

**ISSUE OF IDENTITY AND DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS IN A COLONIZED NATION: AN ANALYSIS OF ALI'S "TWILIGHT IN DELHI"**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The aim of this research is to represent the nostalgic condition of Indians being faced as the result of colonization. It throws light on the issue how colonized Indians become the victim of double consciousness between the original identity inherited from their ancestors and westernized identity attained through the mimicry of western colonizers. The issue of identity and double consciousness, a sub-category of postcolonial theory, is used as theoretical framework in this research. Bhabha uses the word "hybridity" in order to explain the conflict of identity in colonized people. In Ali's Twilight in Delhi the character of Asghar suffers from such nostalgic situation due to the clash between his parental and western identity.*

**KEYWORDS:** Colonial, Double Consciousness, Identity Crisis, Nostalgia, Twilight in Delhi

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The conflict of identity in colonized cultures and societies is a major issue of discussion after colonization. The colonizers introduce their culture as standard and universal regarding the colonized societies historical void and pre-civilized limbo. Through such colonial discourse, European writers and critics, are creating chaos among colonized natives about their history, culture, and identity. They give no importance to their ancestral values and present their own system of living as standard. In this respect, Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is very emphatic in which he describes West as the centre and the East as other. This superiority and inferiority complex has made the lives of colonized people nostalgic. In the novel *Twilight in Delhi*, Ali himself observes the relationship between colonialism and culture and how the resultant mimicry influences identity of the Indian natives. He describes in detail how colonialism attacked on Muslim identity, psychology and their culture during the nostalgic years of 1857-1919. Ashcroft, Griffith, Tiffin (1998) explain the issue of identity crisis as "an experience of imposing Western culture on native culture resulted in a clash between two cultures ultimately leading to an internal conflict in the indigenous people". Under the extreme influence, a native may feel rootless and fragmented. Same is the case shown by Ali through his character Asghar whose father represents original culture of harmony while he runs behind western culture. He wears western style clothes and shoes. He also decorates his house in western style. But in real sense, he is in a state of flux, never satisfied with his

position in a colonized society. He is the best example of colonized native, a victim of double consciousness in an indigenous country.

Ali has thrown light on all the major issue of colonial discourse in his novel *Twilight in Delhi*. But this study focuses, particularly, on the issue of identity and conflict being faced by the colonized people.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Ali's (1910-1994) work has been evaluated as one of the most glorious Pakistani literature written in English language. His major works are based upon the history and culture of Muslims in India. In *Twilight in Delhi* (1940), he presents the historical event of colonization as Dayal (2010) reviews it in her own words: "No account of history of Delhi could be completed without a detailed examination of the 'mutiny' or the 'war of independence' of 1857" (p. xii). She says that the Indian Muslims participated in colonial encounter considering it a jihad against Christianity which Europeans were trying to spread all over the India and this resulted in merciless killings, violent chaos and untold bloodshed. There is a detailed description of historical events and places in *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) as Jalal (2007) verifies in the following words: "True character of Delhi was based on the central activities of Fort, Chandani Chowk and a crowd which assembled daily at Jamma Masjid. He shares his sorrow on losing such significant buildings from Delhi because they used to play a vital role in our Indian identity. Erikson (2004, p. x) further illustrates the significance of using important place names in *Twilight in Delhi* by saying that "the place names have a meaning in the language and in the native identity". In the support of this novel, Ali (2007) discusses the fact faced by his ancestors in these words: "The story of my immediate ancestors held the key to a treasure, trove of mysteries. My grandmother was five and my grandfather eleven when the Ghadar of 1857, the blind persecution and massacres of the citizens of Delhi, took place" (p. xiv).

Apparently, it seems that novel is about a love story between Asghar and Bilqeece but in reality, it explores a sense of loss after the events of colonization. The characters feel lost in sense of identity. They are the victims of double consciousness due to the clash between Indian Muslim culture and Western culture. Faiz (2004) describes the native identity of Indian Muslims as a blend of two types of life styles, one is ideological and other is materialistic. This has turned their identity from unity to fragmentation.

The novel, thus, concerns with doubleness in terms of identity and culture, resulting from colonial encounter, and it deeply overwhelms the lives of colonized natives. The colonized people have lost their original identity due to this ambiguity. They are unaware of their real identity, who they are and from where they belong to because the living style they are adopting is both of their own culture and the western culture.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Colonialism was basically a clash between cultures, languages, people and way of thinking, placed under one system ruled by the western empires. European colonizers introduced western way of thinking, English language and culture in the form of native context in order

to produce Europeanized natives. Bhabha (1994) theorized those colonized natives as the 'hybrid' and calls this process a tension that arises between diversified people and blend them into one nation. Ashcroft et al (2000) intensifies this conflict as the development of a new culture and identity due to close connection between two different cultures. The concept of doubleness is more clearly expressed by T.B.Macaulay's 'Minute' of 1835 as the construction of "a class; Indian in blood and color but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect". Fanon, in his famous work, *Black Skins, White Masks* (1967), describes colonialism as dehumanization of the natives. He says that the colonized natives are the image of the white man because the white man, as their master is something to be frightened and desired. So the black man attempts to look like white master and wears a white mask on black skin. Naipaul calls them, 'half-native/half-Westernized' and explores his views in *The Middle Passage* (1969) as, "A peasant-minded, money-minded community, spiritually colonial society: a combination of historical accidents and national temperament has turned the Trinidad Indians into a complete colonial, even more Philistine than the white". Naipaul discusses double consciousness as the outcome of colonial encounter which removed all traces of roots and implanted new culture. A great theorist Paul Gilroy in his *Black Atlantic* (1997) visualizes double identity as a source of flourishing or threatening the nation's state. No doubt, the colonial period is over, yet its effects on the national culture and identity are still haunting.

### Textual Analysis

The conflict of identity and double consciousness resulting from colonial encounter is clearly obvious in Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* in the form of clash between two cultures. Mir.Nihal is the embodiment of Muslim culture while Asghar is the lover of western identity. Asghar is such a character of the novel that faces nostalgia of double identity all the more. If he follows his parental culture, he will never be able to fulfill his desires inspired from European colonizers. On the other hand, by adopting western culture, he would be deprived of parental consent and love. As the lover of western culture, Asghar wishes to be look like them. So he purchases western style clothes and shoes that are never liked by his father. When he sees Asghar wearing such western style shoes, he bursts upon him; "You are again wearing those dirty English boots! I don't like them. I will have no aping of the Farangis in my house. Throw them away!"(p. 13).

Mir.Nihal is very aggressive to European colonizers and in anger; he calls them 'Farangis'.

But despite of his father's so much hatred against Europeans, Asghar loves the western system. He wishes to adopt western values in every field of life. He has a keen desire to enjoy life as freely as western individuals do. He is tired of rigid customs of native culture. There are too many restrictions in traditional cultures even in the case of making friends as it is obvious in the following lines spoken by Mir Nihal to his son Asghar, "... And where have you been so late in the night? I have told you I don't like your friendship with Bundoo. Do you hear? I shouldn't find you going there again."(p. 13)

The younger ones are not even allowed to make friends of their own choice. They have to remain under the complete order of their parents. Similarly when Asghar falls in love with Bilqeece, a girl belonging to lower caste, his father strictly warns him never think of marriage with a girl from lower caste as it was against their social dignity. He is very determined in case of social values and cultural system as described in the following words of Mir Nihal,

“Is he my own offspring? My children cannot do anything against my wishes. If he marries Mirza Shahbaz’s daughter I will disown him”. (p. 68)

According to Indian cultural system, children are so obedient to their parents that they never do anything against the will of their elders. But Asghar in his passion of new system crosses all the limits and dreams of enjoying life with his beloved just as westernized individuals do in their real life. He dreams of stars joining in the form of her beloved and dancing with him as it is described in the novel, “... and as they dance they come near, and as they come near he sees in the star the face of Bilqeece; and dancing they fall into each other’s arms... But the star vanishes and the sky melts, and he is one with his sweetheart, knowing a heavenly bliss which is not on this earth...”(p. 16).

These lines show that Asghar was a passionate lover of modern culture in real sense. He remains lost in the domain of that culture irrespective of day and night. Despite of his father’s great resistance, Asghar urges to marry Bilqeece. So when his father refuses to give him consent, he loses his heart and becomes so frustrated that tears appear in his eyes and he says with pain; ‘Death is much better than this life. I ....’(p. 80).

This thing is a source of mental agony for him. He is as much depressed and frustrated in life that wishes to die. There is not one single difference between Native and Western cultures. After a long resistance when Asghar succeeds in getting married with his beloved, he suffers from another dilemma. In extreme happiness, he tells his beloved wife how he had loved her and had burned to have her in his arms when they were not married, he asks her how much love she has for him but she only smiled and replied, “I was bewildered when I saw you, and did not know where to hide myself in shame”. (p. 180).

Asghar was expecting the same passionate response from Bilqeece. He wants her to love him, respond his love warmly, even to dance with him just as western girls and boys do as written in the novel, “He wanted her to kiss him and caress him; put her arms around his neck and whisper: ‘I love you, I love you.....’But she was simple Indian girl, and did not know the ways of love.....”(p. 179-80).

Bilqeece proves to be a purely Eastern girl who does not know the values of western system. It is unfortunate for Bilqeece that she is unable to do all this according to Asghar’s will. She adores her husband as her lord and master. She does everything to make Asghar happy but she doesn’t know how to make wonderful romantic talks which Asghar was demanding from her. He is deeply disappointed from the cold response of love from Bilqeece and again becomes dishearted in life. He loses his interest in Bilqeece and all other activities.

It is important to note that besides Asghar, Bilqeece also suffers from the tragedy of double identity. She feels very happy on becoming wife of a Westernized Indian boy but doesn’t know how to live as a westernized wife. She is so shy that she feels shame while speaking to her husband. Her bashful attitude is evident in the novel when she attempts to ask her husband the reason of his changed behavior towards her. “She mustered courage and spoke softly like a child apologizing after a reprimand: ‘I don’t know what I have done to displease you that you do not even speak to me now...’ (p. 204).

Her inability to understand modernized desires of Asghar sent her into hell. Asghar has turned to a completely changed person who shows no softness for his wife who was once his sweetheart. He becomes disgusted and annoyed towards Bilqeece. Such disgusted behavior of

Asghar is a great agony for Bilqeece. Her life becomes a burden for her as she expresses to Asghar, 'If you keep on loving me a little', she said in a tearful voice as Asghar kept silent, 'life would not be so miserable'. (p. 204)

As an Eastern wife, she faces a great number of disappointments, depressions, and even she dies in the dilemma of understanding. So double consciousness is such a big crisis for colonized people that it neither relishes Western followers nor leaves Eastern lovers. Everybody suffers in one way or the other.

## CONCLUSION

Issue of identity and double consciousness is very tragic in its real sense as experienced by Asghar as well as Bilqeece in *Twilight in Delhi*. It is creating dangerous effects on the psyche, culture and identity of colonized people. The blending of two entirely different cultures has given birth to serious identity crisis and fragmentation in the present time. This situation is very horrified and discouraging. It needs to make some changes and improvements in the present set up. There are three possible ways; (1) To completely accept the western culture. (2) To completely reject the western culture. (3) To make gradual progress towards new culture.

Among them, third one seems to be more effective. Hence, there should be made some appropriate amendments in the social system of colonized areas. People should also be interested in resolving themselves from such nostalgic condition and make necessary commitments, which is the applicable solution of this issue.

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