

## **FICTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF INDIAN MUSLIM LIFE BEHIND THE PURDAH IN AHMED ALI'S TWILIGHT IN DELHI**

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### **Abstract**

*As per the present approach for the work in relative in dementia affecting someone in their forties or fifties present paper discusses the analysis of fictional representation of Indian Muslim life behind the purdah in Indian English novel, Ahmed Ali's Twilight in Delhi (1940). Purdah in this novel becomes symbol of the oppressive hold of tradition on a Muslim woman's life in a patriarchal/feudal society. While Ahmed Ali depicts his women as showing passive acceptance of and resignation to a life of confinement behind the purdah. The paper discusses the approach of changing seasons for the Delhi and illustrated with stark oppressive and heat dampness. The story dates back to the age of July and chilli December and also further certify the change in story spoken and other story that will change for better. The characters are endearing and you will find yourself rooting for them at a crossway between their most joyful and most vulnerable moments*

**Keywords:** portrayal, progressive ideas, purdah rules

### **Introduction**

The other method of depicting collective life, apart from incidents, is through characters. In a collective-life novel, individuals cannot be emphasized to the extent they are in other novels. Their action lasts only so long as need demands. But authors of such novels do not often lay any emphasis on characters and use them only as types standing for certain characteristics. In contrast to this, Ahmed Ali allows each and every character to live a full life in his own right. In fact, each character assumes such stature in him that we identify ourselves completely with him and become oblivious of the corporate body of which this character is only a part. Ahmed Ali has given two characters the dimensions of development and growth—Asher to a

certain extent, and much more than him, Mir Nihau. Asher falls in love three times and these are the three basic kinds of love which an average person is likely to experience. First, he visits a courtesan out of a desire to flirt. The courtesan falls in love with him, but he turns her down.

Then he falls in love with Bilquece, and after a little struggle, he marries her. It is, thus, successful love. But on the pattern of the saying "Familiarity breeds contempt," he becomes indifferent to her. When she becomes ill, his love surfaces again. Yet his reaction really is not so much love as it is pity. After Bilquece's death, Asghar falls in love with her younger sister, but finds he cannot marry her. Thus this love remains unsuccessful. Ahmed Ali has thus depicted the emotional ups and downs of an ordinary man's life. Asghar has another role in the novel. The balanced and inwardly harmonious whole which Delhi's culture had produced is presented in the character of Mir Nihal; but that balance has now been upset. Prevailing conditions had produced a new man whose life had neither depth nor expanse, nor balance nor uniformity, who is culturally a mongrel and, in fact, a hybrid and somewhat contemptible, whose finest emotions are devoid of beauty and dignity, the qualities which spring from the traditions of that harmonious culture. Asghar is the representative of this new man. But then once this balance achieves stability, it becomes static and turns to death

The creation of this character is Ahmed Ali's great achievement, his master stroke. Yet we cannot separate this character from the body of the book, because the whole book has its life in him. The description of Mir Nihal's illness is a masterpiece in itself. One finds nothing comparable to it either among Urdu novels—which have no serious standing—or in Western fiction as well. In at least two places this novel acquires the effect of Flaubert; the only difference being that Ahmed Ali is most sympathetic to his characters and Flaubert's attitude at such moments becomes critical. That is how even the comic elements in Ahmed Ali produce an effect of pity.

One of these moments is when the pelican, having been procured with such difficulty, is being killed and not only the children but even the old maidservant Dilchin comes to watch it. The other is the moment when one of Mir Nihal's arms regains sufficient strength and, to while away his time, he traps mongooses. One day a mongoose and its mate are busy at love-play and the female saunters into the trap. At this moment Mir Nihal suddenly remembers Babban Jan and does not pull the trap shut, and from that day has the trap removed. Illness and death are moments where a writer can be judged. At such moments one either becomes emotional or ineffective. But Ahmed Ali escapes being either.

Ali has tried to talk about Muslim rights by describing them "Others" and has used the words of Urdu to show a shift from English literature to Urdu. It also depicts the cultural norms prevailing in Delhi during British oppression as he has shown his son Asghar as the representative of British or colonizers as he wears the British dress and speaks English

language and becomes a part of colonizer's culture. Similarly he has revealed the conservative Muslim approach regarding women as in the novel women are confined in the four walls of the houses and are not given any rights to express themselves in any related field of life.

Associating it with post-colonial discourse there are number of examples of the issues which show that Ali's main intention was to talk about Muslim rights through his literary bent of mind. To Ali, Karachi (1984) when British entered in India made their own city by calling it "New Delhi" which was situated outside the walls of the city. These rulers removed the last culture by calling it historical void and implemented. The prophecy about Delhi came true as they wanted to build a new Delhi and Delhi remains where, as Ali reveals his agony through Hafiz, "Even if the friends are oblivious of my being I have a thousand association with them"

The prominent color of colonizers' dominance is quiet adamant on colonized after the British rule over sub-continent. In this context the role played by Ahmad Ali through his novel *Twilight in Delhi* holds a distinct literary position. Ali (1984) says that, "The purpose and intention behind writing this novel was to limelight the decay of our norms and culture, our ways of living and thinking, values were dead. Nobody was even allowed to revive his past and see his historical roots"

### **Theoretical Framework**

The present research is the socio-cultural study of Delhi under post-colonial view point. It gives an insight on the transformation of human attitude and the cultural values. The term post-colonial has been interpreted in different perspectives by many theorists and scholars. Historians have invented the title post-colonial since the recent post era of Second World War. According to Ashcroft et al (1998), in the last decade of 1970's we witness the term "Postcolonial" being used quite frequently by the writers and historians of the related era.

The term holds a chronological significance and is very prominent in the literary and historical narrations of late 70s. The term has actually been used to emboss the lingual, social, political and cultural background and happenings of social setups that had been previously ruled by the English queen. Post colonialism has been interpreted in wider ways now, Ashcroft et al (1998), It is the study and interpretation of territorial background of European continent we witness many institutions of colonial background related to European history. Going through the facts we also witness lengthy actions and quite descriptive managerial affairs of the British rule.

The response of the concurrent colonial settlements to such assaults in the related contexts was quite evident in both earlier and later times of the rule. So post colonialism is a reward against European imperialism. It can be said that now the European imperialist is the British

imperialist which is ruling as the most exalted nation all over the world. The British are ruling the seas and their state is one fifth of the whole world. The British came in the Asian continent and occupied the Indian territories. They rewarded those people who followed their culture and punished those who ignored or disobeyed them in any manner

The title “Twilight in Delhi” in itself gives us an impact of a light which is getting dim, it provides us a picture of the life of the ‘Indians’ going down towards death, and the decay of Muslim civilization. As the starting lines of selected novel show the condition of Delhi: “Night envelopes the city, covering it like a blanket. In the dim starlight roofs and houses and by-lanes lie asleep, wrapped in a restless slumber, breathing heavily as the heat become oppressive or shoots through like pain”. Further he says that, “In the courtyards, on the roofs, in the by lanes, on the roads, men sleep on bare beds, half naked, tired after the sore days labour”. (p.1) Ali has used the postcolonial terms “opposites” –“Order and Disorder” “issue of identity” by which he wants to describe the order of the past and the disorder of the present, as in Delhi the previous ordered culture, norms are now changed with disordered ethics and culture of colonizers the British. The subjugation and deprivation of the Muslims who were a great nation in the past is vividly described by Ali through his present novel due to colonial dominance.

The Muslims had to lose their glory, identity and power by becoming as ‘opposite’ before British. This polarity is revealed: ‘It was the city of Kings and monarchs, of poets and story tellers, courtiers and nobles. But no King lives there today, and the poets are feeling the lack of patronage, and the old inhabitants though still alive, have lost their pride and grandeur under a foreign, yoke.....where are Babur and Humayun and Jahangir? Where is Shahjahan who built the city where it stands today.....gone they are, gone and dead beneath the all-embracing earth’. (p.2)

Another postcolonial term “Hybridity” is also used by Ali when he shows the diminishing culture of Muslims due to British rule. He has presented two characters side by side to show that how the British culture was affecting the youth and was creating a hybridism between past norms and culture and the necessity of the acceptance of new British culture to survive.

As Mir.Nihal is the representative of old culture and has clash with his son as his son Mr.Asghar is the embodiment of new culture and is under the influence of Western culture, Asghar dresses up like English men which is not liked by his father and he calls British Farangi which show his hatred for British

Like Hardy he wants to show that man is helpless against the heavy odds of life that may befall on him by destiny. When the table turns against us, the wheels of time crush everything that comes their way, beyond recognition. He claims that Delhi has changed so much at all levels since the composition of this novel that nobody can even recognize its century’s old royal status. The devastation of culture and language under the onslaught of so many cultures

and languages is an enough proof of the overall destruction of the life of Delhi. The title of the novel is also significant to high light the theme of the novel as the word twilight itself stands for dim light, a light stays on the sky only for a while and nothing can be seen clearly or distinctly in its short lived existence. Likewise this word presents a situation about the life of Delhi in which nothing was clear and everything was yet to be known. It was basically the twilight of the Muslims of Delhi who suffered this transition from old order of life to a new one. The novel is about the confusion and bewilderment on part of the Muslims at all these changes.

This is a story of a nation that once has been apple of world's eye but here comes a time when it is languishing in search of identity. Like the concept of twilight, the confusion of the Muslims is also transitory. There is still a hope that soon they will be able to find out their identity to decide the future course of action under the fast changing society.

### **Analysis Socio-Cultural Life of Delhi**

Through the analysis of the work by both the novelists it can be said that Ali (1940) and Singh (1990) have painted a picture of socio-cultural life of Delhi in their own manner. They share many similarities as well as dissimilarities in their way of description. But the main objective of both is to paint the true colours of socio-cultural of Delhi from centuries to present time. They have shown impartial attitude to describe the details about the glory and grandeur of Delhi during the bygone days and her condition at the present time. They want to show the world that Delhi has always been a place of constant attraction, admiration and temptation for all the rulers from past as well as of the present across the world for her rich soil in all respects. This city must be called a romance of both the writers keeping in view their passion and zeal for describing their association with the city and her culture. Ali (1940) has adopted foreign language to describe the glory and grandeur of the royal city to his British masters. His main object is to introduce the rich culture of Delhi with her true colours to his opponents who were of the opinion that this was the land of brutes who needed to be tamed by rode. He has been confined to the presentation of Muslim Culture of Delhi in his work to reflect his views as he thinks the Muslim culture has always been enjoying pre dominating status in all spheres of life since centuries. Singh (1990) has resorted to present the life of Delhi as a saga of history, romance and sex. He has discussed the life of Delhi in the historical perspective. Faiz (2004) said that the arts symbolized the ways of social life in two respects one was ideological and other was material. And these arts become source of identity for a nation and its civilization at all levels.

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