

## Biopolitics and Environmental Crises: An Ecomarxist Study of *The 786 Cybercafé*

TAYYIBA MARYAM

### Abstract:

*This research paper attempts to examine the novel The 786 Cybercafé (2004) by Bina Shah from ecomarxist and biopolitical perspectives. It outlines the relationship between ecocriticism, marxism and biopolitics. Ecocriticism, a new perspective in literary theories assimilates to Marxist literary and cultural criticism. Through the method of textual analysis this paper investigates multiple socio-economic, biopolitical conditions and ecological crises of Karachi impacting on the life of individuals by using Marxist point of view as economic lens. Biopolitics contains a number of theories with which new forms and dogmas of communities are investigated in an intricate set up showing the links between life and its governance. Moreover, this paper documents biopolitical competence suggesting an association between the text and the challenging society. It also endeavors to manifest governing apparatuses and social life according to biopolitical parameters. My reading of Bina Shah's The 786 Cybercafé (2004) suggests that core issues of the human world such as troubles created by capitalist society, ecological disasters, economic and political structure are the subject matters of this novel. Furthermore, ecological disasters, economic and political structure of urban city Karachi help to understand and elaborate the current situation of Biopolitics. Environmental crisis can also be called as the present face of politics itself for instance different geopolitical struggles reshape the tracks of power on global scale. In the meantime, it also demonstrates that how the environment plays as a biopolitical component. The key contribution of this paper is to switch attention on the recoding of setting as a mechanism through which the Biopolitical environmentalization of actual spaces might pass into the literary dimension. It serves as a symbiotic association between man and*

*nature constituting ecological consciousness in accordance with the besmirched image of human life undoubtedly that is the result of poor physical infrastructure.*

**Key words:** Biopolitics, Ecological Crises, Economic Instabilities, Unemployment, Urban City.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This research paper comprises economic and ecological examination of Bina Shah's novel *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) with ecomarxist and biopolitical perspective as it tries to seek out issues pertaining to the human relationship with environmental and economic fringes. My reading of the novel under review suggests that ecocritical issues along with Biopolitics and Marxism are the subject matter of Shah's writing. This paper encapsulates the core issues of human world such as young generation dilemmas, troubles created by capitalist society, and ecological disasters. Asian literature exhibits well-known works replete with the socio-political background. The two opposite observable facets politics and society are categorized into one.

Bina Shah's *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) lays bare astonishing facts of metropolitan city where urban people are suffering from multiple deficiencies. Concerning the ecological crises urban ecology can be manifested here. Urban ecology with cultural ecological approaches conceptualizes the city as an essential part of the environment and as a space in which environmental issues are marked concretely. Urban ecology takes its main incentive from an analysis of illustrations extracted from contemporary culture which concerns with urban life and the complicated interrelations between urban communities and their milieus.

This paper highlights social discrepancy concerning with economic and cultural disparities. Inequality between the poor

and the rich as well as among the provinces is brought to light in the course of the novel. Shah's work *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) very minutely reproduces the complexities based on the class struggle, economic quandary, gender issues and evils of capitalist system. The novel invites attention in the direction of setbacks generated by class distinction in Pakistani society. People from different provinces are also criticized for their distinct identities; these instances are analyzed with Marxist point of view in this paper. Living in sick environment Jamal Tunio, the protagonist, has the dream of becoming well-to-do because by establishing a Cybercafé on Tariq Road he can be entrepreneur. The character of Jamal is an explicit example of destructive economic system. He is also the victim of economic disparity prevailing in this society and captivating the individuals.

The characters in the novel are entangled in sense of duty and desire to execute ambitious dreams. They are encircled by internal and external threats which hold them back to proceed. Setting of the novel is an explicit example of destructive ecological urban space, it portrays polluted, gibberish, filthy and befoul atmosphere of Karachi. Therefore, people who are living in such milieu are also surrounded by various troubles. Shah sketches an impoverish picture of Karachiites who are yearning for their basic necessities in life. People strive with dreams but no resources are available and overpopulation seems to be the major reason of economic turmoil.

Economic instabilities inform the readers about irregular establishment regarding individuals' identities which engage them towards inconclusive struggle to obtain wealth and material gains in a capitalist society. Imbalance in distribution of different resources among provinces contributes in economic instability and becomes evidence of poor fiscal policies. Certain external and internal forces are involved in affecting the stability of economic structure of society. In

economic context Karachi has become paradoxical because of its fungal growth. The urban city is exhibited possessing vibrant economic condition with a large set of obstacles for the individuals like Jamal and Yasir. The challenging face of this urban city impresses its inhabitants only for its facade lusciously and hides its grueling outlook. This contradictory condition leaves the individuals with numerous dilemmas in their life. They can just presume positively with hope but throughout their life they remain and act mechanically in the hands of power and authority for example the portrayal of Ahmad Tunio elaborates this condition meaningfully. He works hard throughout his life but at the end he is empty handed. Therefore, the people who are living in such milieu are also surrounded by various troubles.

This paper cites examples of economic instability from the selected text as economy is crucial arena of any urban city because the novel reveals urban poor class being shifted to the corners of the city. Shah sketches an impoverish picture of Karachiites who are yearning for their basic necessities in life. People strive with dreams but no such resources are available and overpopulation seems to be the major reason of economic turmoil. Jamal's character is explicit illustration because he has to rely on his friend Yasir to start his Cybercafé on Tariq Road, a busy commercial area of Karachi. These nuisances compel the individuals to move to the foreign countries for their better future which they can never imagine in this locale due to unemployment and lack of resources. Physical environment, economic disparity and biopolitical conditions become the cause of Abdul's move to Canada at the end of the novel as he has studied Information Technology from a famous university for that reason he hopes to avail better opportunities over there.

This paper further expounds ecological crises which pertain to wretched environmental conditions in a society that can affect its individuals and become the cause of uncomfortable halo. It passes on to a destructive change in

ecological system brought by human actions. In this paper multifaceted ecological crises prevailing in urban city are highlighted. Ecological crises and urbanization are interconnected. Urbanization can be reckoned the leading cause of ecological catastrophe. Overcrowded localities lead the inhabitants to congestion and environmental degradation. Moreover, growing ecological crises destabilize human survival. In this paper second wave of ecocriticism is focused which holds Lawrence Buell's notion that Ecocriticism is an "increasingly heterogeneous movement" (Buell, 2001, p. 1). This wave brought with it a redefinition of the term "environment," expanding its meaning to include both "nature" and "the urban" (Buell, 2001, p. 11). Lawrence Buell calls it "second-wave Ecocriticism" which takes an open interest in urban environments, third world literatures, and a much wider range of genres. (Buell, 2001, p. 21)

Ecocriticism and literature are interrelated, unusual combination of natural science and humanistic discipline. Ecocriticism expounds that how man's relationships with his physical environment is reflected in literature. Marxist approach in relation to Ecocriticism investigates the setting of the novel with other structural literary devices such as character, plot, and genre. According to Buell, Ecocriticism also includes the genres of third world literature. For ecocritics race, class and social justices are the central concerns. The paper analyzes the physical setting of the novel through Ecomarxist method. Karachi happens to be the melting pot of miscellaneous races, cultures, religions, and languages. Shah identifies Karachi as the wasteland of failed opportunities where corruption has overwhelmed all the facets of human life.

This paper also probes into Bina Shah's novel *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) through Foucault's idea of Biopolitics which is concerned with population as political and scientific problem and as a biological issue of the exercise of power. Biopolitics refers to the examination of policies and apparatuses through

which human life processes are managed under structure of authority. Relevant biopolitical problems in this paper significantly denote the exercise of power over population and ecological sphere in particular the characters of Ahmad Tunio, Jamal, Yasir, and Abdul. Their whole life is demonstrated as encircled in biopolitical conditions. Social life is entangled in certain governing powers which definitely affect the socio-economic structure of a society.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Medovoi illustrates about the limits of Ecocriticism, biopolitical dimensions, consequences of Ecocriticism, and Marxist ecocriticism in particular biopolitical unconsciousness. Ecomarxist literary criticism takes hold of the historicity of these terms developing a diagnostic reading of literary and cultural texts. Along with this limits of Ecocriticism are evaluated. Glotfelty's articulation of Ecocriticism has to face crisis since its approaches to the literature. In the meantime, literary figures engrossed themselves in the narratives, genres and metaphors on the other hand Ecocritics aware of such anticipation have understood the structures of narratives. Medovoi further explains interaction between biopolitics and Ecocriticism. Marx's awareness of population and its social effects can be assimilated with biopolitics' main concern with population. During Marx's time the focus of the study was demographic dimensions such as population, class, gender, race, and education. Here Biopolitics seeks to resolve these demographic facets politically. Medovoi gives reference to Foucault that the environment can be manipulated the same way as population itself. Describing the consequences for Ecocriticism, population and environment can be categorized together. It is thought that human beings make their abode according to their needs such as land, water, and climate because human beings cohabit with other species. To a far

extent, both population and environment are ideologies which certainly approach to human beings and their surroundings. (Medovoi, 2013, p. 79-81)

An inception of Ecological Marxism can be outlined from noteworthy notions of James O' Connor. O' Connor quotes Aiden Foster-Carter, an honorary senior research fellow, manipulating the relationship between Ecocriticism and Marxism; "Those who insist that [Environmental destruction] has nothing to do with Marxism merely ensure that what they choose to call Marxism will have nothing to do with what happens in the world." (O' Connor, 1988, p. 11) In this connection nature seems to be worn-out, resources appear to be insufficient, and pollution becomes devastating for the population. Consequently, Capitalist system ruins ecological system. For O' Connor environmental history becomes analytical and developing step beyond traditional political, economic, and social histories. (O' Connor, 1988, p.11-17)

Zainal evaluates ecological catastrophe and economic issues in Malaysia which is preoccupied with capitalism. He analyzes Malaysian writings through Ecomarxist considerations. Further, socio-ecological changes are observed due to British colonial administration in Malaysia. The range of ecological issues faced by Malaysia is categorized as pollution, loss of forest and climate change. Other than this, there are certain factors of environmental issues such as industrial development and urbanization as well as these developments demand for more land. Consequently, such circumstances prove to be devastating for human and non-human both. Literary and non-literary works of Malaysian authors invite the attention of the readers to consider prevailing economic and ecological crises for example population control, career opportunities and social justice and these writers also unfold human domination over biosphere. He also considers human beings responsible for ecological crises due to their alienation from nature. (Zainal, 2016, p. 1-8-27)

Lowy reviews Ecomarxism and states that irretrievable calamities in the life of human beings are the result of dominating capitalist system. Extreme weather conditions, increase of air pollution, growing destruction of rain forests, destroyed soil, and unmanageable amassing of waste, all are warning signs and threats to human life of this planet. Ecocriticism and Marxism both share objective end implying economic mechanization in context. Both socialism and ecology concern with the fulfillment of needs, social equality, and protection of nature. Ecological issues are great challenge in this regard Marxists should undertake revision of traditional mode of productive forces. All this is obstacle in systematic progress of a society in economic paradigms of modern civilization. Regarding first and second contradiction of capitalism O'Connor signals to capitalist system that it is destroying various conditions including natural environment. Ecology functions to make us aware of the impending dangers on this planet ensuing from the mode of production and consumption. These threats and crises of civilization need radical solutions. Ecologists are reacting to growing ecological issues in Asia, Africa and Latin America. (Lowy, 2005, p. 16, 17)

Han assesses the interrelated perspectives Marxism and Ecocriticism. Research on Ecomarxism is progressing rapidly. He reflects the relation between the both by examining the two comments with regard to labor process theory in capitalist system. First, Marx is anthropocentric i.e. the domination of nature while the second nature-centrist i.e. root source of nature. Before Marx's ecology his concept of labor needs to be reviewed. Scholars have examined Marx's material metabolism. Material metabolism has twofold meaning. First meaning can be taken as Physiological concept/natural science, it denotes the relationship between humanity and nature appears in connection with environmentalism. Accordingly, this physiological concept criticizes capitalist system from an



ecological perception. Second meaning can be taken as a philosophical concept dealing with ecological concerns. (Han, 2010, p.15, 20)

Cilano, a critic of Pakistani Literature, praises Bina Shah's *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) that the novel provides the symbolic significance of the city Karachi as isolated locale, with its residents worn to shreds between belonging and displacement. On the other hand this city signifies hope and the realization of the idea of Pakistan, a homeland for the Muslims of subcontinent. Since its existence, as Pakistan's megacity, Karachi has been economic leader of the country. Economic prosperity of the city has been fluctuating with a lot of demographic changes as well as the social-economic and political dynamics. Cilano further goes on to say that the story of Bina Shah's remarkable novel *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) identifies Jamal as the protagonist in 21<sup>st</sup> century having a dream to be entrepreneur with the set up of a Cybercafé on Tariq Road which is the busy commercial centre of the city Karachi. Access to the Internet and technology grants the socio-economic benefits. (Cilano, 2013, p. 163-168)

Rainbow and Rose review Foucault's concepts of biopolitics and biopower. They undertake the clarity of his concepts biopower and biopolitics. They argue for the necessity of these two models in the analysis of contemporary works. Regarding this they describe the basic notions of Foucault as well as discuss new philosophers Georgia Agamben and Antonio Negri in this field. Race, population, and reproduction are the themes in the sphere of biopower. One pole of biopower exhibits anatomo-politics of human body and the second is biopolitics of population which centers on certain mechanisms of life. Biopolitics is a "form of power that regulates social life from its interior" (Foucault, 2008, p. 23). Life turns into political object in biopolitical setting. (Rainbow & Rose, 2003, p. 4-20)

### **3. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This section of the paper contains materials and methods which have been used to make it more perceptible and evident. This paper uses qualitative approach for textual analysis of *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004). In this research paper various primary as well as secondary sources like books, articles, newspapers, magazines and websites are consulted for layout. A compilation of data will be administered from different sources to gather more knowledge about the topic. This thesis will be descriptive in nature. The study will follow APA sixth edition referencing style. The text is critically examined in the light of Biopolitics and Ecomarxism and then it discusses ecological and economic crises in the novel.

Theoretical framework of this paper is based on ecomarxist criticism with biopolitical perspective. Ecocriticism, being a branch of literary criticism, has been conferred all over the world as interrelated with the literature. Theory of ecomarxism is utilized to evaluate social, cultural, economic and ecological dimensions. Ecomarxism proves to be helpful to seek out the ecological crises prevailing in physical world and for the advancement of ecological policies for the fair distribution of resources in the planet. It can be constructive to cultivate ecological wakefulness and to resolve ecological crises as well as to enumerate the relationship between society and environment with sociological outlook. Lawrence Buell (1939) clarifies that ecocriticism comprises two waves. He argues that the first wave of ecocriticism is concerned with nature oriented writings while the second wave is concerned with urban oriented writings. The word 'ecocriticism' first appeared in William Rueckert's essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism* in 1978. Ecocriticism is defined by Rueckert as "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology (as a science, as a discipline, as the basis for human vision) has the greatest

relevance to the present and future of the world.” (Glotfelty, 1996, p. xx)

Ecocritics develop the definition of environment that it includes urban degraded landscapes which must be perceived as natural landscapes. The ecological trace recognizes that the conformist approach to economics, the expansion archetype, utilization patterns of developed countries, and overall increasing population. Our Ecological trail focuses on these effects that have formed a method to recognize the ecological and social annihilation done by modern life. We can determine this phenomenon by calculating that how much land is mandatory to enable human beings who endeavor for a particular number of people and then compare that to the amount of available land.

Social-ecology, also called eco-Marxism, deals with the controlled development of individuals. Evaluating ecological crises, the role of Ecosocialists cannot be denied. As it is observed that Ecosocialists began to assert about the dreadful environmental conditions, and these social inequalities curtail from the same resource where profit is the fundamental goal. Ecologists recognize how the life-sustaining functions within an ecosystem can be disordered by the behavior of human beings. In the meanwhile, ecosocialism mingles the insights of ecology with the rich tradition of socialist thought and action, especially associated with Marxism.

Biopolitics, a convoluted concept, has been utilized and advanced in social theory. It began with Foucault’s commendable recorded lectures (1978-1979) and was formed in a book *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008) published posthumously. This is quite intersectional term of biology and politics showing its concern for social and political power of life. His notion of biopolitics is elaborated here:

For the first time in history...biological existence was reflected in political existence...But what might be called a society’s ‘thresholds of modernity’ has been reached when the life of the

species is wagered on its own political strategies. For millennia, man remained what he has been for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question. (Foucault, 2003, p. 142-143)

Michel Foucault's foremost concern has been to inspect the tactics and apparatuses through which human life progression is administered under the system of power over knowledge and so forth. A very comprehensive passage from Foucault's *Society Must Be Defended* (2003) is noted above about the domains of Biopolitics that they can control over the relative affairs of the human race, or the way human beings are living in their environment and the milieu which surrounds them. This utterance by Foucault categorizes two major concepts i.e. 'environment' and 'population'.

#### **4. 1 ECOMARXISM IN *THE 786 CYBERCAFÉ* (2004)**

This research paper documents the biosphere of industrialization and urbanization of Karachi captivated in the clutches of capitalist system. Prevailing ecocritical crises are investigated through Ecomarxist lens. Predominant issues based on class struggle are analyzed through Marxist paradigms. Buell includes nature and urban as the centre of concern for this reason Ecocriticism is more socio-centric. Man's relation to physical nature has foremost significance in Ecocriticism. Ecological and economic disparities in *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) refer to man's association with his physical environment and tendencies of changing nature into urban. The novel offers various instances with ecological relevance which can be identified from Ecomarxist point of view. Ecologists believe that life-sustaining functions within an ecosystem can be disordered by man. Man himself is liable for ecocatastrophe only for his own gains. Man has built his milieu according to

the predisposition of urbanization. Tendency towards urbanization in this modern age leads man towards irreparable harm to society. He has to survive in the suffocated buildings in accordance with changing trends of commercial world.

This paper intends to encapsulate social and economic transformations in a society under capitalist structure. Shah depicts Ecomarxist perspectives through various notable socio-economic instances in *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004). Shah chooses the common people from ordinary strata who are certainly entangled in their environmental forces and economic strains. The success of Bina Shah's novel is largely based on the presentation of class antagonism, capitalist society and its impact on the individuals; they show lack of direction and purposelessness in their life. Young Karachiites are leading pointless life under false hopes. Shah portrays money grabbing materialistic civilization and manages the description of positive and negative aspects of society. Privatization of institutes happens to be the most unfortunate instance for the economic cycle of society. People of Karachi are allured and influenced by the commercial world but at the same time they are discriminated regarding career aspirations and other facilities. Youth of Karachi city is victim of class difference. They drive on the same broken down city buses wearing cheap sunglasses. They do not enjoy the liberties of life rather on weekends they drive towards Clifton "up and down brightly lit roads through neighborhoods with thousand yard houses" (Shah, 2004, p. 12-13). Thousand yards house is quite opposite to the congested flats of rest of the people in Karachi.

Accordingly, Shah's *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) is composed as urban oriented novel. Urban world is created by the author to reflect its dimensions i) the advancements of Karachi in the novel ii) the depiction of poor urban class and overpopulation. This paper also unveils the structure of commercial development which brings environmental destruction as Shah describes fascinating huge buildings with

full vigor but this development seems to be occupying the human space. Consequently, human beings are forced to survive in narrow buildings. Shah's *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) is weighed down with manifold eco-social challenges faced by poor urban class residing in this megacity. Urban city fails to provide proper physical infrastructure which includes basic necessities of life such as shelter, water, food and electricity to its inhabitants. Shah gives detailed account of poor community facing never-ending economic and ecological crises. It also lays bare multifaceted ecological crises and economic instabilities prevailing in the urban city Karachi under Marxist view.

The troubling capitalist system is affecting the individuals of society in their economic development. The practice of growing capitalist system, commercialization, and urban development undeniably become the responsible agents for ecological destruction. Shah has delineated characters that are under the dire influence of aforementioned conflicts. Portrayal of Ahmad Tunio, Jamal, Yasir, and Abdul are the illustration of multiple conflicts therefore throughout the novel their conflicts remain unsolvable.

Notably this research paper examines the text of *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) by Shah with ecomarxist perspective. Ecomarxists emphasize that in modern era the internal and external stability of the nature is troubled by the earning aims of human beings. Human beings seem to be liable for the degradation of ecosystem. The physical setting of the novel Karachi is analyzed as urban area and its contemporary issues are brought to light. The fundamental cause of economic disruption in Karachi can be rapid birth rate and shift of people from rural to the urban areas. Karachi is considered the most populous city of Pakistan. Shah sheds light on this over populous city which consists of majority of poor people.

Rapid urbanization causes unmanageable ecocritical complications in Karachi. In an urban city overpopulation turns out to be the major cause of economic disparity and destructive

ecological system as well as brings adverse changes. Shah manifests these complexities in the novel with the description of inhabitants of Karachi that they drench in sweat on the corners of the streets, they are unable to afford a shelter to reside in, as it is asserted “On those punishingly hot days which populated Karachi with depressing regularity, the sun hung in the sky like an executioner, and the moisture danced in the angry white air” (Shah, 2004, p.11). They have cold drinks with cheap plastic straws and mitigate the intensity of hot summer by touching their faces on the slabs of local ice-seller for temporary relief. Image of extreme weather conditions for the poor people unfolds the effects of commercial development. Accordingly, Shah enumerates that eighty seven percent of the people of Karachi cannot afford air conditioners. Physical environment gets on the nerves of people on the other hand only rich people can afford such kind of luxuries. According to Marxist view, this class is unaware of the system which is governing them. The condition creates a sharp contrast between the lives of rich and poor. In such circumstances, capitalist society disowns these helpless people who even cannot meet the expense of uncontaminated water.

Extreme weather conditions adding together with humidity suffocate the whole environment and become intolerable for the human beings, it is purposefully enumerated in the text as “...that you had to force your chest to inhale the hot, sultry air” (Shah, 2004, p. 256). Shah sketches the never ending predicaments through the detailed description of street beggars and vendors seeking for their livelihood. In the novel Shah depicts the miserable condition of the beggar children living in an urban city who open the valve of a water tanker because they are underprivileged of the availability of water. She meaningfully illustrates it in *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) “In the street, some beggar children flock at the taps of a huge water tanker” (Shah, 2004, p.11). This class regulates in its milieu mechanically without even knowing the basic rights. The

beggar children live in the hut of tin that can be taken as degraded image of human life.

The destructive environmental state of Karachi through can be observed through the description of Ahmad Tunio's flat. The flat and its balcony give the image of polluted and smoggy air instead of providing the image of relief. It is demonstrated critically here by Shah, "...and gazing out over the lights of Karachi that sparked intermittently between the smog and the dust of the city" (Shah, 2004, p.164). Through ecocritical insight relationship of man and nature is investigated because man's association with nature has become weak moreover human space is replaced by commercial buildings for capitalist development. Detailed description of Ahmad Tunio's flat can also be evaluated with Glotfelty's interpretation of ecological crises that man has altered his surrounding according to his own purposes. *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) deals with the ecological destruction through the description of overcrowded flats. "He contemplated the flat distastefully, the shabby walls, the close corridor, cold and dark, even though the temperatures outside were scorching" (Shah, 2004, p. 20). Shah constructs a dark and dismal image of the flat which is undeniably suffocated. His flat is also an elaboration of Buell's concept of urban life as rapid urbanization has confined man in limited locale.

In addition, the individuals like Jamal and Abdul are delineated to represent masses of Karachi. They hold the dreams of becoming the heads of import and export companies but in actuality their dreams turn into ashes in this capitalist society where they are not capable of getting a proper job according to their qualification. The individuals have to face "grim realities: no money-no girl-no car" (Shah, 2004, p. 13) in a country which consoles its citizens with big promises but provides small opportunities. People become the slave of this capitalist system which ruins human life. Jamal never found this urban city privileged for the individuals of society like him.



In spite of all inescapable troubles he seeks for entrepreneurship. He manages to move in this inert society where even PhD holders drive taxis. The urban social infrastructure fails to provide chances to the deserving individuals.

Ecological and economic crises faced by Karachiites have been drawn here from *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) with the help of Ecomarxist approach. Inhabitants of Karachi are compelled to live where they do not want to reside. This kind of economic instability is sketched by the description of Jamal's flat as "Buildings were pushed together like the cages of the chickens for sale in Empress Market" (Shah, 2004, p. 20). Residents of Karachi living in overcrowded flats are compared to chickens' cages. The balconies of these residences could not fulfill their purpose of having space and relief rather these are a symbol of exploitation of the natural life.

Ethnic groups located in Karachi had been savaging each other for a long time simultaneously for instance here is elaboration of class distinction "Muhajirs against Sindhis, Sindhis against Pathans, Pathans against Punjabis, Punjabi against Afghans" (Shah, 2004, p. 23). All these disputes refer to the ambiguous circumstances of Karachi and the characters remain unsuccessful in getting out of this chaotic situation. Marx holds the view that the conflict of class distinction can create a classless society under capitalism because in a capitalist system law differs for the poor and the rich.

#### **4. 2 BIOPOLITICS IN *THE 786 CYBERCAFÉ* (2004)**

My reading of the novel *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) by Shah determines economic crisis and its impact on the life of individuals for biopolitical analysis. The research paper unfolds various occurrences in the selected text emphasizing the effect of power on micro-level in urban city Karachi. It also sheds

light on the problem of population and the various strategies of apparatuses which govern it.

The compatible perception of biopolitics deals with the social life governed by power. Shah realistically demonstrates social life which is governed by the political apparatuses. In the novel Ahmad Tunio, a local Sindhi, belongs to salaried class. He believes that Sindhis are born with unending disadvantage; Sindhis are deprived of career opportunities while Muhajirs and Punjabis are privileged in this matter. Shah aptly portrays the position of urban Sindhis who are deprived of equal rights. "In Ahmad Tunio's mind, Sindhi man in Karachi had been born at permanent disadvantages, and nothing was going to happen that would change this fact of life any time soon" (Shah, 2004, p. 23). In this way, class conflict is obvious because few communities are privileged and majority of the inhabitants is completely ignored by the governing power. He has been struggling for the survival of his family throughout his life and paying imposed taxes.

Biopolitics also investigates the complex links connecting social life and its governing apparatuses. Being a jobless, Jamal seeks a fine job to survive with little hope. His dream of becoming a successful businessman and setting up a Cybercafé on Tariq Road involves class struggle. Individuals like Jamal are the prey to this system that governs them directly or indirectly. "The only people who could afford to set up franchises and industries were the already super-rich, super- corrupt industrialists and feudal," (Shah, 2004, p. 30) the image drawn by the author is a glimpse of governance operating all social arenas.

Foucault's primary evaluation of biopolitics is associated with oppressive mechanism in relation to power on the individuals of society. Jamal Tunio, the protagonist, manages to get a job of painting used-cars for illegal car business in urban city Karachi. He joins this illegal car business as a result of unemployment because he was unable to get suitable job in

public and private sectors of Karachi. Shah aptly puts it “Karachi boasted a weak law enforcement system, and a thriving stolen car industry, with upwards of forty cars being lifted a day” (Shah, 2004, p. 25-26). Oppressive mechanisms dominate over the system of life. Jamal entangles himself in oppressive mechanisms unknowingly; he just keeps doing what the owners of this business ask him to do because he is even not familiar with the real names of the employees and the workers. All of a sudden, one day he comes to know about the police raid on this stolen car company and remains stunned that all the business has been finished and he seems helpless in getting any clues about the company. In this way, the novel *The 786 Cybercafé* (2004) serves as a blueprint of urban society displaying multifaceted socio-economic and biopolitical problems of this society.

Foucault’s biopolitics is concerned with the manifold issues of life pertaining to the observable facts which can affect the progress of human life and can also change it. The exercise of power is observable when Mushtaq had Jamal and Yasir in his power and threatens them to reveal the illegal ways of running the 786 Cybercafé to his superiors. He uses them as instrument for his own greed on the other hand he himself exploits the rules and regulations of PTA. Such exploitation and politicization to Jamal’s business wrought by the apparatuses of power illustrate that the person like Mushtaq operates the structure of the system directly and indirectly. Mushtaq seems to be sure in this case that everyone can become prey to this stagnant system.

## CONCLUSION

My research spotlighted multifaceted crises faced by vulnerable people of Karachi through Marx’s interpretation of capitalist system. Shah has the capability to draw a world of social, economic, and ecological crises of urban city under the

troublesome effect of capitalist structures. Indeed, this paper demonstrates a symbiotic association between man and nature constituting ecological awareness and consciousness. Accordingly, the social issues regarding individuals and political power reveal biopolitical problem. The increase in urban populations, congested buildings, industrial pollution, humming of machines in factories and shift of people from rural areas are investigated regarding urbanization. Ultimately, these issues give rise to economic and ecological disruption in the big city. The poor urban masses as well as their movement sketch the filth of the Karachi streets more directly. The interplay between growing population and urbanization affects the human existence and processes of life. It can be summed up that ecomarxist and biopolitical examination of the novel substantiates that physical infrastructure has made human life suffocated and besmirched because human life is rapidly going away from nature. Such kind of physical infrastructure fails to provide comfort to the inhabitants and brings ecological catastrophe.

## REFERENCES

1. Buell, L. (1996). *The environmental imagination: Thoreau, nature writing, and the formation of American culture*. Harvard University Press.
2. Cilano, C. N. (2013). *Contemporary Pakistani Fiction in English: Idea, Nation, State*.
3. Foucault, M. (2008). *The birth of biopolitics: lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. Springer.
4. Foucault, M., Bertani, M., Fontana, A., Ewald, F., & Macey, D. (2003). *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*(Vol. 1). Macmillan.

5. Glotfelty, C. & Fromm, H. (Eds.). (1996). *The ecocriticism reader: landmarks in literary ecology*. 103-23. University of Georgia Press.
6. Han, L. (2010). *Marxism and Ecology: Marx's Theory of Labour Process Revisited*. In *Eco-socialism as Politics* (pp. 15-31). Springer Netherlands.
7. Joyo, A. & Memon, S. (2015). *A Critical Analysis of 'Slum Child' by Bina Shah, under the Marxist Theory of Reflectionism by Georg Lukas*. Proceedings of ADVED15 International Conference on Advances in Education and Social Sciences.
8. Löwy, M. (2005). *What is ecosocialism? Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 16(2), 15-24.
9. Medovoi, L. (2013). *The Biopolitical Unconscious: Toward an Eco-Marxist Literary Theory*. In *Literary Materialisms* (pp. 79-92). Palgrave Macmillan US.
10. O' Connor, J. (1988). *O' Connor, J. (1988). Capitalism, Nature, Socialism: A Theoretical Introduction*. (1st ed.).
11. Rueckert, W. (1996). *Literature and Ecology. An Experiment in Ecocriticism (1978)*.
12. Shah, B. (2004). *The 786 Cybercafé*. Islamabad: Alhamra.
13. Zainal, Z. I. (2016). *Environmental attitudes in selected contemporary Malaysian novels in English: an ecomarxist perspective* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Malaya).