

TWILIGHT IN DELHI AND SHADOWS OF THE POMEGRANATE TREE : A COMPARATIVE, POSTCOLONIAL DISCOURSE

Tariq Awan¹, Shadab Fatima²

¹Lecturer, Department of English, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazirabad, Pakistan, & PhD Scholar, UTHM University, MALAYSIA;

²Lecturer, Department of English, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazirabad, PAKISTAN.

¹ tariqueawan@sbbusba.edu.pk, ² shadabfatima764@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The paper intends to critically compare the two novels under postcolonial theory. The comparison brings forth various aspects which are astonishingly similar like both the novels are historical fictions, depicts colonization and cultural hegemony. The research unveils White Man's Burden and propagation of Christianity as tactics of betrayal. Identity crises, question of survival, moral depravation, and economic losses are common conflicts. Resistance is also a common phenomenon but present research reveals that the nature and motive behind the resistance is different in both the novels. The research unsnarls Muslims as better rulers than the colonizers. They were lenient and their reign was comparatively peaceful. They were more tolerant, open minded and unprejudiced towards other religions and nations. The research verifies Fanon's views of the detrimental impacts of colonization on the minds of colonized. As both the novels end in loss and nothingness, the most glaring difference between both the novelists in dealing the theme is that Ahmed Ali is mourning the loss and decline of Muslim Empire, indulged in nostalgia and longs for the rehabilitation of his Past, on the other hand Tariq Ali shows the decline without any remorse or self-pitying, his novel presents a better and positive image of Muslims as religiously and socially tolerant beings.

Keywords: Colonization, Cultural Hegemony, White Man's burden, Resistance, Nostalgia

INTRODUCTION

Ahmed Ali an esteemed writer and the first Muslim to write a novel in English gathered international fame with his first novel "Twilight in Delhi". Truly a man of letters, he has been a versatile writer who had written remarkable short stories, poetry and novels but Twilight in Delhi is his landmark. Oxford history of India (1958) states in reference with Ahmed Ali that it can be said that he has taken over from E.M. Forster and Edward Thompson the task of interpreting modern India to itself and the world.

Tariq Ali an illustrious writer, journalist and film maker with his Islamic Quintet which is a series of five histories based novels. With the success of first part, Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree the showers of praise that he received he decided to delve in further to bring up to the surface the relationship between Islam and the west. The novel was written at a time when Muslims were blithely demonized as barbaric, reactionary and repressive, Ali returns to a historical moment when tables were turned. Tariq Ali with his Islamic Quintet presents to the world that Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance. His novels portray the better and positive image of Muslims.

Background of the Novels

Tariq Ali's *Shadows of the Pomegranate tree* opens a window to 15th Century Moorish Spain, where queen Isabella and King Ferdinand are in power, subjugating the Moors and bring them in to a treacherous treaty which postulates the free religious and cultural rights to the colonized but soon violence and persecution began and the Moors were clutched in physical and psychological violence. Ahmed Ali's novel "Twilight in Delhi" is a social documentary, a novel which holds mirror to 20th century subcontinent. British, who treacherously landed on the subcontinent, with a purpose to civilize the natives (White Men's Burden) overthrew the Mughal's rule and reserved the throne for themselves.

Theoretical Background

Post-colonial theory is one of the important theories centralized and based upon suppression and negation of human rights like Marxist, feminist African-American theory etc. (Abraham, 1997).

It is a special academic discipline that focuses on the impacts of colonial rule and its cultural legacies in the colonized world. Edward Said's book *Orientalism* has been considered as seminal work in post-colonial discourse which projects west's concept of orientals as others. The book highlights the stereotypical demarcations that separate East and West. Europeans claim to be the descendent of superior race and civilization and the East as creatures from an inferior species and exotic civilization. (Said 1978)

Ashis Nandey highlights two modes of colonization. One is physical confiscation of the lands the second mode used by the rationalists and liberals is the colonization of the minds (Nandy 1983). The colonizers legitimate their rule by asserting that they are the reformers of the colonized world. They have got the responsibility of civilizing, enlightening and humanizing the colonized, as Kipling termed this phenomenon as White Man's Burden.

Take up the White Man's burden

Send forth the best ye breed

Your new-caught, sullen peoples,

Half devil and half child

Take up the White Man's burden (Kipling, 1989. Lines 1-5)

Post-colonial discourse uses a special term for cultural colonization that is "cultural hegemony which is a geopolitical method indirect imperial dominance with which the *hegemon* (leader state) rules subordinate states by the implied means of power (the threat of intervention) rather than by direct military force" (Gramsci, 1971). Assault on Language is also a part of cultural hegemony. It is another handy tool used by the colonizers to usurp the national identity of the colonized. "English language is a key to all improvements. Persian the court language, Sanskrit and Arabic were abolished with a purpose of producing a class of persons Indian in blood and color but English in taste and character". (Bentinck 1829)

An eminent psychiatrist and theoretician Frantz Fanon in "The Wretched of the Earth" provides an analysis of the nature of colonialism and its impact on the subjugated people. He found the nature of colonialism as essentially destructive and the impacts of colonialism are harmful, detrimental and damaging the mental health of the colonized people (Fanon, 1961).

DISCUSSION

Literature is replete with the productions based on colonial rules. It is a centuries old practice of the powerful and strong nations to subjugate and perpetuate assaults on weaker ones. The

comparison that has been drawn between the two novels i.e. Tariq Ali's "Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree" and Ali Ahmed's "Twilight in Delhi" projects the same idea. Both the novels depict colonization and plight and predicaments of the colonized at the hands of colonizers.

White man's burden and colonizers' ulterior motives

Tariq Ali and Ahmed Ali both have shown in their productions that colonizers have some ulterior motives behind their oppression. Ahmed Ali has openly rejected the high talks and claims of colonizer's civilizing mission in colonies instead the novel gives the message that all the miseries and predicament of Indian nation was due to colonization and British rule. Ahmed Ali in his *Twilight in Delhi* has presented the same issue. When British overthrew Mughal Empire, people were assured that it will bring peace and progress for the people of Hindustan. They were thinking that after ascension of King George, prosperity would return, but the conditions became more pathetic and the reality of the colonizers' fake mission of civilizing the colonies revealed. The edible commodities were out of stalk. People of Hindustan experienced sky-rocketing inflation the rates of sugar, ghee and flour went so high that people started craving for such edibles. A famine like situation arose and people were dying out of hunger. The natives uttered in unison that "Yes the Farangi's are cheats and faithless swine" (Ali, 1994, p.210). Such pathetic conditions compelled people to lose their civic sense. People out of hunger and inflation turned in to savages. Shroud thieves got birth, people started haunting for new ways of stealing and looting one another.

Tariq Ali has shown that Spanish inquisition on the Moorish lands had some hidden purpose. Propagation of religion was not the urge behind the inquisition like civilizing the subcontinent was not purpose of colonization in *Twilight*. Christians were not truly interested or bent on increasing the followers of Jesus but what they want was property and money for the church "Even if we do convert, they will find other means to steal our property" (Ali, 1992, p.173) and as Salman Bin Mohammad Said "These Christians can sell the virgin Mary herself for money (Ali, T. p. 174.)

Cultural hegemony

History is witness that whenever any nation tries to take hold of the other, the first thing to be attacked is always "The Culture". Ray brad bury said that if you want to destroy any nation's culture, just make his people stop reading the books. Just holding control of the land is not the only purpose. Though the Christians had conquered the land earlier but the night they burn the culture "Ximenes with a crooked smile declared; tonight was our real victory" (Ali, T, p. 12), clearly shows that the land was not the only target. Slavery gets completed when minds are imprisoned and made handicapped by looting the culture and civilization of the nation. Tariq Ali in his *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* shows this via historical event in which the culture of Muslims was burnt on the stake. Even after conquering the lands, the Christians were not satisfied. Archbishop Ximenes de Cisneros after getting outclassed by Muslim Scholars and Intellectuals declared to annihilate Muslims "Ximenes, May Allah punish him, declared war on our culture and our way of life" (Ali, T. p.23). They wanted an absolute rule which they can only achieve by substituting "Muslim's culture with their own" which they achieved by burning the treasure of Muslims' culture in the form of books. Ahmed Ali in "*Twilight in Delhi*" has not directly shown the happenings and events of cultural hegemony but that does not means that Ahmed Ali's depiction of colonization is partial or incomplete what Ahmed Ali has depicted, is the effect of cultural hegemony that is "Hybridity". The impacts of British culture on the natives are shown through Asgher's character "his English boots, English shirt that he wears inside his sherwani, his new home in which he used to wear English dressing gown and the furniture that he kept in English

fashion” all show the impacts of British culture on colonized nation. So the colonizers achieve absolute rule by destroying the culture of the colonized and in this way they rule the minds of the natives.

Identity crises

Ahmed Ali and Tariq Ali both have projected the idea that whenever any nation comes under colonial rule, they confront identity crises which is the direct result of cultural hegemony. Cultural Hegemony drags a nation on the verge of destruction and consequently the nation fearing to lose their identity indulge in identity crisis. Tariq Ali shows this crisis through the people of Al-Hudayl. They were worried for their identity “They will soon forbid us our language. Arabic will be banned on pain of death. They will not let us wear our clothes” [Ali, T. p.78). Language and clothes are two of the most important identifying factors for a nation. Language and clothes provides a unifying force that binds a nation in to one single whole. Ahmed Ali in his *Twilight in Delhi* also depicts identity crisis. Due to the imposition of British rule, identity crises developed which Ahmed Ali has depicted through the character of Mir Nihal and Asgher both. Mir Nihal lays himself congealed to his national identity from head to toe he is the representative of a Mughal era , his clothing’s ideas and language everything depicts him belonging to his past while Asgher depicts that crises in even more severe form he was bewildered in two different cultures as Ahmed Ali depicts this as “I must not wear pumps or English shirts, I must not grow my hair in English fashion, If I had stayed in Delhi he would not have even allowed me to learn English”(Ali, A, p.27) Cultural hegemony results in such circumstances like identity crisis where the natives feel themselves demolishing and dooming.

Muslims: As better rulers

No matter how much the colonizer’s claim about their enlightening, humanizing and civilizing mission in the colonies, their reign brought chaos and unrest. *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* and *Twilight in Delhi* both show Muslims (colonized) as better rulers and their reign comparatively more peaceful. Tariq Ali has shown Muslims as tolerant and peace loving. In Muslim’s reign none of the Christians was persecuted or forced to convert. They were free in their religion and worships. As a Christian himself said to Umer after returning from Christian’s camp “they asked Are you a Christian?” I replied that my family had never converted and that we had lived in al – Hudayl but that nobody had ever suggested to us that we should embrace the faith of the prophet Mohammad – We had Lived in peace” (Ali, T. p.242) In Muslim’s rule everybody was living peacefully and a harmony was maintained in the empire while on the other hand when Christians took the charge, they destroyed the peace and treaty that they signed with Muslims and forced them either to leave, convert or die.

In Christians’ Reign	In Muslims’ Reign
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ban on Arabic • Ban on wearing Moorish clothes • Ban on veil / perda for women • Destruction of Moorish culture • Destruction of public baths • Ban on festivals and wedding songs • Ban on begetting more than 3 children • Forced conversions. • Plunder of property and money. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No ban on language • No restrictions on clothing. • No hard and fast rules for women • Culture was safe. • Public baths were thronged with people • All were free to celebrate their religious festivals. • No ban on begetting progeny. • Religious tolerance • Life and property were safe.

Ahmed Ali in *Twilight in Delhi* also shows the same he says that Delhi was a paradise, a jewel on earth in Mughal's period – but its peace, pride and glory had been destroyed by the British and now the city of Delhi is left with ruins .

In Muslims' Reign	In British Reign
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delhi was a paradise , a jewel on Earth • Economic stability • Enough to eat • Peace and harmony in the society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delhi is left with ruins and decay. • Decline of economy. • Famine like situation arose due to skyrocketing inflation • Restlessness, Processions, Protests and demonstrations became a matter of routine

“the glory had gone and only dreariness remained the richness of life had been looted by the foreigners and Vulgarity and cheapness had taken its place” (Ali,A. p.240), Both the novelists, Ahmed Ali and Tariq Ali had shown that the reign of Muslims was better and peaceful while in Christian's reign they have depicted despair, disharmony and persecution.

So, *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* and *Twilight in Delhi* are similar in this respect as well.

Resistance from the natives against colonial rule

Ahmed Ali has depicted many incidents of resistance directly and many in the back-ground of the novel. Many times in the novel, the war of independence 1857, Home rule Movement and Movement against Rowlett Bill which show that natives stood against the British rule and their policies. They stood against them held processions and demonstrations and protested against the British wanted to demolish a mosque and wanted to establish a church there but Muslims with their swords stood against them and were fired upon by the British and within few minutes the whole mosque turned red with Muslim's blood such was the resistance shown by Ahmed Ali which was purely National and religious (as in mosque scene) in spirit but what Tariq Ali has depicted is antagonistic to Ahmed Ali's depiction. *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* do show resistance but their resistance was not out of religious fervor or faith but based on materialism and worldly concerns. Life, Property, safety and their lands were their major concerns for them and these were the stimulants that stimulated them to convert, leave or stood against their oppressors. Even Zuhyr the knight who fought gallantly said “Nothing matters, me as much as the safety of our home and states” (Ali,T. p.143).

Both the novels show resistance but the nature and driving force for the resistance is different in both the novels.

Representation of women in colonized world

Twilight in Delhi	Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree
Women characters are :- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doubly colonized • Weak • Submissive • Sexually immature and naïve • Strict observant of veil/perda • Restricted to a portion in the home called Zanana (place for females only) 	Women characters are :- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free • Strong • Dominant and confident. • Licentious and lusty • Not observant of veil. • Free to come in front of male guests or strangers

Both the novelists have shown multitude of women characters but their roles and representations are different. The scenario is same in both novels that they were living in a colonized world under subjugation. Ahmed Ali shows his women characters as doubly colonized (subjects of colonization and patriarchy both) while Tariq Ali has shown women in strong characters. Ahmed Ali has shown women as submissive and less participating in the affairs of life. They were restricted to a portion in house called Zanana. They are immature and naïve in the matters of sex. They have been shown as free from any physical urge as it is shown by Tariq Ali in Hind's character. Ahmed Ali has depicted prostitutes as well but even the prostitutes have been shown as compelled love stricken creatures under the domination of their patriarchs. On the contrary, the women in *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* are equally licentious and lax in their sexual relationships. Hind and Zohra are the examples. Lady Asma even had an illicit relationship with her son. Zubayda has been shown as a worldly and strong character. Hind's self-decision of marriage and choosing her spouse against Uncle Mughal's son brings forth that Tariq Ali has treated women equally as man. He shows the ladies of Hudayl clan freely talking and coming in front of everyone, be it a messenger or guest staying in their home. So both the novels depict various women characters but the characters and characterization are different.

Hatred and resentment from the natives: A verification of Fanon's analysis

Both the novels verify Frantz Fanon's analysis of the colonized and his views that colonization is essentially destructive and its impacts are detrimental on the minds of colonized. Both the novels show colonization and forced rule, persecution and suppression of the rights of the natives it breed hatred and resentment in the hearts of the natives.

Tariq Ali has shown that Muslim become so much anguished that they dipped their genitals in to holy water of the church and on being caught, they said that he is a new convert and his Christian friend had advised him and it is a sort of ablution or purification. (Ali, T. p.131) In order to ventilate their resentment and hatred they urinate in the church, ejaculate and excrete in sacred places of the church and stepping out from the church as they have lost their sense. (Ali, T, p.202).

There are many incidents in the novel where people are cursing and abusing Ximenes for his cruelty and callousness.

Ahmed Ali in his Novel *Twilight in Delhi* has also shown the resentment and hatred that the subjects exhibit for their oppressors. When the pavilion which was to be used for King Gorge V's coronation catch Mir Nihal smiled and Mrs. Nihal showing her mirth and happiness in British's plight said "It is God's wrath that has been falling on these good as dead farangis. She further cursed them that may they be destroyed" (Ali, A. p.120)

According to Fanon's analysis colonization produces negative and destructive feelings in the subjects. Tariq Ali and Ahmed Ali both have shown the hatred and abomination for the oppressors. In both the novels, the subjects have been shown as helpless and burning in anger and showing their hatred against their oppressors.

Difference in general tone or atmosphere of the novels

The critical comparison between *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* and *Twilight in Delhi* shows the difference in tone of the novels. Ahmed Ali's novel maintains an elegiac tone throughout. The general atmosphere of the novel is sad and gloomy. Happiness has a little part to play and there is a short episode of happiness. Ahmed Ali has been observed indulging in Nostalgia, showing his longing and yearning for the past (A Pre-colonial world) and exhibits sympathy and love for the lost glory. On the other hand Tariq Ali in *Shadows of the Pomegranate tree* has presented the whole scenario without any regret or lamentation. He has

presented the glaring and bitter truths, social and moral evils without any remorse. The novel presents a better, soft and more tolerant view of Islam and Muslims as better and more tolerant rulers than Christians.

FINDINGS

The present paper “Twilight in Delhi and Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree: A Comparative, Post-Colonial Study” unveils a pivotal difference between the novels under analysis that though dealing with the same theme i.e. colonization both the novels maintain entirely different tones. The general atmosphere of the novels is quite different. Twilight in Delhi maintains an elegiac tone throughout the novel. Ahmed Ali is indulged in nostalgia yearns for his lost and past world on the other hand Tariq Ali has not shown any sympathy or longing for the lost glory of Muslims rather he has presented a better and soft view of Islam and Muslims. The study unfolds the fake and treacherous claims of colonizers’ under White Man’s Burden. Both novels are historical fiction depicting colonization, its nature, its impacts and the consequent resistance shown by the natives against colonization. However the resistance differs as in Shadows of the pomegranate tree it was based on material and security concerns while the resistance shown by Ahmed Ali is for the maintenance of the life of a nation and her identity.

Both novels show cultural hegemony, persecution and subjugation as colonizers’ tool for controlling the colonized. Both novels show Power and Money as colonizers’ ulterior motive behind colonization. The scenarios and setting are different in both novels but both show various common issues despite of the difference of time and setting. Both novels present multitude of female characters but Tariq Ali’s female characters leave the readers wonder struck with their strong, bold and licentious ways while Ahmed Ali’s female characters are doubly colonized passive and conventional though even belonging to 20th century than the 15th century women of Granada. Both the novels show Muslims reign more peaceful and beneficial and Muslims as better rulers than 15th century Spanish Christians and 20th century British. The present study also verifies the detrimental effects of colonization on the minds of natives in accordance with Frantz Fanon’s analysis.

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