

Book Review

Twilight in Delhi by Ahmad Ali

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INTRODUCTION

Ahmad Ali (1910-1994) was a central figure of the most productive era of Pakistani literature in English. He was one of the founders of modern Pakistani English Literature. He was basically a poet, novelist, critic, and a translator. Most of his works were based on a holistic description of our history and culture as a nation. He worked in Civil Services of Pakistan for sometime during partition. Ahmad Ali also worked as a visiting professor for some universities of Pakistan and USA. 'Ocean of Night' and 'Twilight in Delhi' were the most intensified fictitious efforts of Ahmad Ali, and with him a chapter of Pakistani English Literature was ended in 1994.

'Twilight in Delhi' is a magnificent novel, presents a story of the scattered life style of a feudal Muslim family of Delhi during coronation. It depicts a conflict between elders and youths, on the issue of cultural patterns and life styles after the emergence of colonial rule over Subcontinent.

SYNOPSIS

"Twilight in Delhi" is based on a plot of love between a feudal family's son Asghar and a comparatively lower family's daughter Bilquees. Mir Nihal as the head of a feudal Muslim family is struggling to protect the new generation from the disastrous effects of colonialism on their culture. On the other hand he himself is indulged in frivolous activities as a member of a feudal family. Asghar the youngest and the rebel son of Mir Nihal tries to go against the norms of his family, he gets married with his beloved and starts living in a foreign life style. His nature of flirting causes the death of his wife. His rebellious

nature, deplorable situation of his family and few other similar incidents break Mir Nihal's courage and he fell ill. Bitter economic situations, sense of British slavery and death of his elder son paralyze Mir Nihal and at the end he seems helplessly moping like an owl.

REVIEW

'Twilight in Delhi' to me, is a heart throbbing description of tried Muslim culture of the time. It basically has a plot which is based on a love story but in fact it is capable enough to communicate the cultural anarchy of the Muslims of Delhi. It is a painful lament on the loss of some precious values. The plot progresses with the marriage of Asghar and Bilquees but on the other hand contemporary issues are highlighted in a very effective way by Ahmad Ali. 'Twilight in Delhi', very meaningfully throws light on the pathetic conditions of the successors of king Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last of Mughal Dynasty.

There are many kinds of loses, are caused by British rule over India. There is an utter sense of loss in each and every sentence of this novel. The story is narrated in third person. Ahmad Ali portrays the situations in a way as he himself has remained a part of it. It is the height of his artistic perfection. The novel depicts a sense of loss; loss of identity, loss of power, loss of moral, ethical and religious values, loss of social values as well as a loss of economic set up. We can find the loss of identity and power, Mir Nihal feels, on the moment of coronation. The time when the pomp and show of British Raj kindles the old heart of Mir Nihal by recalling him his golden and past of majestic rule of Mughal Dynasty. He shed tears

for the remarkable past of Muslims of Delhi and Subcontinent.

Loss of cultural values is better described by Ahmad Ali in the marriage decisions and life style of the youngest son of Mir Nihal. He adopts westerns patterns of life by lending no ears to his father. Loss of economic set up is discussed in a chapter, where some traders or shop owners are presented, discussing the pressure of taxes and complaining inflation (increasing rates of grains). Both inflation and taxes in fact destroyed their full fledged businesses.

Loss of religious and moral values is highlighted in the behavior of grave diggers towards the people. They used to sell coffin sheets on high rates to people after observing the increasing rations of deaths. Secondly moral and ethical values are seemed dead when we find

Asghar's blunt attitude towards his elders.

The frequent repetition of humid and suppression scenes reflects the suppression in the lives of the people of Delhi.

On one hand it has a strong plot, a heart throbbing settings, and marvelous themes but on the other hand it too represents a series of colonial dilemmas. An effective picture of historical realities is tried to be conveyed by the book. The book contains multidimensional themes, like Postcolonial, Imperial, Hybridity, Losses and male chauvinism. This novel can be greatly criticized from the feminist perspective It's a naked picture of Male Chauvinism. The attitude of male characters towards female characters is quiet humiliating and disgusting.

In the whole, the novel is a great effort by a Pakistani writer to draw a vivid view of colonial aftermaths on the cultural history of Muslims of Delhi and of the whole Subcontinent. It can also be termed as a mighty contribution in the bulk of Postcolonial literature produced by the prominent literary figures of Pakistan.