

A Critical Study of Decline of Muslim Culture & Tradition through Characters with Different Perspectives in Ahmad Ali's *Twilight in Delhi*

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ABSTRACT

Twilight in Delhi is supposed to be a story of a Muslim family lived in Delhi at the beginning of the 20th century. The novel talks about the journey of the family's fate value and cultural heritage shown through different events. It is a glimpse of history; all kinds of human emotions are discussed here by Ahmed Ali. The novel has many parallel themes, at one stage I encounter the theme of continuity and at another stage I find the writer justifies the theme of change. The themes of change and supremacy of time are the important aspects, with the passage of time the tables are turned and life changes its way without considering any consequences. Current study particularly emphasized on the declination of Muslim culture, through the all major characters with different perspectives.

Keywords: Ahmad Ali, Dehli, Decline, Tradition, Muslim Culture,

INTRODUCTION

Ahmed Ali is the first Muslim to write a novel in English called, "Twilight in Delhi (1940)". He was one of the pioneers of the Progressive Writers Movement. Ali was a graduate from Aligarh and after the completion of education, he availed himself of an opportunity of teaching at various Indian institutes. His education and his job facilitated him to understand both the English as well as Indian culture. He found a big gap between the booths and tried to bridge it through his writings. He decided to write in English, but used Urdu poetry also in his writings and created a new style of writing in the subcontinent. This style resulted in the amalgamation of European realism and the Indian sensibilities. (Shamsie, 1997)

AHMAD ALI'S TWILIGHT IN DEHLI

In a jiffy M. Ali Jinnah presented his demand for a separate power to the on all sides of India, Muslim federation in Lahore, the Hogarth Rattle in London published Ahmad Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) the 1st crafty extra ordinary in English by an Indian Muslim upbringing in Delhi in the initial 20th century, it was immediately celebrated for its authentic relation to an important and apparently now irretrievably lost, high cultural dimension to Indo-Muslim identity. The dissimilar was then- and broadly repose is-regarded as a remembrance, as a matter of fact stifle bewilder, of cultural extinction.

BACK GROUND OF THE NOVEL

"Twilight in Delhi" re-captures the magnitude decaying twilight of pale unique Delhi but of the finish Muslims' control, which began to derail up the downfall of Mughal crown Aurangzeb in 1707 and finally went off track in the aftermath of 1857. The assorted narrates the definition of imperialism next to the tumultuous lifespan of 1857-1919 surrounding the hanging fire of novelist's crumb celebration of the decaying Muslims' life and talisman. Yet imperialism does separate from or substructure rest the verified or aborigine culture, Ali describes with great honesty. He wrote what he experiences as a native of realm culture, of surmount sentiment and of realm symbol of wind sub-continent annulus Muslims plays on

words their day and intermittently the decline and death of their power and culture. Roughly, these obligated Ahmed Ali to list range havoc and downfall in his novel.

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

Different perspectives to show declination in Delhi's culture and tradition are: a) Downfall of Mughal Empire, b) Love & lost in the characters, c) Moral Decay in characters, d) Male Dominancy, e) Female Futility, and f) Cruelty of Time.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

But what is the Muslim culture'? Is it a kind of racial memory of the great deeds of the Arabs, Persian, Turks, etc.? Or language? Or Art and music? Or customs? I do not remember anyone referring to present-day Muslim art or Muslim music.

(Jawaharlal Nehru 1936, p 470)

Ms. Iftikhar (2012) regards *Twilight in Delhi* a fine piece of art and calls Delhi the center of Muslim civilization and she believed that, "Delhi is a true eye witness of decay that turned the city and ahead Ali present Delhi along with its the pathetic conditions of Delhi people and he has been successfully evoking pathos in the heart of his reader with his dismal and desperate

Description." (pg.397). So, *Twilight in Delhi* can be read by the reader of every age, of any religion and they can imagine or portrait the twilight in Delhi of Ahmad Ali's time.

Mrs. Jamal (2012) has presented a very realistic picture of Delhi in the novel by symbolizing it a defining symbol of 'LOSS' in the Muslim sense of nostalgia:

'The city of Delhi was once the voice like grip of art, culture, architecture and learning. Its throne was adorned by the kings and monarchs who patronized learning and encouraged fine arts. Many victorious wars were fought on its battlefields. It has seen their glory as well as their disaster. They were those who beautified the city by erecting great monuments and creating magnificent buildings, And whose only work was to invade the city, raid its fortresses, destroy the monuments and loot the wealth. And the city of Delhi stands a witness to all these happening like a mute spectator. It has no reaction to show against the damage done to its culture and civilization (vol: 5)

According to Darliple (2008) *Twilight in Delhi*, is 'an unmatched portrait of the life of the mixed Hindu-Muslim culture of pre-Partition Delhi: the pigeon flyers and the poets, the alchemists and the Sufis, the beggars and the tradesmen.'

A review on this novel shows 'the real residual power of the mogul golden age is not political (the surviving descendants of Bahadur Shah are all beggars and cripples) but cultural, and Ali's book is first and foremost a tender record of traditional family ceremonies, of kite battles and the old aristocratic hobby of pigeon flying. The cries of the pigeon flyers are the *ubi sunt* accompanying Ali's portrayal of the parallel decline of Mir Nihal's family and of mogul Delhi.' (Reviewer's publisher)

Mrs. Gupta (2007) has seen *twilight in Delhi* a beautiful novel in English literature as a 'Primarily the novel deals with the downfall of Delhi culture due to the arrival of British in the beginning of the twentieth century and simultaneously it gives us a glimpse of Indo-Muslim family life. The novel becomes the storehouse of various images drawn from Delhi and its culture. Not only the pigeon flying and kite flying have been projected as the major part of Indian culture but the subordinated women's life also becomes its chief issue.'

Ms Iftikhar (2012) further elucidates that Ali (1940) depicts the harsh realities of life experienced by the Muslims, so he mentally prepares his reader 'what he is going to describe what he is going to describe and what they are going to read about. 'She believes that,

'He has no intention to describe the splendid past of the Muslims, the magnificence of Delhi or the massive empire of Mughals where they ruled over for centuries, rather, he discloses the current plight conditions of Muslims, the decay of their culture, and how do they feel or react, being victims of imperialism.' (pg.398)

She suggests that Ali mingled realism with dark description to present a lively picture of Delhiculture, he combines bitter realities of human existence, positive and negative aspects of characters, and she believes that these are not the people of Ali's imagination but the people of real life in

Delhi, 'Mir Nihal and his family depict with all flaws and weaknesses has made possible to create his character with innate idiosyncrasies' (pg. 399)

Shreffler's Review recaptures the perception of an upbringing leap for Mir Nihal, an aristocratic Muslim who loves pigeons and whose adolescent wants to get spoken for. It recounts yet that song; Asgar, brutal in admiration, and married, harsh about of love, had a daughter, and became a widower. Ali's Proustian routine of widen makes this archetypal human story sing. Unhesitatingly, for turn out that in the event of, cats deal to hit Mir Nihal's pigeons, Ali makes us ambience a visceral sense of his loss--and of his impending doom. At book's repeal, Mir Nihal advertising bedridden inspects a lamb out of here, Asgar is widowed, and the English crackruns-involving down Delhi's old walls and are building a "New Delhi" that will swamp the old. A autocratic disparate, the to be aware of its unique subject (Booklist Review)

Many intellectual discourses have studied Twilight in Delhi as one of the remarkable additions in English post-colonial literature; The whole scenario has been depicted through the title, the decay of culture, the fall of the Mughal Empire. It stands unique with its structure, plot, theme, and even the title has its own value and attraction.

AHMAD ALI'S OBJECTIVE WAY TO DEPICT THE DECLINE

Ahmad Ali has an objective way to see the things and used them something meaningful and significant sense to highlight the decline of Delhi through every character of his and their emotional perspectives.

He has chosen very artistically, appropriate metaphor, images and use objective symbols to depict the crumble of the situations throughout the novel.

Table 1. Shows declination through Major Characters

<i>Dehli</i>	As a metaphor of downfall of Muslim culture and tradition.
<i>Bilqeece</i>	Bilqeece may be seen as the glory and success of Muslim culture, once they had But lost and could not constant the worth of that glory.
<i>Begum Nihal</i>	Begum. Nihal is nothing but a suppressed and masked character, victimized by male dominance, though she seems to have power to take a decision but actually she is an obscure one for herself and for all.
<i>Mir.Nihal</i>	Mir Nihal, himself is the epitome of the great Last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar who had lost everything in the last and became miserable for the world.
<i>Asghar</i>	Asher is the symbol of weakness or a cause of decay a man who has got everything what he want, but due to greedy and self-centered nature has proven himself a weak and insignificant element of society

Table 2. Shows selected data from the text to evaluate the downfall of Delhi from different perspectives

<i>Decay of 'Love' in Asgar's Character</i>	Yet he was not so much in love with her as with his own self...his own dreams and illusions which he had created in his mind (pg. 130, lines 1-3)
<i>Down fall of Bilqeece character</i>	Familiarity breeds contempt... (pg.130, line- 20)
<i>Declination of Women</i>	The four wall stood, shutting them all in from the world, protecting them from noise and life (pg.92,lines 15-16)
<i>Depiction of Delhi's deplorable condition</i>	I'm the light of no one's eye the rest of no one's heart am I that which can be use of none a handful of dust am I (pg.81, lines 7-11)
<i>Cruelty of time</i>	But great are the ravages of time and no one can do anything against its indomitable might, king die and dynasties fall, life goes with heartless continuity trampling ideals and worlds under its ruthless feet always in search of new one (pg.90,lines 12-20)
<i>Corrosion of Nihal's Character</i>	His days had gone and the new era of hope and aspiration, which he neither understood nor sympathized with, was beginning to down. but his world has now fallen(pg.149.lines25-29)
<i>Dominancy of Male depicts through the words of Begum Nihal</i>	A man remains young at sixty and a women grows old at twenty (pg.149,lines32-33)

The above data have been selected from the whole text which is the main concerns of the novel. Interpretation, abstraction of the writer's ideas will be made each other in the selected lines in order to find out the relevance between extracting data and secondary data discussed previously.

THE DECLINE OF DEHLI AND MUGHAL EMPIRE

The word 'Twilight' describes a course of time that is temporary and does not remain for a very long period by going through the novel and in the light of selected data I have analyzed that Ali tried to attract the life of Delhi at a point when the old system is providing space to a new setup and he paints the picture of the behavior of the residents to change which has made them to lose their prestige under a despotic rule. The nation that once attracted the whole world is now standing intricate and is without their particular entity.

Delhi was the state of Monarchs, Kings, Nobel poets and storytellers, Monarchy ruled over there, but now no king is there today old residents of the city are still alive but have lost their glory under the rule of foreign reign. The residents of Delhi once have pride in their cultural heritage, the foreign reign and despotic rule has destitute them of their greatness, high position. It appears as if they never lived in the same streets as the city of Delhi lost its glory and fervor. The once glorious and imperial Muslims, civilization of Delhi give the picture of an endangered or depleting entity.

Various factors cause the decline of Muslims culture and society, the decline came out not only with codes and doctrine, but also one indivisible product of the society is rampant or increasing beggary.

One analyzing view on the remarks of Ali as he presents Delhi as a beaten dog because it became easy for Frang is to overtake Delhi due to no seriousness and less interest, of the then Mughal Emperors. Mughal Emperor of that time did not have the capability to run such a big state. By the despotic rule new roads were built in Delhi, which reduced Delhi's splendor or made its splendor descendent one and turned into pomp and show.

It is the beginning of the end of the Mughal Empire, prince and princes were reduced to position or status of servants. GullBane a granddaughter of Bahadur Shah Zafar wandered street to street. No one thought that the decline would be horrible to such a great extent, while analyzing the decline of Delhi the war, was fought at that time also played its horrible role.

Many people lost their lives in the war and death surpass or overtake India, war also cause a decline of Delhi as due to its side effect the contagious disease breakout in India because of gases used in the war. The decay of literary sense takes place from 1857 to 1917.

Decline of Delhi comes in all aspects for example, in domestic life, in poetry, political condition in living style of people.

If we analyze the decline in aspect of poetry so in the words of Mir Nihal '*gone are the poets and gone in the culture*'. Poetry also represents to the culture the entire famous poet like Mir.Zauq and Dard became invisible from poetical scene. It is the poet who leads society through his words, in foreign York most of the poets become invisible and their absence causes the decline of Delhi culture.

In society male and female characters, both are important. If the value of any one of them is neglected it also cause decay of culture, tradition and society, same case happened to the women of at that time. How wonderfully presented by Ali in these lines

'The four walls stood high, shutting them all from the world, protecting them from noise and life'(pg.92)

Women became restricted within the four walls of their houses in the name of protecting them from the bad onuses of the outside world. Women were kept away from the improvement taking place in the world at that time. They were snatched of their rights to seek knowledge and kept them unaware forever, it is quite wrong to say that the women of that time did not have feelings or emotion, but it should be born in mind that women were prohibited to show their inner feelings and emotions. There was supremacy of male in community women's right were limited to be fed and to be clothed on a domestic level. Ahmad Ali describes the decay of women characters, in my point of view, all the women characters shown leading meaningless lives.

If the woman's husband dies, she is not allowed to marry as Begum Waheed is the example of that plight.

Ahmad Ali describes some words with reference of Begum Nihal,

'A man remains young at sixty and a woman grows old at twenty'(ibid, pg. 149)

It gives a sense as man is allowed to enjoy his life, no matter how old he is at the same time women has no right to say even a single word in her favor, women is being shown emotionless and feeling less. A man can marry other women while his wife is alive meanwhile women can't marry even if her husband has passed away.

A society run with these two important characters Man and woman and women characters have been shown weak, having no power at all so, the decay of women character is also considered to be the decline of culture.

Ahmad Ali quotes some words for cultural decay in Delhi:

*'In the light of no one's eye
The rest of no one's heart am I
That can be of use to none
A handful of dust is I. (ibid, pg.81)*

these words depicts a desperate cry on a glorious city which is deplorable now, the city where darkness is prevailed where no light is more once this city was worth seeing was the choice of everybody's heart. Once Delhi was the center of Mughal Empire and now there is nothing in the center of Mughal Empire, but dust blows away in its streets devastation came upon its culture and purity.

The analysis theme of the novel is it revolves around the destruction and devastation of a glorious and grand civilization and pure culture.

Ahmed Ali also says,

'But great are the ravages of time and no one can do anything against its indomitable might, Kings die and dynasties fall. Life goes on with heartless continuity, trampling ideals and worlds under its ruthless feet always in search of the new'(ibid. pg.90)

Well, time and tide wait for none, life goes on the stability follow Anarchy this beautiful city of grand civilization become the toy in the hands of time and time is the most powerful factor, it waits for none Kings passes away and dynasties come under the decadent splendor, all is the game of time, old setup give space to new one, culture, societies and traditions are perished with the beginning of the foreign yolk.

The cycle of life goes on from development to destruction, prosperity to adversity from pain to pleasure, and from gloom to happiness. The decline of Delhi has been shown in the characters of the novel and revolves around Mir Nihal's family, the family lost all its strength and influence.

Old and new generation are compared and contrasted. Polarization is clearly evident throughout the novel.

The decline of Delhi can easily be analyzed if I eventually mention that the children of Bahadur Shah Zafar the last Mughal Emperor were married to their own servants. They serve as cooks and maid many of them became beggars. No decline is as horrible as the decline of Delhi, its traditions, culture, societies, people and the emperor.

DOWNFALL IN “MIR NIHAL’S CHARACTER”

The novel twilight in Delhi, move around the typical Muslim family of Mir. Nihal based at Delhi. He was the agent, representative of traditional Indian Muslim. After the death of his loved one Babban Jan and the brutal killing of his pigeon his youth and he enter into the state of carelessness permanently, his inability to kill the cat indicates his failure to control his life and hence from this stage it starts the important stage of Mir Nilha, his inability to see his own role in the barbaric killing under the foreign yoke indicate the native incapacity to understand or to discern the cause of their decline.

He is paralyzed and confined to bed!

Nihal transformation of an energetic, enthusiastic person into a paralyze done, the decline of his character is very pathetic. His son dies and his daughter in-law dies, even most of his friends pass away. Begum Nihal becomes blind.

Ahmad Ali says,

“His days had gone, and a new era of hope and aspiration which he neither understand nor sympathized with, was beginning to dawn, but his world now fallen.” (ibid, pg.149)

In above lines the decline of the character of Mir. Nihal is fully described. His days are over and the world is no more for him even older system providing space to the new setup, but he has nothing to do with that.

DOWNFALL IN “ASGHAR’S CHARACTER”

He is the representative man and the agent of the youth of that time. His father Mir. Nihal is against the Frangis and despotic rule meanwhile Asher like the way of living of Frangis, their lifestyle attracts him, the decline of his character from these words

*Yet he was not so much in love
With her as with his own self,
His own dreams and illusion which he had created in his mind.” (ibid.pg.130)*

Asghar loves himself, he is lusty by nature, he just uses women for his lust. He does not love anyone with sincerity, he lives in self-created illusion, and he loved three times with different women. First, Mushtari Bai, Second, Bliqeece and third Zohra the younger sister of Bilqeece. He married Bilqeece, but after marriage he could not prove himself a caring and passionate husband as Ali says, *‘Familiarity breeds contempt.’ (ibid, pg.130)* Anything may lose its value if we achieve it, this is what Asghar did with Bilqeece.

Bilqeece lost her zest for life and wished to die because of the worst behavior of Asghar. It is Asghar, who once claimed to commit suicide if he could not get bliqeece if marriage. He does not make any contribution to society.

DECLINE OF “BLIQEECE CHARACTER”

Bilqeece is nourished or brought up in an Indian atmosphere where women are not likely or supposed to have passion and desires. She is forced to live under the intimidation or threat as her life is not her own or but depends on a person with whom her future is attached.

She is always conscious of her piety or chastity. Society demands subjugation of passion and its impacts is a heinous crime. By keeping in view all these dogmas and codes built Bliqeece character grew under strict religious and social instruction. Her matrimonial with Asghar failed, as in the Asher’s views she proves to be the most unromantic woman. She is altogether unaware of the passionate conversation her husband demands for or yearns for. It is a love marriage, but no passions in feeling attached to it. Bliqeece makes up her mind to sacrifice her life and prefer death as it is the only way Asghar can be happy. His marriage life is the decline, downfall and the decay of her character in the novel. Asghar does not understand Bilqeece even she loves him fatally. Asghar demands Bilqeece what he has seen in Mushtari Bai. Bilqeece does not know anything like that. The writer Ahmed Ali says some lines with reference of Asghar which he says to Bilqeece:

There was such a beauty and desires in your eyes. Did not you love me? (ibid. page192; 10-11 lines)

On these lines Bilqeece answer,

“I was bewildered when I saw you and did not where to hide myself for shame.” (ibid.pg.192)

Bilqeece got frightened and became confused when she sees Asghar and found no way to hide herself in shame. Bilqeece cannot the callous behavior of Asghar towards her; her life becomes living death for her. She allows Asghar to marry again with another woman. In novel Bilqeece character go through only declination. Every stage of her life is nothing but the decay of her character.

DECLINATION IN THE CHARACTER OF “MEHRO”

Mehro is a young girl of fourteen. She is the younger daughter of Mir Nihal. Her character is placed in the background and in matrimonial context. The ugly side of Indian society has been shown in Mehro's marriage. She is not given her due right to the consultation about her marriage; she is deprived of the most important decision of her life, Ahmed Ali says,

“The girls were never consulted about their marriages and were given away to any man their parents selected.” (ibid. pg.136)

Same happens to Mehro; she is taught to kill all her passions and there is no room for her emotions or love. She looks up at stars while she is on the bed, considering her husband would be like a king, prince and the soldier. She weaves beautiful dreams about her husband. Her dream does not come true when she sees Miraj as her husband who is ugly, hideous and suspicious man. Mehro's mother, Begum Nihal, being a woman could not understand the feelings of her daughter and she selected Miraj for daughter Mehro because Miraj's father is a wealthy person. After seeing the Miraj on wedding day, Mehro's father shows a resistance against marriage, but Habbu-bu-din says him the following words.

“If the marriage is cancelled it would mean a bad name for family” (ibid, p.136,)

Mehro becomes the sacrificial animal on the name of cruel tradition to survive in the society. Her marriage puts light on the plight of women of the sub-continent. On another stage Ahmed Ali also says, “Her position is not different to that of a cow under the butcher's knife, but what she can do is to accept it with as much courage as she can.” (ibid, p.136)

Mehro has no option but has to accept it as the decision of other destiny. Her condition is not different from the animal to be sacrificed.

CONCLUSION

Ahmad Ali described the decline or the downfall of a glorious empire, through the characters, he represents how such a decay of Muslim culture and tradition in united India and Delhi happened, all actions revolve around the family of Mir. Nihal he described how the old system provides space to the new setup.

He just describes the declination of Delhi is due to a foreign yoke, meanwhile he did not describe that what were the reasons and causes for which Muslims had to go through the sign of decay.

The characters have shown the declination of Delhi, but he did not mention the mistakes of Mughal Emperor behind the decline of Delhi. Ahmad Ali mentions that foreign culture and tradition in Delhi due to despotic rule and foreign yoke.

He calls Delhi as a 'beaten Dog' the pathetic picture of the decline of Muslim culture and tradition can aptly be justified by the following verse of the last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar,

*Na Kisi Ki Ankh Ka Noor Hon,
Na Kisi K Dil Ka Qarar Hon,
Jo Kisi K Kam Na Askay,
Me Wo Mushte Ghubar Hoon!*

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