

**THROUGH THE OPTIC OF EDWARD SAID'S  
*ORIENTALISM*, UNMASKING IDENTITY;  
EXAMINING THE IDEAS OF "SELF" AND  
"OTHER" IN AHMED ALI'S *TWILIGHT*  
IN DELHI**

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**Abstract**

*My heart aches to see you fight for chairs;  
Only poor masses are crushed with open arms by bears.  
I saw many deaths in houses and houses in deaths,  
But thou made me unable to breathe.  
We are drowning up to the neck in our blood;  
No one is there to come, see and judge masses smeared with mud  
Never ever tell the truth to live a life,  
Dumb, deaf, and blind can live here. (Farman Ullah)*

Informed by the close reading of the novel *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) by Ahmed Ali during and under the impact of colonization from the perspectives of socio-political aspects of the extraordinary situation that has been faced by common people through ordinary words. The present study aims to examine the novel *Twilight in Delhi*, how the "Self" and the "Other" interact within the historical backdrop of British colonialism and the "massacre and destruction in Delhi in 1857" (Yahya: 2013) as it is portrayed in the book *Twilight in Delhi*. It contends that prejudice, an imbalance of power, and oppression characterize this relationship. The research looks at the negative effects of this uneven dynamic, such as violence, theft, and cultural fusion. The novel's author gives the colonized

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Indians a voice by denouncing British colonial power and urging resistance to it. The conclusion emphasizes the necessity to confront and end colonial dominance while highlighting the harmful impacts of the "Self" and "Other" connection.

**Keywords:** *"Self" and "Other", Orientalism, and Postcolonialism.*

### **Introduction**

the concept of the "Self" and the "Other" is an artificial distinction that allows the Self to assert dominance and suppress the Other. Edward Said's Orientalism emphasizes how the Other is often viewed as a problem to be solved or confined, rather than being recognized as individuals or citizens. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin also support this viewpoint.

Binary opposition, like light/dark, white/black, colonizer/colonized and the "Self"/"Other", takes a prominent place in Postcolonialism. "The "Self" whether it is conceived as male, white; or European, is constructed as a positive term. Conversely, the "Other"- be it female, black, non-European is constructed as its negative reflections." (Peter Child & Roger: 2006)

Colonizers view themselves as morally, culturally, and physically superior, labeling the colonized as evil, dull, and mysterious; As demonic or exotic "Other". For the former, the savage is evil as well as inferior, but for the latter, the savage is perceived as a primitive beauty or nobility born of closeness to nature. In either case, however, the savage remains "Other" and, therefore, not fully human. (Tyson: 2023)

Edward Said argues that this distinction is man-made, which the West has created for the East, wherein the Orient/"Other" is seen as standing in the opposite of the Occident/"Self", which owns every opposite quality. If the "Self" is civilized, "Other" is uncivilized, if the "Self" owns every quality of goodness, in contrast, the "Other" owns every quality of weakness and evil. This imaginary distinction by the "Self"/Occident gave them the authority to educate and civilize the "Other" and treat them like savages. He made this thing clear that this Occident/Orient is an imaginary line drawn between East and West. The main purpose is to come up with terms

with the Orient to marginalize and rule over it. Ashcroft makes it clearer in his statement that "Orientalism is a Western invention, knowledge which constructs the East as the "Other"; therefore, in Said's formulation, it is principally a way of defining and 'locating' Europe's "Other". (Ashcroft: 2004)

Postcolonial literature highlights the unequal relations of "Self" for the Colonizer and "Other" for the Colonized. This study explores colonization's cultural, historical, and economic aspects, highlighting the presumed superiority of colonizers over the colonized. It focuses on the author's personal experience of British rule and the deprivation faced by Indian Muslims. *Twilight in Delhi* portrays the decay of Indian culture and identity under British dominance.

This study is an attempt to analyze *Twilight in Delhi* from the postcolonial perspective, to examine the connection between the Colonizer and the Colonized and also the effects of this connected relationship, which is based on an imaginary distinction made by the Colonizer. It focuses on the Colonized Indians status who were (and are) not a free subject of thought and human being having their own values and traditions. It describes the colonial effects of the British rule over the Indian Sub-continent. It highlights the values and culture of India to show that they were not inferior to the British and could stand up for themselves. Now, the question arises of how/why did the Colonizer bring devastation to the economy, culture, and tradition of the Colonizer?

There is no "Self" without an "Other", a relationship made by the "Self" to degrade and subjugate the "Other". For centuries this relation has been going on an imaginary gradation by the superior race of the time. But this "Other" is not a savage and should be treated as a human being who deserves respect as that of the "Self" to bring peace, equality, and communal harmony in the world.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study provides awareness of colonial discrimination and inequality, provides awareness of the colonized subjects being free of thought and action, and serves as a reference for postcolonial studies.

### **Literature Review**

The relationship between the “Self” and the “Other” is a hot debate in postcolonial studies, with *Twilight in Delhi* being discussed from different perspectives. *Orientalism* (1978) is a postcolonial literary work to study the rude behavior of the “Self” and the “Other”. It is considered a masterpiece in postcolonial studies, and many literary works are taken to examine this unequal relationship of the “Self” and the “Other” in its perspective.

Besides, Said (1980), Two years after *Orientalism*, in an article titled "Islam through Western Eyes," he expands on his theories of the distorted portrayal of Islam in Western literature and media, highlighting the perception of Islam as a threat to Western civilization. He argues that Orientalists continue to perpetuate prejudice and questions the lack of unbiased study in the West due to political reasons

Priya Joshi (2002) in, *In An Other Country: Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India,*, contends, "Ali's formal and cultural influences in *Twilight in Delhi* tend to be from the Urdu and Persian poetry that flourished in Mughal India. The transaction he engages within *Twilight in Delhi* is an oddly paradoxical one, freely utilizing an imported language and form but vigorously eschewing “Other” cultural influences from them altogether." Such linguistic tools are ploys to create a gap between the two discourses, introduce the new value systems and thus identities, and to demystify the colonial thought patterns. In short, postcolonial writers use the dominant mode of expression to unlearn the colonial lessons, accommodate their own point of view, inculcate new ways of seeing, and, most significantly, foreground their sense of identity.

Dr. S.S. Biradar (2010), in *A Middle-Class Muslim Milieu in Ahmed Ali's Twilight in Delhi*, comments that comments that "Twilight in Delhi" vividly depicts Islamic rituals, social initiatives, and historical events, while the protagonist avoids celebration.

Akbar S. Ahmed (1997) supports this argument with evidence from the past in *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity, The Search for Saladin*; The Muslims of India surrendered their capital city of Delhi, their cultural identity, their language, and their monarchy all at once. The defeat was terrible on both an ideological and cultural level.

After 1857, a dismal situation developed as Muslims were singled out for persecution by the British. Not only did they fear for their political safety, but also for their very survival and sense of "Self", under these conditions. As a result, literature records the suffering that people experienced throughout this period. The authors' interest in 'place and displacement' and the identity issue associated with re-establishing a satisfying connection between "Self" and 'place' rings through in their writing. Some Pakistani authors have focused on the end of colonial control in the subcontinent and its aftermath, when sectarian violence, massacres, and human rights violations were commonplace.

Muneeza Shamsie (1997) is of the view in, *A Dragonfly in the Sun: An Anthology of Pakistani Writings in English* that, presenting a Muslim perspective on the colonial encounter, the author hoped to challenge established canons of imperial literature. Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* is a great example of a book used as a historical record that shows several points of view. The elaboration of Muslim civilization and the history of British colonization in India, and the narration of the Mughal Empire are the perspectives truly depicted by Ali.

Ashis Nandy (2002) wrote in *Time Wraps: Silent and Evasive Parts in Indian Politics and Religion* that Ahmed Ali, With the help of *Twilight in Delhi*, hopes to rebuild his beloved cultural heritage that was destroyed

during the colonial era. The author would experience healing from learning about this history, and we would learn more about the nature of our cultural interactions with “Other” groups as a result. For someone concerned in cultural and political psychology, the past is not only the objective history of a person or group; it is also a record of the memories, experiences, wounds, and coping mechanisms that have been imprinted on people's personalities through time. As he says:

*Twilight in Delhi* is analyzed from different perspectives by different writers. The novel in the English language is the outcome of the colonial rule of the British, which is discussed accordingly in its social, political, and nationalistic perspectives. The brutality of the War of Independence, 1857 (Indian Mutiny) is discussed in the light of this novel. The sudden political change in India after the War; when Bahadur Shah Zafar was dethroned; was unacceptable to the Indians, are brought by some critics. The formal and cultural influences are highlighted. The customs of the Indian Muslims are vividly described. But still, there is some space that is to be filled by the following research in the shape of the “Self” and “Other” relationships.

This research examines *Twilight in Delhi* from a postcolonial perspective, exploring the impact of the “Self” and “Other” dynamic. It highlights the destruction and exploitation inflicted by British colonizers on Indian Muslims, emphasizing the degradation of the “Other”. The study emphasizes Ahmad Ali's resistance to colonialism and the novel's powerful anti-colonial voice. The study is based on the unequal relationship between “Self” and “Other”; and how this relationship affects the “Other” psychologically, culturally, and economically. The exploitative attitude of the “Self” towards the “Other” and the writer's reaction to this attitude is discussed in the framework of Postcolonialism.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

When one becomes weak, the "Other" becomes powerful. History reveals that the one in power is repressing and subjugating the weaker ones; human beings in power consider themselves as superior and deserve to rule over the rest of human beings because they consider their culture, tradition, and civilization as superior to that of the "Other". Being labeled as civilized and educated, they want every "Other" human being to copy them and to accept them as their masters and to call themselves as the proper "Self" and the remaining as "Other". "The "Self" is the colonialist, and the "Other" is colonized. The "Other" is everything that lies outside of the "Self" (Loomba, 1998, p.144).

The process of Otherization reduces the "Other" to the level of a slave or savage. As the "Self" imposes its norms and educational system, it destroys their culture, language, art, and history, upsetting their sense of peace and harmony. "*Orientalism* must create its own "Other"; because of this "Other" it can strengthen its own identity and superiority, and because of this "Other", it can set off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground "Self" (Said, 1978, p.3).

Edward Said (1978) in *Orientalism* criticizes the colonial ideas of the West and makes it clear that this discrimination is made by the West in order to rule over the East. The East is represented in Western literature as exotic and a place of hunting memories, and this distinction lead the West to be the "Self" and the East to be the "Other". "*Orientalism* is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident" (Said, 1978, p.10).

*Twilight in Delhi* precisely illustrates the harm done to the culture and civilization of the Indian subcontinent by the colonial rule of the British. *Twilight in Delhi* mourns the condition of Delhi because it was the capital of India and represents the whole of India. It was the city where the kings

were set and the poets were enjoying the literary activities and everywhere, there was peace and love. But now due to the colonial rule of the British and their rude behavior, everything is changed, the whole social setup of Delhi is changed now and the citizens of the city is very much disturbed. The people thought they were still there but lost their pride and glory by living as slaves of the British Raj. Though Delhi has been through such a mournful situation and its color is pale but still keeps hope for standing up and brightening the picture.

The city of Delhi is not an ordinary one, but a city of great dynasties who built this city and Delhi reminds of the great kings, where they are gone, where is Shah Jehan and Jahangir. This city is sad because all the builders are nowhere but beneath the noble land of Delhi. Due to the colonial destruction of the British, everyone is mourning the decline of India, except for some monuments which are still alive to tell the sad history of its demolition. The beautiful city of Delhi is ruined by the rulers because it does not belong to them, as it is the refinement of their subjects, and from bright Delhi, they change it into some uncultivated desert. The dust is blowing in the whole city because the British Raj makes it filthy from a holy and peaceful city. The poet's tongue is unable to tell the melancholic songs of the city. "I'm a resident of the storm-tossed place." (p.3). The stars are dim to show the deserted face of Delhi and have no harmony in the air of the city, because, the culture, joy, and splendor is dashed out by some aggressive race of mankind.

But its poets are also gone, as is its culture. After the rope has been burned, all that is left are the rope's coils to serve as a reminder of earlier magnificence. However, its monuments, structures, boulevards, and byways are all in ruins. The city seems black and deathly under the worn-out stars.p.3)

In the War of Independence 1857, though Muslims fought for their country, they were as divided in pieces that could not be mingled once

again. The British tackled the situation and planned a great fight against the Indians. But Indians were not aware of the British hypocrisy and were defeated in the Mutiny. "Like a beaten dog it has curled its tail between its legs and lies lifeless in the night as an acknowledgment of defeat" (p.4). The city of Delhi was defeated by the British and silence was hovering around in the city as a sign of failure. Muslims were thrown out of the cities in their own homeland because the British considered these Muslims to be a threat to their rule and treated them like savages; even never belonged to India and considered them to be the property of the British. The monuments, the culture, and the economy were as destroyed as it was part of some non-human race.

Asghar is fond of English fashion and like to wear English dress but Mir Nihal does not like it. Mir Nihal knows the strategy of the British that they want to impose their culture, religion and teaching over the people of India. So every time he opposed Ashgar for doing such things and Mir Nihal's refusal of such things made Asghar feel very sad and bitter on the part of his father. Mir Nihal knows the result of such things because the young generation will not fight for their country but rather will become slaves; that's why he opposes Asghar in doing so because the consequences will not be good for the upcoming generation. He expects a violent and solid struggle against English rule by the young folk of India.

He often gets upset and yells at me. I cannot dress in pumps and English shirts, nor may I style my hair in the manner of the English. He wouldn't have even let me to study English if I had remained in Delhi. (p.49)

The English cruel rulers not even attacked the culture and history but the economy of the country was so much disturbed that in every street and market, one would come across many beggars asking for daily bread. In the time of Mughal kings, it was not the situation and now the economy of the state is totally occupied by British rulers and has no place for the common Indians. The novel portrays a picture of such beggars in order to show the

inequality of the British towards the Indians. Every beggar will ask for a penny singing a sad song with such grief and agony that one would feel pity and tears will come in their eyes. The English people looted the economy of India, princes and princesses were thrown out of their palaces and their property was occupied by the British. The beggars sing the poems in order to bring back the memories of old times of prosperity. One of the beggars sings the poem of Bahadur Shah and feels pity for India.

The poetry of Bahadur Shah, which he sings, evokes memories of earlier times when Hindustan wasn't bound by its current tragedies. His voice conveys not only Bahadur Shah's sorrow but also the cries of India's slaves:

I'm the light of no one's eye,  
The rest of no one's heart am I.  
That which can be of use to none  
-just a handful of dust am I (p.136).

In the year 1911, the Coronation of the new king was taking place in Delhi. The people from around the country were coming to see their new king but many people were very sad and feel not good because they knew that it was a sort of yoke bringing to their necks for becoming a slave and were opposed to it, but they could not do anything to stop it. There were also some who were happy because they were after their gained something from the British king. The old inhabitants were very angry with that Coronation because they themselves had seen once their own kings were going through the streets of Delhi. "many happy in the hope of gain, ""Other" raging within their hearts at the thought of subjection to a foreign race." (p.137). As the Coronation came near; guests were coming to Mir Nihal's house for the marriage of Asghar. The house of Mir Nihal and Delhi was as same decorated as like the exhibition ground. The Coronation was also a hot

topic among the guests of Mir Nihal and among the women of Delhi. The Coronation is nothing but to enslave the people of India by the British Raj. Many women were also against to this Darbar decoration for the white king. The women heard of the preparation for the Darbar and made sour faces and passed bitter remarks, "What would these beaten-with-the-groom Farangis do?" (p.139) Rupees and gold mohurs were thrown upon the Mughal monarchs by the handfuls whenever they left the palace. What will these foreigners who are as effective as dead give? Stones and sand! (p.139)

Due to the catastrophic consequences of the cruel and brutal colonization of the British rulers, every sphere of life even buildings and historical places, were destroyed and badly abused. The fore rulers of the country, the Mughal family, were in the extreme target and many princes and princesses were banished from their homes in which they ruled for hundreds of years. The new rulers had little sympathy with the people, culture and values of India. Those who opposed the British ruling were thrown into jails or sentenced to death. Many people who were in authority during the Mughal Empire were badly treated and punished harshly. The last Emperor of Mughal Dynasty was dethroned and his sons and daughters and granddaughters were searching for bread and roof. They were now treated as the slaves of the British and everywhere they were abused and teased by the English soldiers. Such a treatment of descendants of the great king shows how the English colonizers destroyed the whole of India in the 'Mutiny'. Mir Nihal, being opposed to British Colonization, burned with rage and anger for the British, but he couldn't do anything but feel bad for the English and feel sympathy with the family of Mughal king, Bahdur Shah, who were thrown out of palaces to stables and living below the line of poverty.

One of these princesses was Gul Bano, a granddaughter of Bahadur Shah. She was seven at the time of the 'Mutiny', and she escaped with her family

but all the members of her family died and suffered many hardships. She then came to Delhi and married a cook because no one was giving her any shelter and bread. One day before Coronation she happened to come to Mir Nihal's house. Mehro, the daughter of Mir Nihal, asked her about Coronation and the preparation for the Darbar for the new English king. "What are they alike? Are they better than what used to be in your time?" (p.143) Gul Bano on hearing that misunderstood Mehro's intention and remarked very sadly that how they were banished from their homes and how they killed many of the members of the Mughal family and how the Farangis looted everything belonged to them and demolished their Empire. "We are beggars and the Farangis are kings. For us, their only a bed of thrones, and they sleep on the beds of roses" (p.143).

*Twilight in Delhi* presents the time of the destruction of Delhi; and how the whole country is destroyed by the 'Angrazi Sarkar'. Life became deserted for the remaining members of the royal Mughal family: they were thinking of death; they were against their existence; the life they were living after the 'Mutiny' was worse than death; every descendant of the Mughal family, including Gul Bano felt life as a burden on their shoulders. The city of Delhi was deserted and demolished by the British. The old culture was ruined by the cruel foreign race. Gul Bano and every sympathetic person of Mughal were angry and mourning their own destruction but they were helpless and could do nothing. Gul Bano used to go through the streets of Delhi singing the poems of Bahadur Shah with tears:

Delhi was once a paradise,

And great the joys residing here.

But they have ravished this bride of peace

Remain now ruins and care.

The Indians have been ruined, alas (p.144).

On the day of the Coronation, Mir Nihal was very sad because this was the place where the Mughal kings used to go through these streets but the time had changed everything and his beloved Delhi was in the hands of people who came from beyond the seven seas. Mir Nihal was ashamed of being sitting in the crowd of Coronation and thinking about the past grace of Delhi, but he could not do anything. The English people came to India in the guise of the East India Company in 1602, and gradually, they enslaved the people of India; they fought sect against sect, religion against religion, and at last, as part of this process, they dethroned the Indian king and established their rule. The glorious time of India was going through the mind of Mir Nihal, who was feeling anger for the British Raj. As the procession passed and there were the English and local army, and "In the background were the guns booming, threatening the subdued people of Hindustan" (p.149). The English considered the entire crowd as a threat to this Coronation and therefore managed every possible effort to stop people from doing something. Mir Nihal setting there was thinking of the ruthlessness of the British "that India had been conquered with the force of arms, and at the point of guns will she be retained" (p.149).

The English came from some far-distant place, and Delhi, which was once built by great kings of the world, was ruined by these people who have no sympathy with its citizens. Mir Nihal knew of the Coronation, which was just a show-up to play with the feelings and emotions of their subjects. The writer comes here to the mind of Mir Nihal and thinking of the past, which was unforgettable, but the English have done their job and made Delhi a city of dust; Today it was this very Delhi that was being despoiled by a Western race who had no sympathy with India or her sons, thought Mir Nihal. Already they had put the iron chains of slavery around their once unbending necks, and "The Mussalmans had no guns and most of them lost their lives, the rest came away. " (p.150).

The cultural places of India have no value for the Farangis Sarkar, the Jama Masjid, which is the most respectable place for the Muslims and they can die for it, but this Jama Masjid is not even out of their evil intentions. Mir Nihal, when he sees the procession pass by it, the year 1857 comes into his mind when the Englishmen want to change this Jama Masjid into Church, and Mir Nihal's eyes fill with blood in tears. "The Jama Masjid, which the English had insisted on demolishing or turning into a church during 1857" (p.151). On 14<sup>th</sup> September 1857, when Mir Nihal was of ten and the Jama Masjid was full of Muslims for their prayers on Friday and English invaded the city wall and wanted to demolish this religious place; on resistance of Muslims, they killed hundreds of Muslims, and showed their colonial power over the helpless Indians. Mir Nihal remembers the bloodshed of how the natives were shot by the English to show their imperial power and hunt Indians like a hunter. Metcalf was the leader of this brutal hunting group. "As Metcalf saw the people with the swords in their hands, he opened fire. Hundreds fell down dead on the steps of the mosque and inside, coloring the stones a deeper red with their blood" (p.152). In 1857, Muslims were killed in hundreds and Mir Nihal was sad thinking about the past people who fought against the Farangis and the new generation which he called 'chicken-hearted' and happy in this disgrace of English colonization.

The people of Delhi were pushed to the sides and they had no power to change their situation and to save their homeland. "They were in the hands of the foreigners who did as they pleased, and they had no command over their own destiny." (p.206)

An "Other" characteristic of Delhi due the colonial subjugation was the hybrid culture of India, where the new generation was stuck in between and confused. This hybrid culture was spreading all over Hindustan and Mir Nihal seemed very much concerned with it but could do nothing. Mir Nihal failed to understand the hierarchy of the bad times in India and remained

silent with grief in his last days of life. The Farangis destroyed "Others" land, and he witnessed all brutality of the English people. "A hybrid culture which had nothing in it of the past was forcing itself upon Hindustan, a hodge-podge of Indian and Western ways which he failed to understand" (p.251).

*Twilight in Delhi* becomes the voice of Indians to tell the English people that the Indians are not to be taken easily because they have their own great culture and history. Mir Nihal, the central figure of the novel, becomes the voice of the writer and through him, he condemns the ruthless ruling of the British. He condemns the killing of innocent Muslims: the destruction of their culture, the abuse of their religion, the abuse of "Self"-respect of Indians and the looting of their property. "Most of their property was also lost, sold to the Baniyas at ridiculously low prices by English" (p. 275). Each and everything of India is destroyed by the English colonizers. Ali makes *Twilight in Delhi*, a strong voice against the unequal and brutal ruling of the "Self" (English) over the "Other" (Colonizer).

### **Conclusion**

In the tumultuous relationship between the "Self" and the "Other", discrimination reigns supreme, establishing an unsettling power dynamic. The colonizers, viewing themselves as superior, deem the colonized "Other" as exotic or even demonic, perpetuating a toxic hierarchy. Such is the devastating backdrop of "Twilight in Delhi," a novel that gives voice to the oppressed Indians, unveiling the dire consequences of this lopsided relationship. The aftermath of the 1857 War of Independence serves as a harrowing testament to the atrocities inflicted upon the Indians – a cycle of violence, plundering, and cultural assimilation initiated by their British colonizers. Amidst the anguish of post-1857 India, the author passionately denounces this unequal rapport, offering a clarion call for resistance against the blood-stained politics of colonialism. The British, driven by a sense of "Self"-proclaimed superiority, relentlessly subjected the Indians to abuse,

displacing kings, massacring communities, and desecrating religious and cultural landmarks. As the “Self” they mercilessly strip the “Other” – the Indians – of their homeland and possessions, perpetuating an unrelenting cycle of oppression.

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