



## Critical Discourse Analysis of Ahmed Ali's Novel Twilight in Delhi

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### Abstract

This article explores the hidden cultural ideologies and power relationships depicted in Ahmed Ali's novel *Twilight in Delhi* using critical discourse analysis. It succinctly discusses the critical discourse analysis methodology and its application on works of literature. It sheds light on the fact that critical discourse analysis can help understand the relationship between power, language, gender, and society as portrayed in any piece of text. Furthermore, it delineates that critical discourse analysis can also be used to explore the nature of different aspects of historical events. Besides, selected parts and characters have been analyzed to find out the miscellaneous aspects of the novel. The study highlights the salient features of Muslim culture, portrayal of women as submissive characters, views of colonized people as regards the colonizers, and the past glory of Muslims.

**Keywords:** critical discourse analysis, hidden cultural ideologies, power relationships

### INTRODUCTION

The term discourse has been derived from the Latin word *discursus*, which means an argument. In recent times, there has been a considerable debate on the meaning of discourse which has given birth to a number of different perspectives. If we look at discourse through



linguistics' perspective, it refers to a process that involves analyzing language beyond a sentence. To study discourse is to analyze the written or spoken language in social context.

Critical discourse analysis is a research methodology that views language as a form of social practice and seeks to identify power asymmetries and structural inequities that may be created, established, and reinforced through language use ( Fairclough, 2013 ). The works of Fairclough and Wodak have helped this discipline emerge as a separate field of research. It studies the relationship between power, language, gender, and society as depicted in the text. The word "critical" in the term critical discourse analysis refers to the way as to how this field critically examines the hidden ideologies and power relationships that are reinforced through language use.

Critical discourse analysis has become a vast field of research and contains a number of areas which are discussed under this discipline. It explores the nature of different aspects of historical events. Hidden ideologies and power relationships are particularly examined during the critical discourse analysis of any speech or text. How people behave in society and their attitude towards other individuals are manifested through discourses. How the link between text and society is established is also studied in critical discourse analysis. It has become a common phenomenon to examine the speeches of world leaders by applying the theory of critical discourse analysis in order to decode the implications and hidden messages conveyed by the leaders.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How have different aspects of Muslim culture been depicted in the novel?
2. How have women been represented as submissive characters?
3. How do some characters reminisce the past glory of Muslims?
4. What kind of views do the colonized people have as regards the colonizers?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

M. Asif Amir & Asim Mehmood (2017) conducted a research on Tariq Ali's novel *The Stone Woman* applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) .They explored the ideology working in the novel. They subjected the discovered ideology to Althusser's theory of ideology and came to this conclusion that the male supremacy in the family as well as in the society has been accepted as an ideology. That very particular Ideology has been internalized and naturalized through certain institutions such as family, marriage, traditions and customs.

Asifa Kiren and Prof. Dr. Abdul Ghafoor Awan (2017) critically analyzed the problem of feminism and the place of women in society as shown in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* using critical discourse Analysis .They analyzed the meaning of feminism , the role of women in the late 20th and early 19th centuries, Jane Austen's concept of feminism and the society in which she lived and grew up, and the irony employed by the author to address the norms created by upper classes of that era.

Kawa AbdulKareem Sherwani (2020) did a research on Elif Shafak's novel „ The Forty Rules of Love“ to explore the different traits and proclivities of human beings. According to him, in this world, which is characterized by chaos, people can still find peace and contentment. This research aims to analyse the dialogues of Mawlana Jalalludin Rumi and to represent the eastern spirituality and Sufism. As per one of the findings of his study, this novel is brimming with the essence of spiritual love and attempts to remove the differences across societies.

Salih Al-Mamoory and Masoumah Abathar Witwit (2021) conducted a study to analyse the ideology of "Oppression of Black People" in Harper Lee's novel "To Kill a Mockingbird". Using critical discourse analysis, the authors examined the speeches of important characters to reveal how racist policies were used against the black people in South America and how black people were denied equal access to basic amenities of life such as housing, welfare services and education and so on and so forth.

Sajid Ali and Sajid Ahmad (2017) worked on Pakistani Fiction in English, in which he explored new written discourses. He went on to investigate linguistic aspects in fiction, with a focus on computational linguistics. In his research paper, Sajid Ali investigated the nativization, internationalisation, globalization, and linguistic aspects of fiction writing and literature written by Pakistani writers.

The discourse stylistics was worked on by Paul Simpson and Geoff Hall (2002). They worked to study literary and nonliterary discourses in order to analyse topics such as social and cultural aspects, power, and imperialism, using various frameworks such as cultural, critical, and ideological frameworks.

Abdalmughni (2019) conducted a research on Stylistics, Literary Criticism, Linguistics, and Discourse Analysis in order to provide a comparison and explanatory research. He began his research with pedagogical work and a comparative analysis of discourses and each branch of Linguistics.

Azam and Shah (2019) investigated gender inequality in a Grade 5 English textbook using critical discourse analysis. They studied the gender roles depicted in the book's social stereotypes. Their study reveals social and cultural aspects through the use of language, in which the gender roles of men and women, as well as their responsibilities, are clearly stereotyped. They discovered androcentrism, titular dominance, semantic roles, pictorial dominance, order of representation, and stereotypical male and female representation.

Radka Noskova (2011) investigated women's revolt against stereotypes in Toni Morrison's novels. In her research, she focused on social stereotypes, including racism and gender differences that women face. Tony Morrison's writings on female depict the obstacles and restrictions that women have to face living in patriarchal societies and social stereotypes that are a byproduct of social construction. Her research is a comparative study of two novels in which social stereotypes are studied and the respective analysis of each novel is presented.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research is a structured and careful study of a particular topic which is conducted to find new facts and information related to that topic. Methodology is a set of methods used to carry out

a research. Hence, research methodology is a structured and careful study which is conducted to find new facts by following the prescribed methods. Qualitative methods are mostly used when researches of critical discourse analysis are conducted. The nature of this study is also qualitative because critical discourse analysis approach is being used. Arguments, in-depth analysis and logic are the main tools of this research.

The data of this study is analyzed using Norman Fairclough's three dimensions of discursive practices. Three dimensional model of Fairclough is based on the following:

- 1) Text
- 2) Discursive practices
- 3) Social Practices

### **DELIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

In this study, selected parts and characters of Ahmed Ali's novel *Twilight in Delhi* have been critically analysed and an attempt has been made to explore the historical perspectives and ideologies of the early 20th century, gender based discrimination, class differences and numerous hues of love.

### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The following section presents an analysis of and discussion on the selected parts and characters of Ahmed Ali's novel *Twilight in Delhi*.

#### **Aspects of Muslim Culture**

Ahmad Ali's magnum opus depicts Muslim culture in a very vivid manner. Offering namaz is something among the most striking aspects of Islamic culture as portrayed in the novel and which the reader does not fail to notice. In the beginning of the novel, Begum Nihal wakes up at the crack of dawn and, after performing ablutions, offers her morning prayer and reads the holy Quran. Mehro, her daughter, follows suit. As soon as the Moazin calls the Azaan, Mir Nihal, Asghar and other characters give preference to offering prayers over other things, no matter where they are and what they are doing. Secondly, free mixing of men and women has been discouraged. The house of Mir Nihal is divided into two sections: mardana and zenana. Only blood relatives are allowed in the zenana section of the house. Furthermore, the lives of the women in Mir Nihal's house are defined by monotony as hardly new things ever happen. They keep on doing chores of domestic life which are very much similar in nature. Thirdly, pigeon flying is the pastime of Mir Nihal. Since the cries of „Hai Koo“ are heard from nigh every other roof, this shows that a great number of men, who are mostly Muslim, do it as part of their pastimes. Mir Nihal holds his pigeons very close to his heart and spends a considerable time in looking after them. One day he forgets to lock the door of his pigeon loft. A cat finds its way to the roof where pigeons are kept and eats some of them and leaves others dead. Only a few are left alive.

This event coincides with the death of Baban Jan, who is Mir Nihal's concubine. Though keeping concubines goes against the spirit of Islam, many acquaintances of Mir Nihal are seen

condoling with him and encouraging him to keep another. These two heart-rending events leave Mir Nihal dejected and he, as a result, abandons the hobby of pigeon flying altogether. Fourthly, listening to qawalis, paying visits to shrines and believing in charms and amulets are also among the defining characteristics of the Muslim Delhiites of early 20th century. Standing on the rooftop, Asghar gets nostalgic while listening to the qawali being sung by qawals over the roof of his friend's house. Shams often visits the shrine of Hazrat Nizamudin Auliya. It's Bari, friend of Asghar, and Begum Shahbaz, mother of Bilqeece, who believe in the magical powers of charms and amulets and consider them as the only solution to every problem.

### **Results**

The analysis shows that characters strictly follow some tenets of Islam while ignore others. All characters pray five times a day and female characters mostly observe purdah as well. Mir Nihal, Ghafoor and Asghar have relations with concubines who may be somehow acceptable in society during those times, but are not permissible in Islam. Moreover, it's been observed that people who get income from their assets have involved themselves in some hobbies or activities to kill time. Pigeon flying is one of them and a lot of financially stable Delhiites do it as part of their hobbies. Besides, the society is superstitious and fully believes in charms and amulets.

### **Women as Submissive Characters**

During the course of history, women have most of the time been portrayed as submissive characters in countless works. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise to see them portrayed as helpless and powerless characters in this novel as well. Begum Waheed, Asghar's eldest sister, is the epitome of a submissive character. She is married off at an early age, but, as fate would have it, gets widowed at the age of nineteen. Succumbing to societal norms, she never remarries, preferring to live with her children and in-laws and suppressing all her feelings and desires. Her mother, Begum Nihal, too suffers a great deal, though differently. Reading between the lines, it reveals to the reader that Mir Nihal, besides keeping Baban Jaan as his mistress, has had an illicit relation with his home maid Dilchain. She gives birth to his child who dies afterwards. All this leaves indelible marks on Begum Nihal's mental health and she goes nearly mad. However, she accepts the reality silently as, being a woman; she is unable to do anything. Men's faults are not considered even faults whereas women's minor mistakes are deemed as blunders. Another event that shows women as powerless characters is the matter of Asghar's marriage. Asghar is in love with Mirza Shahbaz's daughter Bilqeece. Bilqeece's family is lower in rank and Asghar fears that his father will never consent to his marriage. He requests his sister, Begum Waheed, who in turn persuades her mother to speak to father about it. Begum Nihal has to muster up a lot of courage before speaking to Mir Nihal regarding this whole issue. When she puts the matter in front of Mir Nihal, he gets mightily angry and threatens to disown his son if he marries Mirza Shahbaz's daughter. Despite all this, Begum Nihal manages to seek Bilqeece's hand for Asghar stealthily, because it is Begum Nihal who has tied the knots of her two elder sons and they are living happy married lives. Apparently, women have no say even in affairs concerning marriages of their children.

They are powerless on the whole. Mehro, Mir Nihal's daughter, is married off to Meraaj, who, by all means, is not a suitable match for her. Just to avoid gossip and for the sake of family's honour, she is given to Meeraj against her wishes and she, shedding dry tears of sorrow, accepts

the whole matter as something done by the will of God. Last but not least is the indifference of Asghar towards his wife, Bilqeece. He has imagined her to be a fairly romantic girl, but, to his sadness, she turns out to be shy and does not reciprocate his love the way he wants it to be reciprocated. The grief of Asghar's growing indifference pains her unimaginably and gnaws at her heart. She bears all this without complaining and falls ill. Since hunger has deserted her, she becomes more vulnerable to diseases. At the same time, Spanish flu is raging in the subcontinent and claiming innumerable lives. She too gets infected with it and says goodbye to her painful life ultimately. In brief, it seems to be the lot of women to suffer a great deal in patriarchal societies.

### **Results**

It can be analysed easily that the society of early 20th century is patriarchal. The consent of the male head of the family is inevitable in almost every matter. Furthermore, class and caste are taken into consideration while settling marriages. Women have almost no say in the affairs of life and have to bear many things silently. They have been represented as powerless creatures.

### **Past Glory of Muslims**

In the opening pages of the novel, the author enumerates the great Muslim Kings who once ruled the land of the subcontinent. He reminisces the golden times when mighty Mughals and other kings ruled with unparalleled glory and splendor. Now, as all of them are gone, remain only their tombs and monuments which are reminiscent of the glorious past and a source of both pain and delight. Bahadur Shah Zafar is the last king of Mughal dynasty whose daughters and granddaughters are still alive. They are in such a plight that they're unable to eke out their living. Gul Bano is one of the granddaughters of Bahadur Shah who has fortunately escaped the killings taking place during the mutiny. Though still being very beautiful, she is in a pitiable condition. She reads aloud Bahadur Shah's poems and accepts money in return. For people like her whose ancestors have once ruled Hindustan, the event of coronation of George V is nothing less than a painful reminder of the glory of bygone days. Apart from this, Mir Nihal and his friends occasionally discuss the great poets of the past. They believe that their enchanting and evergreen poetry serves as a beacon of light, reminding them of the great tradition of writing and composing verses that once existed. According to them, poets like Ghalib, Zauq, Daagh and Meer are no longer to be seen on the land of Hindustan and only weaklings are found to be composing poetry these days. It seems that there is no maturity of thought and beauty is nowhere to be found in their poetry. They ponder over other aspects of life and come to this conclusion that the richness that once existed in everything is now a thing of the past and their hearts shed tears of blood over this heart-wrenching realization.

### **Results**

The city of Delhi has a magnificent past. A number of mighty Muslim Kings have ruled over it and left behind indelible marks of splendor and glory. Therefore, it is natural for characters like Mir Nihal and his friends, who have lived some span of their lives in Delhi under the rule of the last Mughal king Bahadur Shah Zafar, to keep desiring for the past glory to return. Moreover, with the death of Bahadur Shah Zafar, the tradition of great poetry has died as well. These losses are felt deeply by the characters.



### **Views of Colonized People Regarding Colonizers**

Majority of the Muslims of the subcontinent do not want to be ruled over by English and thus are seen expressing their hatred for them using the word "Farangis". They address them with this particular term whenever they discuss them or their traits. When Mir Nihal see Asghar wearing English boots , he orders him to throw them away as he does not want him to imitate the ways of "Farangis". Besides , people of Delhi have mixed views regarding the coronation of King George V. Some consider it a blessing as their businesses are going to flourish during the days of coronation and even afterwards. Others believe that the King's arrival in Delhi has nothing to do with more business activity as Allah is the Sole Giver. However, Mir Nihal, Begum Nihal and other small female characters are seen cursing Farangis. Their opinions remain unchanged. They are not willing to accept the foreign yoke. Since Mir Nihal and Begum Nihal are witnesses to all what have happened during the war of Independence in 1857, they have deep-seated hatred for Farangis. Upon the insistence of his sons, Mir Nihal agrees to accompany them to Jama Masjid to see the procession of the king pass by. Sitting there, Mir Nihal is filled with feelings of disgust about Farangis and his mind is brimming with disturbing thoughts. As soon as his gaze falls upon the procession of the king, he asks his grandson that they should take their leave. He further instructs him to fight these Farangis when he grows up as they are their sworn enemies. Mir Nihal does not have a single good word for these Farangis. He has endured the times when they butchered his fellow brethren by the scores. He cannot bring himself to accept them as his rulers. His own son Asghar does not seem to be much affected by the history. He likes to adopt English ways of life and thus brings home English furniture and other accessories. People belonging to young generation are indifferent to what happened in the past. They adopt or relinquish things according to their comfort. A large number of people who have lived through the horrible moments of mutiny cannot bring themselves to accept Farangis as their rulers. For them, Farangis have blood of their relatives on their hands.

### **Results**

The analysis points out that colonized people mostly do not have good views as regards the colonizers. Mir Nihal , the protagonist of the novel, and most other characters dislike the colonizers immensely and address them with a sarcastic term "Farangis". Mir Nihal believes "Farangis" to be cruel and inhumane who have killed so many innocent people during the War of Independence and destroyed the rich culture of Hindustan. Indifference of Asghar towards the history of Hindustan shows the decay of the Muslim culture.

### **Conclusion**

After analysing the selected parts of the novel, it can be concluded that Critical Discourse Analysis is an important approach to unveiling the hidden cultural ideologies. Different aspects of Muslim culture, prominent submissive characters, past glory of Muslims and the views of colonized people regarding the colonizers have been deeply explored using CDA. Vivid imagery, life-like depiction of the characters and simple yet flowery language are among the salient characteristics of this novel. Since most of the poetry used in the novel has been translated from Urdu into English, the tinge of Urdu is very much noticeable in Ahmed Ali's language. The author has portrayed the city of Delhi with a masterly hand which fills the readers with a longing to visit the city.

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