



## A Paradox of Modernity: Tracing Postcolonial Urban Spaces in Musharraf Ali Farooqi's *Between Clay and Dust*

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### Abstract

This research article looks at the paradox of modernity in the postcolonial urban spaces of Musharraf Ali Farooqi's novel *Between Clay and Dust*. The novel shows a world stuck between holding onto tradition and moving toward modernization, which is symbolized by the akhara. The article analyzes the tension between these two forces and uses theories of modernity and postcolonial urban spaces to explore how the history of colonialism affects urban life and cultural identities. The study utilises the ideas of theorists like Marshall Berman and Homi K. Bhabha to understand how traditional values and modernism interact. The study reflects the complexities of postcolonial societies, where traditional values often conflict with the changes brought by modern life. This research will examine how the novel shows the fluidity of identity in these societies, which aims to highlight the dynamic relationship between tradition and modernity.

**Key Words:** Identity, Modern, Postcolonial, Tradition, Urban

## Introduction

The tension between tradition and modernity is a ubiquitous theme in postcolonial literature, a place where societies caught in the undercurrents of movement beyond colonial rule struggle to preserve their cultural heritage against pressure from modernization. Often, through the writing of Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, among others, these forces have structured identities and social structures in ways that “expose the underlying cultural assumption of colonial authority and provide alternative readings” (Shahjahan, 2011, p.243). This conflict is evident in urban areas particularly where, with accelerated industrialization, changing values, and the incursion of modern ways of life, traditional practices stand threatened. The stories demonstrate a sensation of a loss and nostalgia for what is being erased (Ashcroft et al., 1989) while pondering over the possibility of hybridity and invention in these new worlds.

Farooqi portrays a poignant picture of a world in transition. The novel reflects not only the superficial changes in the city but also captures the emotional, psychological toll of modernization upon those so grounded in traditional ways. Internal conflicts within characters parallel the larger societal tensions between progress and preservation. It is a reflection on the cost of modernization—and it is not just in terms of heritage lost but also about alienation and displacement it leaves behind.

He masters the scenario of a clash between old and new in his novel, *Between Clay and Dust* (2012). Set amidst the backdrop of a postcolonial city struggling with modernization, the book is about an old wrestler who has dedicated himself to preserving the traditional ways of an akhara.

“The city surrounding him is changing—new roads, new buildings, and new values are constantly eroding the foundations of his world” (Farooqi, 2012, p. 267). Ustad Ramzi stands as a citadel of the past, but his struggle to keep the akhara becomes increasingly symbolic of the greater challenge of holding onto cultural identity in the society that rushes headlong towards modernization. Similarly, there is a cultural habitance called Kotha, ruled by Goher Jan. That place defuses the sub continental culture and traditions into the breath of the people. She also attempts to protect her tradition and kotha and prestige. However, the changing world introduces modern houses and offices where the nawabs and elite community could spend money on. Such reflection is observed when more European colonists led to the development of more corrupt and unequal colonial institutions (Angeles and Neanidis 2015, p.359) which in turn led to more corrupt and unequal post-independence institutions.

The center of this tale is the akhara, a very revered place for wrestling and an icon of discipline, honor, and community values. More than just a geographical location, the akhara is a way of life deeply rooted in tradition and is culturally significant. He believed that when a man is in akhara, he is much closer to his essence (dust). That enlightens him with the true reality of his existence. Yet, as the city modernizes, the akhara begins to degrade, paralleling the erosion of old values which is echoed as “the widespread notion that individuals of European heritage were essentially better than those of other races and were in charge of “bettering” non-Europeans” (Ohaegbulam, 2002, p. 73). The efforts of Ustad Ramzi to protect the akhara emphasize the difficulties involved in maintaining a connection to cultural heritage when that time is primarily focused on moving forward with progress. Farooqi uses the akhara and khota as a major metaphor signifying “the vulnerability of the cultural heritage in the face of uncompromising progression of modernization” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 95). This study will investigate the manner in which Farooqi’s

*Between Clay and Dust* (2012) depicts the tension between tradition and modernity. Utilizing Marshall Berman's notion of modernity as an agent of perpetual change alongside Homi K. Bhabha's framework of postcolonial hybridity, the examination will assess how the novel engages with the intricacies of identity and urban evolution. Through the character of Ustad Ramzi and the setting of the akhara, Farooqi offers a profound reflection on the endeavor to keep cultural heritage in the face of an eternally transforming world.

### Literature Review

Shakeel et al. (2022) explores how the use of Urdu lexicon as code-switching mechanisms both reveals and unmasks socio-cultural problems in the Pakistani context. Through the incorporation of indigenous expressions, the novel effectively conveys the complexities associated with societal issues, including class inequality, cultural deterioration, and mental health challenges.

Dawn (2012) deals with the multifaceted cultural tapestry that defines the Indian subcontinent, best depicted in the novel by Musharraf Ali Farooqi. It underlines the way in which the tale is reflective of the decline of traditional professions, such as Pahlwani (wrestling) and Kotha culture (courtesans), after the Partition, thus acting as a greater cultural division. The story reveals the devastation of the old order through the lives of Ustad Ramzi, an aging wrestler, and Gohar Jan, a courtesan, reflecting the extent of the impact the politicians and social activists had on identities and culture at large. Javed (2020) investigates the significant cultural transformations that occurred after the Partition and the resulting impacts on traditional art forms such as Pahlwani and Kotha culture. The research underlines the way in which these decaying traditions belittle the feelings of belonging of the characters, initiating a setting of 'unhomeliness' wherein they strive to position themselves within a rapidly transforming society. Ustad Ramzi, the elderly wrestler, and Gohar Jan, the last courier of courtesans, are a symbol of disintegrating cultural traditions, still grappling with the erosion of their purpose and identity as their realities dissolve. Although various studies have been conducted on code-switching and cultural transformation, this research focuses on the urban transformation of the rural cities and the death of sub-continental art culture within the era of colonization.

### Theoretical Framework

Marshall Berman (1982) illustrates that modernity is a fluid process of constant change and transformation. It suggests that modern life is an "adventure," characterized by rapid changes and an inevitable pursuit of progress, often at the expense of stability and antiquity. The study contends that modernity transforms societies through a blend of economic, technological, and cultural forces that both create and annihilate. This duality—where the promise of innovation brought by modernization often leads to the dismantling of long-standing social structures—presents formidable challenges, especially within urban environments. Cities emerge as the focal point of this tension, where contemporary infrastructure supplants traditional settings, and "history is either obliterated or reimagined" (Berman, 1982, p. 16). Farooqi articulates his vision through the transformation of the nameless city in the novel. The erstwhile thriving akhara, symbolizing and upholding traditionalism, is today on the brink of extinction as commercialization advances into the landscape and culture. Through such initiatives in urban renewal promoted by capital forces, Berman's concept of modernity as an unstoppable force that breaks apart existing social tissues manifests itself. For Ustad Ramzi, the akhara goes beyond mere physical space; it becomes a lifestyle imbued with discipline, respect, and a shared sense of identity. However, as the akhara succumbs to decay and new urban developments appear, the

novel poignantly captures the pained dissonance that arises during the march of modernization, a resonance with Berman's assertion that modernity is both an exhilarating adventure and a tragic loss.

The experience of modernity in the novel is much more than material transformation alone; it considers the psychological and emotional struggles within characters. There's Ustad Ramzi and Goher Jan, the traditional defenders who fight to find relevance within a context of displacement and obsolescence in a world where the community values speed, profit, and individualism above the communal values of yesteryear. This lens captures the alienation and disorientation that accompany modern life, and thus becomes consonant with Berman's vision of modernity as not only reshaping and reconfiguring physical spaces but also the inner lives of persons themselves.

Homi K. Bhabha (1994) suggests that hybridity as a feature that characterizes postcolonial societies. It implies that identity within postcolonial contexts is fluid and ambivalent and perpetually negotiated in those "in-between" spaces where cultural traditions converge with modern influences. Third spaces, as referred to above, serve as arenas of both conflict and creativity (Bhabha, 1994, p. 47). Wherein new cultural forms and identities are formed in the process of adjustments made by individuals and communities to an increasingly transforming world.

Farooqi beautifully illustrates this hybridity through the city's evolving cultural landscape and its intricately made characters. In a way, the akhara stands at one of these "in-between" spaces, which embody the tension between the ancient values and the modern reality. While Ustad Ramzi clings to the age-old order of things, Tamami typifies the hybrid identity of many embracing life's difficulties while shaped by the imperishable legacy of the akhara. The narrative honed in on the complexities of postcolonial identity, people found to be neither fully embedded in the tradition nor entirely swept by the mode of modernity. This ambivalence mirrors Bhabha's concept that postcolonial subjects frequently inhabit a liminal space, where they negotiate their identities amid the tug and pull of clashing cultural forces.

In addition, the failing relationship between Ustad Ramzi and his brother and the role of the akhara shift shows that identity is fluid and unstable in postcolonial metropolitan landscapes. Farooqi uses these factors to express the notion that traditions are not unchangeable but change as responses to external challenges such as urbanization and economic modernization. This hybridity, as therefore, the novel presents not only in the form of a tensional source of culture but also as a promising space of renewal and adaptation. Here, new identities and practices may arise.

By employing the intersection of Berman's and Bhabha's theories, *Between Clay and Dust* provides an informed representation of postcolonial modernity, one where the old and the new inhabit a tense yet transformative relationship. The novel, therefore, captures all the complexity of urban life within the postcolonial framework, how people and communities respond to the fluid boundaries of identity, tradition, and modernity, and perhaps the instability that nearly always follows in postcolonial urban environments. Farooqi in his novel, conveys that traditions are not static, but they continue to evolve with pressures from without, such as urbanization and economic modernization. The novel, therefore, depicts hybridity not merely as a source of cultural tension but also as a possible arena for renewal and adaptation, where new identities and practices have the potential to emerge.

It provides an interwoven representation of postcolonial modernity, between the old and the new, apprehensively. The novel constitutes the complexities of urban life within a postcolonial

setting, vividly illustrating how people and communities maneuver through the ever-shifting boundaries of identity, tradition, and modernity.

### Discussion and Analysis

Farooqi draws this tension by the changing face of the city, where new roads and buildings erected symbolize progress but simultaneously demote the cultural face of the city. He views, "The younger generation no longer saw the value in the old ways; their ambitions lay in the shiny towers that promised a better future" (Farooqi, 2012, p.128). This generational divide highlights the enchanting allure of modernity, which places individual success and material gain above collective memory and heritage. Farooqi's critique reaches further than mere physical displacement, delving into the psychological and emotional toll wrought by modernization. Ustad Ramzi's isolation and despair mirror the alienation felt by those whose identities are intricately connected to traditions that modern society considers irrelevant. "Ramzi felt as though the world had moved on without him, leaving him to guard the ruins of a forgotten era" (Farooqi, 2012, p.156).

The akhara serves as a powerful symbol of the gradual loss of cultural heritage within the relentless waves of modernity. It was a once lively space for body discipline, honor, and collective solidarity; the akhara represents a miniature society that is deeply rooted in tradition. Decline represents an empty, poignant reminder of the slowly unraveling values, fundamentally undone by the constant forces of urban growth and capitalist impulse. "The akhara had fallen silent, its once vibrant activity now reduced to a mere shadow of its former self" (Farooqi, 2012, p.45) which speaks to the way modernity has literally dis-placed communal spaces. This physical decay of the akhara reflects declining respect for the cultural rituals that once interwove the social fabric. More importantly, the akhara is not simply a passive space; rather, it constantly shapes the identities of those living within it, particularly Ustad Ramzi.

For him, his self-esteem is forever tied to the akhara, which gives him both his social role and his moral foundation. Thus, the decline of the akhara represents not only the wearing down of a physical practice but also personal and community identity torn asunder. That is consistent with Berman's observation that modernization involves the destruction puts it as "of all that is solid, so people and communities become disoriented and disconnected" (Berman, 1982, p.16). The decay of the akhara symbolizes the abandonment of traditional spaces and values in favor of modern, profit-driven developments, compelling characters such as Ustad Ramzi into a confrontation with their own obsolescence. In his work, Farooqi gives expression to the tensions and contradictions of postcolonial urban life. The city is not a mere backdrop but a dynamic force that propels the meeting point between tradition and modernity.

In the midst of the fast-growing metropolitan landscape, more conventional symbols like the akhara struggle to maintain their relevance due to the rapid pace of modern infrastructure development. Farooqi so eloquently captures this: "The city no longer paused to admire its history; it rushed forward, indifferent to the quiet protests of its aging monuments" (Farooqi, 2012, p.92). This feeling reflects the apathy of modern urban landscapes for the cultural and historical icons that once made up the identity of these cities. The tension is negotiated against the larger backdrop of postcolonial urbanization, in which cities often favor economic growth over cultural preservation. The city, as Farooqi paints it, is the headquarters of the contradictory forces

of creation and destruction, reflecting Bhabha's notion of hybridity "a space where new cultural identities are fashioned, though not without struggle" (Bhabha, 1994, p.56).

These "in-between" spaces represent the fluidity and ambivalence of postcolonial identities wherein the old and the new occupy an uneasy and tenuous balance. Modernization's Impact Modernization in *Between Clay and Dust* is portrayed both as transformative and destructive. Racialization seals the white man in his whiteness and the black man in his blackness. The metaphor of sealing refers to the spatial relationships that separate colonizer and colonized as "they meet on a street corner or in a line through body language, gestures, looks, and physical distance" (Kipfer, 2017, p. 718). The invasion of modern urban development into traditional sites, like the akhara, is a scathing critique of the capitalist ethos often at the root of modernization initiatives.

The feeling is most similar to Berman's description of modernity, which describes it as "liberating but alienating—a profoundly dislocating experience for those who cannot keep up with its speed" (Berman, 1982, p.16). In addition, modernization is depicted in the novel as a cultural erosion, echoing postcolonial critiques against urbanization. The metamorphosis of the city means the erasure of not only physical spaces but also the cultural practices and shared identities. Postcolonial urbanization reflects on the concept that modernization almost sideline the traditional institution, relegating them into mere relics of a fast-changing social landscape (Ren 2023, p. 2). This tension is palpable in *Between Clay and Dust*, where the advancing tide of modern values poses a threat to the cultural significance of spaces such as the akhara.

The elder figures—most notably Ustad Ramzi and Johr Jaan—are unparalleled guardians of tradition within the pages of *Between Clay and Dust*. They symbolize resistance to the modern changes around them and perhaps a life reflected in dignified conduct, honor, and communal responsibility. Ustad Ramzi, through his unwavering commitment to the akhara, demonstrates an ultimate belief in the cultural traditions that had molded him and so many like him within his community. His refusal to yield to the fast-changing world around him evolves into an important tension between the old and the new.

He writes, "Ramzi saw no honor in the shiny new world; his honor lay in the sweat-stained mats of the akhara" (Farooqi, 2012, p.46), which speaks to his fixed resistance against the encroachments of modernity. In her role as a tawaif, Johr Jaan typifies a separate form of cultural preservation within her own traditional expression. Both Ustad Ramzi and Johr Jaan strongly oppose the commercialization of their art forms as they are considered sacred traditions and not just tools to reap economic benefits. Both of these characters show how modes of discursive refusal, in which the colonial narrative is not only defeated but is instead politically modified by the colonized, may be regarded as "enabling and aided by more practical forms of opposition" (Jefferess, 2008, p. 185) struggle, and protest.

Their fight together is an expression of the larger postcolonial critique of modernity that is seen as a "system that commercializes and destroys cultural practices" (Loomba, 2005, p.102). The resistance of the elder generation highlights a broader societal dilemma: to preserve the past at all costs or to adapt to the inevitable pressures of modernization. Yet, Farooqi complicates this narrative by revealing that their resistance, though noble, carries a price. Ustad Ramzi's inability to adapt isolates him, rendering him alienated from a society that no longer appreciates his contributions. This exemplifies Berman's concept of modernity as "a two-edged sword—while it encourages progress and innovation, it also isolates those who cannot or do not want to compromise" (Berman, 1982, p.16). Johr Jaan's struggle to maintain her status and dignity against

the tide of social change highlights the individual price of preserving culture in a modern world that is apathetic.

Changing Values among Youths Unlike the elders, the new generation in *Between Clay and Dust* exhibits a sophisticated ambivalence towards tradition, along with growing acceptance of modernity. The character of Tamami, the younger brother of Ustad Ramzi, is a classic example of generational values shift in such a play. Impelled by a sense of personal recognition and monetary autonomy, Tamami chooses to align personal ambition against the greater good of the akhara ethos.

His betrayal of trust from Ustad Ramzi is the milestone in the novel: he chooses his material wealth over loyalty. Farooqi poignantly captures this division of generations: "Tamami wanted what the akhara could not give—freedom to carve his own destiny in a world that no longer cared for the old ways" (Farooqi, 2012, p.88). This reflects the broader social order, where each successive generation embraces the ideology of modernity in order to make sense of personal freedom and deliverance. On the other hand, older characters view tradition as an anchor for security and belonging, while the younger characters view it as an obstacle holding them back from wider possibilities in an ever-changing world. The establishment of the colonial system does not inherently destroy the indigenous culture; rather, it is the interpretation, enforced oppression, and colonialist values that classify, limit, and confine the culture that was previously fluid, living, and open to the future. "At this point, the native culture is utilized to define and degrade the native population's identity, turning against its own people" (Kortright, 2011, p.7). The conflict is symbolic of Bhabha's hybridization concept wherein "post-colonial subjects operate at the level of the" in between "in between" passages of cultural negotiation" (Bhabha, 1994, p.56). This partial acceptance towards modernity by the younger generation reflects their hybrid identities, skillfully balancing the pull of tradition against the allure of progress. Similar attitudes have been observed in *Twilight in Delhi* by Ahmad Ali in which he draws the character of Asgar. Asgar wants to adapt to the traditions of the British whereas his father Mir Nihal desires for his son a pure cultural adaptation. The gap between the generations reflects the hybrid identities. However, Farooqi does not portray this generational shift as totally meaningful. George Lamming a Barbadian writer mentions that his people instead of physical torture, faced "terror of mind" which is black verses black. The British announced that opportunities would be provided to those who would adopt English civilization the most. This resulted in "Fractured Consciousness" that "produced blacks whose personalities were split between white instructions and black memories" (Atieh, 2013, p. 78). The major purpose of colonization is to brainwash the young minds for cultivation of their own machinery. In the novel, often, the pursuit of modern values by the younger characters makes them compromise in morality and move away from their cultural identity. Tamami's actions ultimately lead to his downfall, indicating that the dismissal of tradition in favor of unbridled modernity can yield destructive consequences. This ambivalence brings to light the intricacies involved in maneuvering through generational change within postcolonial societies, where the allure of progress frequently comes hand in hand with considerable cultural loss.

Farooqi has presented scenarios of how post-colonial societies maneuver with hybrid identities that are constantly fluid and flowing. His characters exist in a space where tradition and modernity fight each other in a deeply internalized form. Ustad Ramzi, Johr Jaan, even Tamami reside in domains that combine the cultural heritage with modern values, where these former must align these bellicose forces in their identities. Farooqi portrays such characters as representative of

this whole postcolonial experience where individuals must be appropriate to their social roles in a society marked by rapid change. "Each had a place once, but the lines between those places were now blurred beyond recognition" (Farooqi, 2012, p.76). It depicts the elimination of clear-cut boundaries that once distinguished old roles from new aspirations. Such a hybrid identity is marked by a current of tension and insecurity. In this context of postcolonial hybridity worked out by Homi Bhabha, such "in-between" spaces become both a site of conflict and a space of potential revitalization. In *Between Clay and Dust*, though, Farooqi edges closer to investigation of the conflict rather than resolution through hybrid identities. For example, Johr Jaan, a traditionally grounded figure within an inconstant world, faces her waning power in actuality to coexist with new realities, playing emphasis on precariousness of that position. Her struggle reflects that of Ustad Ramzi, a man who clings to "tradition while being all too aware of its dwindling significance" (Bhabha, 1994, p.56). Farooqi employs these characters to challenge the romanticization of both extremes—untouched traditionalism and unexamined modernity—implying that identity in a postcolonial landscape is considerably more fragmented and ambivalent.

Farooqi, thus, focuses on the inherent ambivalence of identity in a society wherein old values are constantly being questioned and modernity does not offer easy answers. Racist ideology supports "the dominant-subordinate relational paradigm" (Kortright, 2011, p. 754). Both the colonized and the colonizer have developed pathological identities as a result of this process. The novel progresses on this ambivalence through the internal struggles of its characters and the changes that happen in the world they belong to. It is the uncertainty facing a custodian of tradition in changing society that Ustad Ramzi stands for. His identity as wrestler and community leader is progressively becoming hazier. This indecisiveness resonates with Bhabha's concept that "postcolonial identities are saturated with ambiguity since there is a realization that one finds themselves neither fully based in the past nor fully embracing the present" (Bhabha, 1994, p.72). This analysis is further developed by Farooqi as he identifies how ambiguity affects not only personal lives but even the groups' identity. The akharas decayed while a thriving modern infrastructure springs from the earth in the city epitomizes this intergroup ambivalence. "The city moved forward, but its people lingered, caught between the pull of memory and the push of necessity" (Farooqi, 2012, p.101). This tension underlines the fragmented essence of identity within postcolonial contexts, where the sense of security and unison that tradition brought may not be completely usurped by the allure of modernity. The ambiguity of identity in the novel is not portrayed as an issue awaiting resolution but instead as a continuous aspect of life in a world influenced by colonial histories and modern pressures.

**Ustad Ramzi's Inner Conflict** At the core of the novel resides Ustad Ramzi's deep inner turmoil, which embodies the wider theme of identity in flux. In being a custodian of the akhara, he feels he is the last bastion of a proud and disciplined tradition. Still, such an image clashes more and more with the world around him, where the call for adaptation and compromise grows louder. He is intrinsically bound to the akhara, a space that once represented the community and respect but now stands as a reminder of bygone days. "Ramzi's pride in his role was unshaken, but within, doubt began to creep like cracks in the walls of the akhara" (Farooqi, 2012, p.150). This vivid imagery emphasizes the fragility of his position and the psychological toll exacted by the resistance to inevitable change. Ramzi's internal conflict brings to light the challenge of preserving a coherent sense of self in a world where traditional markers of identity are steadily



eroding. His inability to adapt is not merely a personal failing; it serves as a mirror to the larger societal tensions that permeate postcolonial spaces. Farooqi offers a critique of this rigidity, illuminating how it fosters isolation and alienation. Nevertheless, Ramzi's resistance possesses a quiet dignity, underscoring the significance of preserving cultural memory even when confronted with daunting challenges. His struggle echoes Berman's concept of modernity, which exists as both a liberating and destructive force, suggesting that "progress frequently demands a toll from those unable to keep up" (Berman, 1982, p.18). Farooqi's intricate portrayal of Ramzi encourages readers to empathize with the guardians of tradition, all while recognizing the inescapable nature of change.

Farooqi unmasks modernity as a double-edged sword, a power that brings both possibilities and some pretty great challenges to life. On the one hand, modernization brings technological change, urbanisation, and the siren song of economic development. These changes seem to embody the idea of progress - a way out for a society emerging from colonial shadows. However, Farooqi does not have any hesitation in depicting the darker manifestations of this promised progress. The novel narrates how modernity can break up time-worn cultural practices and communal ties and replace them with the more individualistic and profit-grabbing ethos. "The new roads cut through old neighborhoods like scars, dividing what was once whole" (Farooqi, 2012, p.94). It points to physical and symbolic fragmentation created by modern urban development.

This duality repeats the paradox of modernity: while providing instruments for societal advancement, it simultaneously undermines the foundations upon which communities are established. The decline of akhara as a cultural institution is a case in point. Once the bastion of discipline, respect, and communal identity, the akhara now fades into irrelevance, since society is becoming more fixated than ever on economic efficiency and material success. Farooqi disparages this trend, where modernization time and again prioritizes short-term gains over the better preservation of cultural heritage. This sentiment is in tandem with what Berman said regarding how modernity creates this force that is thrilling yet creates a sense of dislocation and "loss in those who are incapable of keeping abreast of its swift changes" (Berman, 1982, p.18). Using characters like Ustad Ramzi, Farooqi depicts the human cost of modernization. Ramzi's failure to adapt to the new order results in his isolation, his position as a cultural custodian becoming insignificant in a world that no longer appreciates the traditions he embodies. Yet, Farooqi's critique possesses nuance; he recognizes that modernization is not intrinsically negative but turns problematic when it obliterates the past without consideration for its importance. The tension between opportunity and threat forces readers to consider the real price of progress, especially in those societies that are still trying to define their postcolonial identity.

Even as modernization causes havoc, *Between Clay and Dust* also celebrates the strength and flexibility of tradition. According to Farooqi, cultural practices and values do not die so easily; they survive, sometimes finding new forms and manifestations in the changing contexts. Ustad Ramzi's unwavering dedication to the akhara, despite its gradual decline into disrepair, stands as a testament to the enduring essence of tradition. His rituals and teachings, though increasingly pushed to the margins, still resonate with significance, symbolizing the steadfast human yearning to preserve a bond with the past. Farooqi writes, "Even in its silence, the akhara held the echoes of its former life, a reminder that some things refuse to fade completely" (Farooqi, 2012, p.109). Tradition for Farooqi is not just nostalgic; it is living and vibrant. The book acknowledges that though some aspects of tradition may end, others will change to meet the needs of today. This is

clearly illustrated in the character of Johr Jaan, who skillfully adapts her traditional role as a performer in order to survive within a transforming society. Her remarkable ability to navigate the shifting cultural landscape showcases the fluidity of tradition, which possesses the capacity to either resist or embrace modern influences while maintaining its fundamental essence. This interplay between the old and the new resonates with the idea of Homi Bhabha's hybridity "wherein a cultural identity is always negotiated in the "in-between" spaces of tradition and modernity" (Bhabha, 1994, p.54). The endurance of tradition becomes a counterforce to all disorienting tendencies of modernity. Even as the city itself transforms, strands of the past continue to survive offering continuity and grounding to those who look for them. This vibrant interplay illuminates the central paradox of the novel: although modernity frequently risks obliterating tradition, it simultaneously fosters the circumstances necessary for its renewal and reinvention.

### Conclusion

Farooqi offers a profoundly poignant examination of the struggle between tradition and modernity within a swiftly evolving postcolonial landscape. Through the lens of the character Ustad Ramzi and the emblematic akhara and Gohr Jan kotha, Farooqi encapsulates the sorrowful truth of witnessing beloved traditions dissolve amid the unyielding tide of modernization. The novel vividly depicts the human cost of this transition— alienation, loss, and a lingering disconnection from one's roots. However, Farooqi also underscores the strength of cultural heritage, showing how, even as modernity drags down old ways of life, the resilient whispers of the past remain. In order to achieve mutual harmony and shift discourse, a different relationship structure that acknowledges the past must be proposed. Thus, this procedure allows for the "remembrance of the past and recognizes the violence, abuse, and ideology of colonialism" (Shahjahan, 2014, p. 243). This narrative of loss and persistence echoing through that of complexities is part of the realities of postcolonial societies, where the ongoing warfare between history preservation and progress is always at play. Farooqi invites readers to reflect on their own cultural topographies, questioning what is gained and what is lost through the promise of progress. Modernization is an unstoppable tide, the soul of a community belongs in its ability to remember, adapt, and honor its past even as it moves forward.

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