture upsets Nadir, who gives up landscape photography after this incident and says, "A Pakistani goes all the way to the land of opportunity only to end up taking photographs of brides" (48). They can serve as wedding photographers around the biosphere.

Farhana, having German-Pakistani ancestry, and a student of glaciology, working on the project of comparative study with the title, “a comparative study of glaciers in the northern Pakistan and northern California” is well aware of Pakistani landscapes, regions of beauty with perfect knowledge of geography. That’s why she discusses about the glaciers with Wes and Nadir, and Nadir comes to know that “Pakistan has more glaciers than anywhere outside the poles”, only through Farhana (37). Narrator, while completely merged in nature, also discerns the voice/chirping of seagulls, teetering in the breeze, moving here and there in their place of visit. Khan uses characters that are deeply rooted in nature with an exhaustive knowledge of glaciers’ growth or melting, alarming situation of global warming, and importance of forests to cope the deteriorating situation of weather. Nadir knows that Farhana is interested in greenery and Kaghan is full of green meadows, so he asserts her to visit this valley as well. “Farhana will like the forests of Kaghan valley”, he assumes. She is interested in opulent greenery, he proclaims further. It is the point where Emily Brady’s concept that ‘perception supports our imagination’ works, or as Carlson’s concept of, ‘scenic beauty’ or ‘expressive esthetic qualities’ (Carlson 20) underpins for the aesthetic appreciation of nature, as Farhana does here, while visiting this valley. They, with a hypnotic power, are spots of fascination for the visitors (45). The Mountain that borders the lake ‘Saif-ul-maluk’ is Malika Parbat, ‘Queen of the Mountains’ one of the narrators mentions. It is also mentioned that glaciers beauty was enriched when people were gliding forward, as if on fairy wings (P.47). These references elaborate the role of appreciator, and viewer for the working of her/his imagination, and this aesthetic response to objects of nature can only be given when one perceives and explores the aesthetic object with wide-ranging concentration. Khan again refers to the power of Imagination when it is informed by the aesthetic engagement! You allow your imagination soar, far in the distance to the northwest of Queen appeared a tiny fragment of what might have been most photographed peak in the Himalayan chain” (Khan 64). For her, Himalayan peaks bring aesthetic pleasure to its viewers. These peaks are aesthetically appreciated by the locals and foreigners alike. It can be seen in case of lakes as well, when Irfan says “A lake so clear and bright, but hideous inside” (Khan 157) and Nadir replies “this lake became a mirror to my own world” (Khan 157). Perceptual imagination here supports to appreciate the nature and to explain the past experiences.

Visitors want to know every detail about the beauty of these places as Berleant mentions that complete sensible world is included in the view of aesthetics which overwhelm them and visitors get curious to know the details and to appreciate it. Role of perception becomes pivotal, as mentioned by Brady. The aesthetic response to natural objects begins with perceptual exploration of the natural objects. It can be seen in the text, how characters are enthusiastic to know the language of glaciers, and Farhana's love to learn this language makes her successful. Characters are engaged with the nature and even owl, the symbol of many wonders and wisdom is the point of their focus and attention. There is direct appreciation of the environment again when, Nadir compares glacier with walnut shell, "Beyond the chasm, I could see the glacier of husks and walnut shells so vividly I could smell it" (Khan 202). This metaphorical comparison is only possible through perceptual imagination, when mind perceives the images of beauty and faculty of imagination gets active to give those images beautiful names, and to appreciate them.

While reading the novel reader feels as moving with the misty wind and walking on the shore of the lake, Saiful Maluk, which intensifies its image of beauty, which is recognized by perceptual participation of appreciator and the object- a reciprocal process in aesthetics, when sunlight falls on its summit and it shines like gold. Maryam takes interest in the visitors as well while roaming in the meadows and near lake. She considers them good hearted, sociable and sympathetic towards local folk. She is happy when Farhana admires her daughter and spends time with her. She calls these people Angrez, who, Maryam thinks, think differently about themselves and come all the way across the seas and want to visit glaciers and lake (77). This portrayal serves as valuing aesthetics- objects of beauty as a unified and holistic phenomenon, which is located in Berleant's idea as well. This experience of appreciation becomes perceptually dynamic, intimate and direct.

In the continuous process of perception and admiration, narrator states, "Malika Parbat's reflection was being admired and broken by a stream of exhausted pilgrims and a dozen boats" (Khan 63). People enjoy riding boats here and spending time on the shore of the lake with the objects of ultimate beauty. The beauty of the area can be traced here further when Nadir comments that Queen's twin peaks fanned into triangular wings, enclosing us in a sharp cloak of blessings (Khan 65) and disruption of the lake continued like a troubled sea on the shore which was considered due

to restiveness in the snowmelt (101) which proves perception as a sudden revelation, as in case of admiring the mountain in the presence of tourists and comparing it with the pilgrims, or sometimes as a contemplative process as in case of taking lake full of blessings showering on its visitors, and therefore, sets perception as a mutual activity of all the sense modalities.

The fairy princess called Badar Jamal (beautiful like a moon) the lover of Saiful Maluk was glossy and slim. Cave, within the lake is another attraction, because Badar Jamal lived there (107). It is also beautiful to pen down when these nomadic people serve the tourists according to their capacity, as Nadir points out, “she’d baked the bread for us, sacrificed a pear, potatoes” (115). It shows a spontaneous response to the hospitality of nomadic people. Khan’s narrator was talking about Kiran’s mother, who was not only beautiful just like the beauty of land and natural objects, but hospitable also. It is also mentioned that these people wake early in the morning for prayers and to see the sun to break behind the mountain, Malika Parbat, which, otherwise was among stars and wisps of clouds in the violet sky (120). This description sets these characters as passionate observers conceiving the beauty as a vast interconnected whole-fulfilling their moral (if not political) duty of rethinking their relationship with the natural world and environment.

This novel also informs that these elements of beauty do not only engage the five senses of the spectator but also provide an opportunity to contemplate these beauties as ultimate blessings. Northern areas are enriched with mountains and glaciers which are considered haven for people, though local or foreigner, which not only beautify these areas but also provide safety to them. Fairy Meadows is the charming and glittery welcome to the jaws dropping mountain range known as Nanga Parbat. The mountains sit in the background of this colorful destination, making it one of the most picturesque places for tourists to visit. Same is highlighted by narrator as well; when he is asked, what brought him there, and he responds with meditative faculty of mind which Brady puts as inventive/creative power to elaborate an object for a short period of time, it is trade and freedom both, trade, in a sense, to take pictures for selling, and freedom to enjoy the beauty.

And we know, you need three things to be free,
Mountains, for security and glaciers; rivers, for
drinking and irrigation, especially to the millions of

people of the lowlands; farmland, for food and money.
Here we have all three. (Khan 239)

These glaciers also provide snowpack and streamflow at different time periods to engage the visitors towards their beauty through participatory model of aesthetic experience, which Brady recalls not only 'seeing as' but also involve the self into natural scenes. The portrayal of glaciers is painted in such an enigmatic way that percipient seems not simply seeing through but also part of those magnificent glaciers. Moreover, these people's livelihood is attached to these mountains. They are blessed who do not only live with beauty but enjoy its every aspect. Farhana mentions, "we're not just here to take photographs and be on our way" (Khan 272), but to appreciate these people as hospitable, devoted and kind for the outsiders. In the cultural and historical formation of nature, where nature is a cultural artifact, there is no demarcation between nature and culture. So, foreigners admire the nature while local struggle to preserve and maintain nature. As aesthetic experience is embedded in senses, so this experience is always relative to temporal or spatial scale of perception.

In Western Ideology, as American Ideology has been mentioned by Khan, this beautiful land does belong to third world country which is taken as safe place for terrorists, and a heaven for Taliban, and people are reluctant to visit these dreamlands, and yes they want to occupy these places as text shows, 'everyone wants our land, everyone wants our rivers, our sea' (Khan 240). Same concept goes against the nomads that they are dangerous people, no more kind or in favor of humanity. Khan has dismantled this image in the Western eyes through her hybrid or white characters, and title of the chapter 'hospitable truths' serves the same purpose by establishing the kindness and services of those people towards Khan's characters.

Talking further about Imagination, for romantics, it is a divine power, and a creative force, and for Casey, it is completely autonomous character that is why, we as viewer talk about possibilities while explaining about or responding to an object of beauty. The striking accounts having its roots in this wonderland have its beauty and power to carve the picture in visitors' minds, and to make their faculty of imagination robust. Nadir's faculty of imagination emboldens a variety of perceptual viewpoints to expand and enrich appreciation, or what Brady calls emotional response towards aesthetics of nature (Brady 89).

River laughed, river was pleased at waterfall because it was leaving one valley to meet the next. Queen once washed her tired eyes in this water and it was called Nain Sukh (247). Nadir's visit to Hunza valley is summed up in Emily Brady's concept of power of imagination in aesthetic response. "We gazed at the sky. Perhaps five minutes passed, perhaps twenty" (Khan 271). He is not sure about the time. Nadir's ampliative sort of imagination shows special curiosity to respond to natural scenery, when he moves towards next lake called Ultar; he responds magnificently, but it is less adorned, as Brady says 'a dull landscape' (Brady 233) and so captured Nadir's imagination least as compared to Nanga Parbat, but 'aesthetically interesting'(Brady 234). So, beauty and one's merging by taking interest in that beauty is also an enthralling experience frequently photographed to paint the magnificence of the scenery.

It is pleasure-seeking perception together with imagination which allows demarcation as appropriate or inappropriate, and use metaphorical language to explain that beautiful valley, as full of "fairies and princes" (Khan 298), which Wyeth calls informed by 'attention' (in Brady 151) to associate loftier adjectives with the already beautiful backdrops. These mountainous zones provide a view which shows sky closer and viewers as talking to the sky, as Nadir says, "I could see stars so close that I felt I could grasp them in my nail" (Khan 302). Water in Ultar Lake was taken as moving when the narrator moved. And on other side it was Hunza River. The way, Hunza River gave the sound was different from that of the sound produced by water of Ultar Valley and river was flowing in curves. It is continuous contemplation, self-indulgence and role of percipient to imagine well which enables them to discern the sounds of water of river from that of lake. Sight of stars is also evoked by the same aptitude of imagination. Brady's four dimensions of imagination, exploration, projection, ampliation, and revelation serve the purpose of brilliant response to aesthetics and keep safe the viewer from going into irrelevant response.

It has been concluded that Khan's *Thinner than Skin* has elements of natural aesthetics and heighten the percipients' faculty of perceptual imagination, aesthetic engagement and sensory perception to appreciate visual aesthetics. Pakistan has been gifted with a fair share of natural beauty which has been explored by Khan's characters and analyzed under all the four faculties of imagination conceptualized by Brady and Berleant's idea of aesthetic engagement as lens. It can also be said safely

that writer has presented soft image of Pakistan on global level to dismantle the established image of this country as war torn and terrorist state, and by showing her people as simple and hospitable. Further, this work of khan has shown dynamic landscapes, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, springs, glaciers and mountains as necessary constituents of the tale to establish novel not only with healthy sense of beauty but also with positive image of Pakistan as safe zone for tourists to explore nature and beauty of its Northern areas. Hence, this research has concluded that Nature, landscapes, and environment have a connection with sensory perception and participatory engagement for appreciation of aesthetics, an enlightened and enriched living, and motivate a person to live in a surrounding which is a refined and lively place. There is further need to save these beauty zones of homeland against the consumer culture, militant encroachment, and capitalists' approach from moving these spaces towards organic death and a technology-fueled society.

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