

"TWILIGHT IN DELHI": A REFLECTION OF PSYCHOANALYTIC FEMINISM

*Rizwana Malik**

Dr. Fouzia Rehman Khan[†]

Samreen Zaheer[‡]

Abstract

The study is founded on the grounds of psychoanalytic feminism and subscribes to the notion that Ahmed Ali's novel "Twilight in Delhi" is a reflection of Psychoanalytic feminism, a belief that woman is formed socially and culturally. The study aims to find out the interesting psycho-sexual and social elements from the text of the novel that forms the Asian women who are too coy and cowardly to express love openly, too pure and shy to love or to be loved. The study being qualitative tends to verify the formulated statement through content analysis, and for that, both explicit and implicit messages given through the characters in the novel are studied and analyzed. A careful interpretation of the characters of the novel reflects the social making of the female gender in the South Asian Context.

Keywords: *South Asian Women; Twilight in Dehli; Psychoanalytical Feminism; Gender; Society.*

INTRODUCTION

Ali's (2007) novel "Twilight in Delhi", has its setting in the post-colonial era, an era which faced many social problems including gender discrimination and being realist Ahmed Ali has depicted all the residing issues of that era including political, cultural, and religious fall. The novel is a depiction of the patriarchal world encountering a conflict; Delhi had two worlds living in its heart, one was that of the men (and dancing girls) and the other belonged to,

*Visiting faculty Islamic International University Islamabad

[†]Assistant Professor, SBKWU Quetta

[‡]Lecturer, National University of Modern Language Quetta Campus

Email: sazaheer@numl.edu.pk

isolated housewives. One can see feminism in his novel as all the female characters of the novel, whether major or minor appear to suffer in one way or the other. Not only this but "Twilight in Delhi" also provides the readers with an insight to look at the factors, which develop, a South Asian woman's personality and therefore woman as a whole. Thus we can say that "Twilight in Delhi" is not a mere depiction of what a woman has to suffer for being coy and coward, it also ponders over those cultural or social factors which develop a South Asian girl into a shy and unresponsive woman.

Feminism in South Asian literature has always been an important issue among controversialists. Forster (1965), being a visitor, ambiguously depicted the coyness and bashful manners of the South Asian woman in "A Passage to India". Suleri (1991), on the other hand, commented, "there is no woman in the third world". Ahmed Ali's depiction of the woman in his novel, "Twilight in Delhi" tends to figure out personality development of woman as an obvious consequence of the way she is brought up.

The novel has many women and their lives, they are brought up to tell. The novel covers almost every phase of a woman's life such as birth, childhood, adolescence, affiance phase, marriage, post marriage, pregnancy, motherhood, widowhood, everything. Women from each social stratum are a part of the novel, housewives, dancing girls, maids, etc. The present paper specifically answers the question as to how gender is socially and culturally constructed and performed, as per the text of "Twilight in Delhi".

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feminism is a set of various movements that have been in quest of gender equality and focusing on women's issues. Being based on the feministic movement, the goal of feminist theory is to comprehend (socially-made or gender-based) differences between men and women by observing the social role and experience of a woman.

Feminists have been debating for women's rights and have successfully changed societies; especially in the west. The concept of woman-rights has always been there because a woman has been a sufferer since ancient times when social settings were patriarchal and women did not exist. Patriarchy has been one of the very important themes in feminist theory. To say it in another way, nations free from the patriarchal rule are way more egalitarian and free. (Keetley, 2005). Prasad & Paul (2006) says that the key concern of feminists is to liberate the weaker sex from patriarchy and to protest the maltreatment of woman in the false name of religion and morality. They demand rights for the so-called "lower" sex that remained submissive and passive for centuries in the male-dictated world.

Feminism has its roots in Athenian society, a society where patriarchy was in practice; Socrates was the first person to talk about women's rights (Witt & Shapiro 2017). Though he believed in biological essentialism, he was of the view that society shall train both sexes equally. He further orated that both men and women cannot do a single thing without each other. Nature has endowed both sexes with equal talents except the biological differences. He approved of the sexual difference but denied any gender differences.

Preceding Socrates' paradigm, in his *The Republic* (2000) opines that woman's destiny should not be decided considering her biological identity. Plato recommends identifying a person on the basis of his soul, not external (biological) identity. Plato, as a matter of fact, did not believe in social equality but he believed that woman is not inferior to man, just because of her different biological identity) and she can be equally useful for society and hence prestigious. Her innate disposition of being a woman does not make her different from a man. In Plato's ideal state, a woman unlike the practitioners of traditional and patriarchal culture and norms should be provided with an opportunity to govern and should not be deprived of this chance just because of the gender-related issues

Gender differences grow from the way one is trained to comprehend his/her biology and to suppress drives, especially sex drive, in order to form an individual up to the standards of society. Marry insists that woman is formed socially and culturally. Psychoanalytic feminism is basically a body that comes under the umbrella of feminist theory, and it is an adaption of Freudian psychoanalysis, a notion that sexual identity is an achievement, not something innate or biological (Freud, Strachey & Gay, 1989). Psychoanalytic feminism believes in the role of society in the formation of gendered personality and the contribution of one's experience in making his/her confidence, maturity, and awareness.

Holmes (2011), identifies Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* as an open example of Freud's Psychoanalytic Feminism because the whole book is based on her famous statement i-e "One is not born rather becomes a woman". By this statement, she subscribes to the Freudian notion that woman is not biologically but culturally formed, sex is formed by nurture, not nature, sex-distinction as something functional, not biological.

Stanley & Wise (1984), mention the widely accepted significance of a mother's role in forming a child's gender. An unprejudiced brought up is not sufficient enough to rear children into gender-neutral beings for the reason that children are always open to the affecting elements of society. So personality is a product of family, society, and idiosyncratic traits. For instance, boys are more exposed to the outer world and hence more confident than girls.

Along with other sociologists, Oakley (1972), inspected that the two sexes are simply as dissimilar as the society made them. In other words, Oakley wholly and solely accuses society of the division between the two sexes. Oakley (1972) thinks that one is destined to be born as sexed (either male or female) and it is sex (a biological distinction) which becomes a basis for societal distinction later on.

Butler (2005) denies that our identity forms our gender and says that our gender forms our identity because doing gender is not our choice. It is not we who do gender; it is gender who does us. Butler, in other words, appears to say that individuals do not form society but society forms individuals. Firestone (1972) appears to believe that the patriarchal families in which women are responsible for caring for males, support sexual inequality. She further orates that patriarchy genderizes the society, by compelling both sexes to maintain different lifestyles. (Biaggio & Hersen, 2000)

In South-Asia feminism was speculated in a different way. The South Asian woman was enslaved by historical circumstances and cultural values of patriarchy and religion, which caused South Asian feminists to implant feminism as a kind different from western feminism. As Kunjakkan (2002), says that in India, situations are different, opposite, more inflexible, and not easy to be changed overnight. Before thinking about bringing a revolution in India, the social structure and position of women in traditional social set up need to be considered first. Ali's writing reveals the marginalization of a woman (Malak, 2005). He has made use of a complex strategy that gives details of the external reality along with the passionate dreams experienced by his characters.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative in its approach as it tends to follow all the below-mentioned characteristics of a qualitative research as suggested by Yin (2010) as vital to make a study qualitative. These are:-

- Studying people's lives with respect to real-world conditions.
- Representing views and perspectives of people under study.
- Describing contextual conditions within which people live.

Keeping the first feature in view, the research tends to study the lives of characters from the novel with keeping the real-world conditions

in consideration. Characters of the novel are studied and analyzed according to the circumstances of their own world. (i-e the South Asian world, the one residing within the novel). Hence characters are judged in detail through the world or social conditions prevailing within the novel. Secondly, the study also has revealed the perspectives of individuals under study; the way they genderize within society. How social factors affect people's opinion and how people learn to adapt to gender, what do they think about this process, about their own sex, and about the fellow sex is also dealt with in the study. The context and settings of the novel have been studied and explained fully to find out the required results; such as zenana-mardana separation, entertainment and social opportunities exposed to both sexes, the prevailing norms and rituals of the third world, and their acceptance by individuals have been analyzed and interpreted through the text to find the results.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is based on the theory of psychoanalytic feminism, a feminist theory founded on the Freudian concept of psychoanalysis, which says that a woman is not formed biologically but socially and culturally. Hence the research tends to find out the element of psychoanalytic feminism in Ahmed Ali's novel "Twilight in Delhi". It seeks to find such elements from the text which support the very idea that a woman is an entity that is a product of psycho-sexual and social elements.

DATA ANALYSIS

Psychoanalytic Feminism Found in Various phases of a Woman's Life:

Childhood

The novel depicts how a female child is unwanted from her birth and remains unloved for the reason of being a girl in a South Asian

society. Ali writes of such a situation when *Jehan Ara was about a year old....But Asghar had become indifferent. His dreams had come to an end, and he did not find his wife so charming as he had done over a year ago...* (p. 201). Ahmed Ali in these lines tells that Asghar was quite disappointed on the birth of Jehan Ara because he wanted a son. He still used to think about his imaginary son and all his dreams were broken by the birth of his daughter. That is the situation many South Asian women have to experience for being born when not expected, for shattering their father's dream of having a son instead, that's how Jehan Ara's childhood was. She did not receive the love her brother would have received, had he been in her place. This is what Ahmed Ali tries to explain several times that society makes a woman. And this different treatment forms one a woman or a man. The atmosphere in which Jehan Ara is reared made her a timid, shy, and less confident personality like her mother, she learned to be ashamed of her sex, and she too like her mother was taught to hide herself, she lived in the zenana and played with dolls.

Affiance-phase

Ali in the novel presents a scene in which Mehro is lying on her bed. Before sleeping, she is thinking about her fiancé. Ali makes the readers reach the very psyche of the character, his unconscious. The author has depicted the natural disposition of humans, the need for love that is present in both sexes irrespective of any sexual distinction. Ahmed Ali's Mehro in the above-mentioned scene thinks about her fiancé Meraj about whom she does not know anything. As a part of the Indian culture, she has not been consulted on the issue of her marriage. Parents and family select husbands for the girls and the girls do not have much say in the matter. Mehro is not told how her husband looks, what are his likes and dislikes, and his nature. Consequently, she is not left with any other option except that she can dream of a prince-charming as shown in these lines "And she associates him with the Prince in the story with whom the princess was in love" (p.8). The only solace for girls like Mehro is escapism in

the form of daydreaming. She had been listening to fairy tales and stories and had been admiring, rather idealizing the princes. Moreover, she had not been told anything about her fiancé. She had connected things in her own imaginative way.

Begum Nihal in the novel as a typical South Asian mother intentionally concealed Mehro's marriage-issues from her. It is something Mehro should be told about. On one occasion, Mir Nihal asked his wife if she had spoken to Asghar about the issue of his marriage. By comparing the two we can find that how women in South Asia do not enjoy equal rights as men. Women are never asked nor told about their marriage as if they have no role to play in the whole affair, while men have the right of consent. As the most important decisions of Mehro's life were being made, Ahmed Ali states that Mehro was sitting aside in zenana, thinking about the decision for her life by others.

Ali has done a psychoanalysis of Mehro's character and has psychologically dissected her character by showing her conscious and unconscious, her Id, ego and superego, her thought and behavior. He tells that Mehro, actually, loved to be teased by her fiancé's name but she never expressed her likeness and that obviously was due to her society. In South Asian society, expressing love is almost equivalent to sin. Hence within Mehro, there lived two different beings; one was naturally present in her, the other one who wanted to be loved and express the way she felt things; the second whom society wanted to be indifferent to the feeling of love. Society made her fight with what was natural and could not be changed but society does not understand this. Mehro, apparently behaved rudely whereas, in hearts of hearts, she loved being teased with the name of that unknown dream-boy. Mehro over here is shown as a sample of the whole Indian or South Asian women population. Her sudden or swift change-over of emotion, (i-e shyness and rudeness) revealed her repressed consciousness of sex which an Indian woman had to conceal because it was a social taboo for her to express her desire. A

man in a woman's life is a turmoil/splash in the stagnant water. This simile drawn by Ahmed Ali showed a relation of active and passive. Man is compared to a stone (the subject) that makes a turmoil in water that is just temporary. Another simile might be assumed as a stone being Mehro's inner /natural being whereas the pond may refer to Mehro's second being or her personality. It made a temporary turmoil in Mehro's behavior but the social codes forced her to repress her desire and behave in a composed manner. In these lines apparently, no one asked her to behave in a shy manner but the bits of advice she had been given several times take the form of superego, and hence this superego of Mehro stopped her to reveal the slightest likeness for her fiancé.

Sheikh Mohammad Sadiq is another character of the novel who is introduced as an uncle who wants to get rid of his niece at any cost and for that, he also tries to tempt Ghafoor with an attractive dowry. Dowry is another social evil of the South Asian world that is highlighted over here by Ahmed Ali. Dowry is also a part of the criteria for a good bride. Ghafoor is shown as quite tempted by the offer of dowry and a young fourteen-year-old fairy and he is quite eager to marry.

A popular south Asian belief is also propagated in the novel that on the very day of the birth of a girl, marriage gets written in her destiny, her only aim in life. She is to be given to a stranger. She is trained to be a good wife. She is supposed to learn everything men want, e.g. stitching, cooking, and above all obeying orders. She has to be submissive, she is told to obey the husband like a lord.

Postmarital Life of a Woman

After marriage, when Mehro saw her husband chosen by her parents, she felt as helpless as a cow under a butcher's knife. She could not save herself and it was her fate. She had to forget her dream-boy, the prince she selected for herself from the stories told by her mother.

Ali also keeps reminding about the subordinate position of a woman in the marital relation. Women are sexually exploited after marriage. Men's extra-ordinary desire to derive sexual pleasure from women-being is repeated and told in the novel many times. Ahmed Ali has highlighted that how women are taught to fear men and they always try to keep them happy. In the patriarchal world, men usually have the right to treat their wives according to their mood but women are trained and taught to adjust and accept male-supremacy in their relation.

In the same phase, another character of Bilqeece is introduced. Ali says that a South Asian girl is formed into cold and unresponsive love-mates because the very idea of love is alien to such girls. The enclosed atmosphere in which they are reared does not support the existence of love, desire, and passion as Ali writes *"by education and hearsay, she is made to believe that passion is the worst kind of sin"* (p.82). A South Asian girl skips a whole phase of her life, she never feminizes but motherizes in her adolescence-age. Similarly, the character of Bilqeece never reached youth, after her childhood, she reached old age, and became too mature to comprehend the idea of love, especially the physical love that Asghar wanted.

Chodorow's (1978) perception of how a girl feminizes by imitating mothers is worth mentioning over here. She believes that a girl does not actually learn to be feminine but being a mother, this she calls "reproduction of mothering". Playing with dolls is a game of girls, apparently, this kind of separation between games of girls and boys is meant to make the girl feminine and opposite to loud boys, who play outdoor games. In this way they are not only taught to remain inside the house but also in playing with dolls, girls learn to become a mother. A girl caresses her doll, brushes her hair, makes food for her, finds a groom for her doll. She pretends to do this all but this actually affects her psychologically and hence she learns to become a mother in her very childhood. That is how Ahmed Ali ponders the ways in which the two sexes are brought up, even they play different

games.

Bilqees in the novel is shown to have been taught to behave properly, to cook well, sew neatly, and behave like a good house-wife. The woman in the South Asian world is taught the ways through which she can become a good wife (e.g. cooking, sewing, cleaning, moping, washing, etc). A woman's personality is formed in such a way that she can become useful to her male partner in the future. Ali says that a South Asian woman is taught through books and sayings that love is a sin, even if a girl falls in love with somebody, she keeps her desire buried in her heart. Men, on the contrary, can express their love. The character of Asghar is also shown to have ended up in his pre-marital relation with a dancing girl Mushtari Bai. Asghar and Bilqees are social products of two different environments and hence incompatible with each other. Men of the South Asian world (as depicted in the novel) have full opportunities to visit their mistresses and derive sexual pleasures which probably is a sin in all religions but women are kept far from the very idea of love. They are enclosed in high four walls, their beauty is guided, they are fully shaped according to the so-called male-dictated feminine mystique, they are kept pure, extremely pure, untouched, touched not even by flowers as they are not allowed to wear flowers in earrings or hair. They are kept so pure, so plain, lifeless, and colorless, that when it comes to enjoying the colors of life, they fail. They become so pure in this kind of socialization that they fail to express their love. All they can do at this time is to show motherly care as Bilqees showed to Asghar or to obey the husband like a lord, as Bilqees did. Bilqees did not know the art of using beautiful flowery language neither did she have any collection of gem-like words because the only kind of literature she was exposed to during her formative years was Holy Quran or some religious books. Asghar, on the other hand, was a bold young lover who wanted to love passionately and fully. Bilqees was a simple Indian girl who had spent her life in purdah. The very word of love was strange for her. Asghar, on the contrary, had already experienced the heights of love, he had seen the beautiful charms of Mushtari Bai,

her passionate love, her embellished language, her aesthetic love for poetry, and her selection of ornamented words. Why would he like the taste of this pure, mother-like, cold, and colorless love? Bilqeece in the novel is shown frightened of the husband. She, however, wanted to please him at any cost. Twilight in Delhi's women are always found trying to please men; either the prostitutes trying to please men with beauty; housewives pleasing men with virtue and obedience. On the other hand, the character of Asghar, a representative of the South Asian men is shown to treat women as an object of love. Asghar's love for Bilqeece is described as purely an infatuation. The idea of love for him is merely physical love. Asghar is not in love with Bilqeece but with her beauty. He wants to have physical love and satisfaction. His dream is a tool; the author has let the readers reach his psyche. Dreams are a depiction of a person's unconscious and using such techniques Ahmed Ali makes the readers know what even the character does not know. Asghar in his dream sees glowing and shaped naked bodies, dancing, their breasts "heaving", their dark hair waving which shows his hidden desire.

Widowhood

The phase of widowhood is covered in the novel with the character of Begum Waheed, daughter of Mir Nihal who becomes a widow at the age of nineteen. She is the mother of two. She chooses not to remarry for two reasons. Firstly that she loves her children and for their better future she sacrifices her own pleasures. Secondly, the social code of their society does not promote the second marriage of a woman. Moreover, she is depicted as a religious and virtuous woman. Her parents want her to come back and live with them, but she prefers to live with her in-laws to avoid any rumors and suspicions. Her in-laws blame her for her husband's death.

Ali in this way exposes that how society's practices in South Asia prevent a woman from her rights and eventually make her appear as a product of this social process. Begam Waheed does not remarry and

that is because her society does not favor the act of second marriage of a woman. Led by this social practice, Begam Waheed chooses to live single for the rest of her life and develops into a woman that is ready to sacrifice and love without any hope to get this love back. In fact, her previous social training has been very strict and never allowed her to nourish any desire or passion, consequently, no such desire arouses in her and she herself opts to remain single for the rest of her life.

Begam Waheed too, like many other women, faced many problems due to her in-laws who accused her of killing their son, Waheed. She had suffered many other things but remained single and finally, she was praised by everyone, because she followed the male-dictated set of rules; she obeyed what society wanted her to do. In a patriarchal world, a woman is respectful only if she pleases the rules set by society. As Holmes (2011) says that individuals keep on genderizing because they are rewarded for it. Begam Waheed did what society wanted her to do but that was not her desire. The author has provided a way for readers to reach her subconscious and unconscious, where she wanted to have all such joys but her super-ego stopped her from doing so. Her desires were repressed and embedded deep in her unconscious because of the social laws she was supposed to follow.

Writing about the expectation from an Indian widow on the death of her husband Ali narrates how on the death of Habibuddin, his widow's bangles were broken and all of her ornaments and colored clothes were taken off. In other words, she was told that she did not have any right to adorn herself with colors and ornaments anymore. In South Asia, a woman starts living, starts wearing ornaments and colors when a man steps into her life and she is made plain again as the man in her life steps out. Before marriage a girl is supposed to remain simple, colorless, and lifeless; after marriage, she decorates herself for her husband and in case her husband dies or leaves her, she is again made simple and colors are snatched from her, even more brutally than before her marriage. This clearly shows that a South

Asian woman lives for her husband.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Ahmed Ali's novel *Twilight in Dehli* has been found to strongly commend the importance of social-factor in the psycho-sexual development of an individual. By comparing various characters from the novel, it is shown that the cultural and social factors are most crucial in gender identity development. For instance, two sisters Bilqeece and Zohra belong to the same South Asian patriarchal society but they have different personalities because they are reared in two comparatively different environments. Bilqeece, being reared by her orthodox religious aunt, is much shyer and unexpressive in matters of love whereas her sister Zohra is comparatively less shy because she is brought up in a comparatively open environment. Similarly, dancing girls and housewives turn out into two opposite personalities altogether.

It has been found through the analysis of *Twilight in Dehli* that South Asian women form into a totally unique and different personality because of the way she is allowed to socialize. Her socialization affects her way of thinking and reacting on various occasions, her perception of things, her preferences, even her behavior. The novel throws immense light on how a woman's lack of social interaction results in lack of confidence and a dearth of expression. It has been found that the novel answers to almost each and every action of characters. The novel informs that South Asian woman is different from women residing in other parts of the world because of their peculiar psychosocial development. She has a cold, unresponsive, and unexpressive behavior. In the novel, the incidents pondering disparate social treatment of the prettier sex are repeated and told, again and again, implying a thought that the novel aims the readers to keep in view; the unequal social and sexual privilege men enjoy and women are kept from, while reading the novel. The reflection of gender inequality and its consequent effect on the lower sex is such a

crucial part of the novel that it would be almost impossible to comprehend the novel without keeping gender inequality and its causes and effects in mind. These incidents are repeated again and again and this repetitive description sometimes appears unnecessary, except that it intentionally aims to stress on the prevailing inequality between the two sexes. This signifies that the novel itself is aimed at showing a woman's behavior as an obvious outcome of the social formula applied to her.

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