



## Fanon's Socio-Diagnostic and Neurosis of the Colonized: The Colonial Trauma in 'Twilight in Delhi'

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### Abstract

*The present study is focused on the marginal position of the Muslims in the Indian Subcontinent and its effects on the structuring of their psyche in Ali's novel Twilight in Delhi. Its main concern is the analysis of neurotic behaviors of the main characters of Twilight in Delhi in the light of Fanon's re-interpretation of Freud's theory of psychoanalysis. The central argument of this study is that psychological problems of Muslims in a colonial situation, as shown in the novel under discussion, are not natural, but are consequences of conditions that are linked to their social and economic circumstances. Their psychological behavior shows the effects of their socio-economic environment created by the colonizer. It is not inherently structured without being influenced by the conditions of the outer world that originates from the colonial suppression and occupation. The research is informed by Fanon's re-interpretation of the theory of psychoanalysis in which he proposes that the psychological disorders in the outcasts or marginal in a colonial situation are effects of the social order which they find to live in. This research tends to analyze how Twilight in Delhi takes up the issue of Muslim's marginality that results in psychological disorders. Moreover, it focuses on the circumstances or conditions, foregrounded in the novel, that lead to the psychological problems of Muslims in Twilight in Delhi.*

**Key Words:** Twilight in Delhi, Muslims, Subcontinent, Indian, Freud's theory of Psychoanalysis

### Introduction

Colonialism has its pervasive effects not only on the culture, politics and social structure of the colonized territories but also on the psychology of the colonized people. They undergo a lot of psychological problems because of their living under changed social environment due to colonial enterprise. The social nature of

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psychological problems of the colonized is the position that is vibrantly proposed by Frantz Fanon. He critically observes the phenomenon of colonialism and traces its psychological underpinnings among the colonized of Africa. Among these observations, he finds an approach to study their psychological issues that remain unnoticed by using conventional theories of psychology. This approach has a profound effect on postcolonial literary theory, and this research work uses it as a theoretical framework to analyze the psychological problems of the characters in the novel "Twilight in Delhi".

## Background to the Study

The literary arena of colonial literature provides a broader picture of the colonial anxieties, psychological and social problems which are foregrounded by writers and critics in their works. It is evident from the renowned literary pieces that the race-conscious colonial society placed the individual as nothing more than an object in the strata of life (Williams & Chrisman, 2015). As this subject matter has impacts on various other domains, it has remained a part of discussion among numerous psychiatrists and social theorists. Franz Fanon always appears as an eminent name in the discussion on racial encounters and mental disorders especially black man's racial inferiority and colonial psychiatry. Fanon's psychoanalysis, on peculiar perspective deals with the instincts and unconscious drives of the black individuals along with social conditions which trigger that psyche (Bergner, 1999). Fanon talks through the "arsenal of complexes" that are brought out by colonial environment in his work *Black Skin, White Masks*. (Fanon, 2008). He witnessed multiple cases during his psychiatric practice in Algeria among which many case histories made the fundamental basis of his works. His psychoanalytical interpretations make it clear that Colonialism, for Fanon, is inherently 'psychopathological' (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993). Despite having acknowledgment for the western psychiatric and psychoanalytical critiques, Fanon insists that those critiques are not applicable to African Individuals or culture. He placed the neurosis and psychiatric disorders in 'social and material context' (Fanon, 2008). Fanon's stance on racial psychoanalysis can be understood clearly by his claim that 'every neurosis, every abnormal manifestation' in the Antillean is rooted in his (racialized) cultural situation. (Fanon, 2008). Due to the theories of black identity, which was formulated by him, Fanon secured his utmost position along with Sigmund Freud, C.G Jung, Adler, O. Mannoni and Jacques Lacan in Psychoanalytical domain. Major segment of his arguments demonstrates that the "identity is relational, where the Self can understand its identity only in relation to the Other, or another". This relational identity, thus proposes that the "black man only sees himself as the negative of the White man". The colonial context also sets the ground which regards "White as the norm, and black the deviation from the norm". Due to the lack of self-awareness and self-recognition, the black man

escapes from his originality and tries to cover himself in a white mask in order to get white man's recognition. Fanon stressed on the factual idea that selfhood denial leads the black men to the point where he considers himself as an object "in the midst of other objects" (Fanon, 2008).

In his essay, "The Negro and Hegel", Fanon argues that the black man only acknowledges his self if he gets 'validating gaze of the other'. The absence or denial of this gaze thus lead toward conflicts in colonial situations. In the context of white and black racial binaries, the black man does not get validation as he projects a problematic identity in front of white man as Fanon writes 'Whoever says rape says Negro' (Fanon, 2004). The white's unconscious collective fantasy about black man thus symbolizes him as sex symbol and reduces his self to sexuality (Fanon, 2004). These problematic sexualities repeatedly appear in colonial writings on Africa and Asia. In *A Passage to India*(1924) by E.M Forster, regarding the 'rape' of Adela Quested, the writer presents colonial anxiety as the act of white women's rape by the hyper sexual black/brown man serves as allusion of the humiliation of British Empire itself (Forster, 1978). The same case is also a subject matter of "*The Raj Quartet*" by Paul Scott where an English woman raped by Indian men became the cause of conflict between British police and Indians (Weinbaum, 1978). A similar idea is also presented by Doris Lessing's in the "*The Grass is Singing* (1950)" where the sexuality remains in relation with national dignity and racial identities (Lessing, 1973). Fanon stands on the same ground as these writers who illustrated the sexualized nature of racial identities particularly in the colonial context. His psychological critique often appears as a double layered colonial psychology which demonstrate that the power to recognize only belongs to white masters and slave struggles to get acknowledgement from the white masters.

In the context of European and Black race, the non-reciprocating gaze reduces the self of black men to the point of 'object' where even his labor does not grant him recognition and he wants to 'Turn White or Dissappear'(Fanon, 2008). This denial leads the black man towards mimicry of the white man which results in confused identities as the black man claims to be 'brown instead of black', 'Martinican rather than African'. By way of explanation, it can be said that the black man stamps out himself by abandoning his identity, language and values in process of imitating 'white masters'. An Indian novelist Attia Hosain in her novel "*Sunlight on a Broken Column*" gave description of Indian woman named Mrs. Perin as a woman who is "proud of Western culture". The colonial desire to imitate colonizers is also dealt by a Nigerian poet named Wole Soyinka in "*Death and the King's Horseman*" where Yoruba women mock another Yoruba girl who joins police forces in order to get English supremacy by 'learning and imitating white man's behavior'(Soyinka, 2002).

A similar sentiment is also witnessed in the work of a Caribbean author Jamaica Kincaid who expresses her hatred for the imitation of master's language.

Many colonial literary readings came up with the issue of freedom and recognition as Fanon writes, “The white masters might grant the slave freedom, but this does not entail recognition” (Fanon, 2008). He stresses the idea by quoting Hegel which states “recognition as an independent self-consciousness” (Fanon, 2008). The point which he proposes is the securing of self-consciousness which will further strengthen the idea of colonial resistance. Explaining Neurosis, Fanon further suggests that it is a schizophrenic condition of torn between white and black culture and considering their own culture inferior. This idea resembles much with W. E. B. Dubois’ account on the black man “double consciousness” where his self is always defined by the eyes of Other (DuBois, 2015).

Fanon’s psychoanalysis of race also presents a social schema of black neurosis which stresses on the theme of loss, cultural rejection, shame, self-contempt, white men superiority and black’s inferiority that are rooted in social structure. In his opening essay of *Black Skin*, Fanon refers the western construction of black race as a “myth”, which is internalized so hard that the black man himself believe in it. According to him, this construction of social image restrained the black man to behave and act like a black man as ‘he is expected to be the white man but is afraid of behaving like a nagger’ (Stephens, 2017). The crisis of such social realities slide the black man into an eternal neurosis and cause ‘shame’ and ‘self-contempt’. On personal level he suffers from ‘situation neurosis’ where his whole race and culture become a matter of burden and failure and shame. Apart from cultural alienation, Fanon also studies casual factors which contribute to neurosis in colonial context. The disoriented nature of family arises the conflict on broader level when the individual notions come in clash with the general social order of white society. The individual neurosis thus exists on dual level; within the family structure as well as the society. While explaining the psychopathology, Fanon argues that every colonial society must develop some kind of mechanism to unleash rage and aggression arisen from neurosis. He termed these sentiments as “collective catharsis”. By citing multiple factual cases in his works, Fanon proved that the inferiority complex of black race is undoubtedly social and historical. The debate often emerges on the literary streams that the Fanon’s reading of the colonial anxieties is an indirect response to Octave Mannoni’s work on the “colonial psychology”.

In “*Psychology of Colonization*” (1950), Mannoni argues that the inferiority complex of black race is juts intensified by the colonial situation. The archetypal images which he provides suggests that the lack of paternalistic European master turn the black man into rebel. Mannoni gives examples of rebellion and massacres in colonial reigns which were the result of suppressed rage against colonizers (Mannoni, 1990). Fanon deviates his stance from Mannoni’s by offering socio-economic analysis of colonial psychology. For him, “South Africa is a broiler into which thirteen million blacks are clubbed and penned in by two and a half million whites” (Fanon, 2007). Fanon also rejects the Mannoni’s proposition that the

inferiority complex is a natural sentiment instead it originates from the material states and social structure. In order to eliminate the neurosis, Fanon also suggests the “situational diagnosis” which will give the colonial medicine. In “*The Wretched of the Earth*”, colonial war and mental disorders are dealt keenly by him. For him, “Colonization in its very essence, already appeared to be a great purveyor of psychiatric hospitals” (Fanon, 2007). While discussing neurosis effect, he explained the criminal mentality of Algerian which in real is the colonial rage. Because of his inability to attack the white enemy, the black man turned against his own race. These sociogenic factors thus denied the biological and genetic orientation of psychological disorders and place the neurosis in psychiatric and social paradigm.

The study aims at discovering the impact of colonial rule in India on the psyche of the colonized Muslims in the backdrop of Fanon's ‘Socio-Diagnostic’ and the neurosis of the colonized. The question is that how the social and political condition created by colonialism creates a psychological disorder in colonized people and how the characters in the fictional narrative *Twilight in Delhi* reflect the psychological reaction to the social and political condition of the colonial world.

## **Colonial Trauma and Twilight in Delhi**

As described in the background study, Fanon suggests that exploitation of colonized land and people by the colonizer is done by creating some social conditions. In these conditions, the colonized is deprived of an equal position to the colonizer. The colonized is treated as an inferior race and he/she loses his/her individuality under the prevailing social and economic circumstances. These conditions, in fact, cause psychological problems in the colonized in the form of violence and aggression. In his re-interpretation of the theory of psychoanalysis, Fanon links the development of individual's psyche to the prevalent socio-political conditions. He suggests that the psyche of the colonized as an individual is formed within the circumstances that are raised by the colonizer. In this way, the psychological problems of the colonized are thought to result from living constantly in a given situation that objectifies the colonized as inferior, brutal, uncivilized, uncultured and without any value. It is the situation of colonialism, instead of the unconscious of the colonized, which is responsible for their psychological disorders in a colonial world.

The atmosphere of violence, restlessness and struggle against the ruling British is evident in “*Twilight in Delhi*” as the action in the novel takes place in the background of freedom struggle operated by all the factions of Indian people to get rid of the British rule. There is a mentioning of various events that brought havoc to the Muslims under the British occupation. The citation of the fall of Delhi, atrocities committed on the Muslims in the aftermaths of the War of Freedom of

1857 and the role of Jamia Masjid as a witness to all these mayhems are present in the context of the novel. There are various other incidents of violence, like the burning of petrol depots and the burning of royal canopy moments before the holding of Delhi-Darbar, that mark the unrest and upheavals occurring under the colonial rule of the British. The account of the movement of non-cooperation shows the political response of the colonized people of India to the unjustified British rule. This is the atmosphere of turmoil, upheaval and unrest in which the people of India, especially Muslims, are compelled to live and suffer. This situation not only affects their living conditions but also their psyche and compels them to agitate sometimes in the form of physical violence and sometimes in adopting political activities.

The novel “Twilight in Delhi” also shows that how the arrival of the British colonizers brings about an utter change in the conditions of the life in the subcontinent. It transforms the culture of the subcontinent, and the introduction of ‘New ways and ideas’ result in a cultural hybridity that is visible in the dressing and the manners of some of the characters. As Mir Nihal’s son Asghar is described to have “The upper buttons of his sherwani ... open and show the collar of the English shirt that he is wearing under it.” The wearing of sherwani and an English shirt underneath tells the impact of British culture on the local conventions. Along with this, Asghar likes to have English shoes and tends to arrange his house in the Western style.

However, this situation is unacceptable for the person like Mir Nihal whose ideals are, “those men of 1857” who put forth resistance against the British colonial rule and sacrificed their lives for a prestigious cause. He hated “the men of 1911” who were “chicken hearted and happy in their disgrace”. His anguish, on seeing his countrymen obeying the usurpers, does not emerge from within but from looking at the dismantling of the social order that provides meaning to his life. There is no fact described in the novel that can lead the interpretation of Mir Nihal’s anger to some unfulfilled desire or suppressed memories. It has its origin in the atmosphere of injustice, subjugation and racial inequality created by the arrival of the imperial power in the colonized land. It is the discriminatory treatment of the British with the Muslims that haunts Mir Nihal and he is compelled to feel anger on the pusillanimous attitude of the Muslims. His anguish is social in nature that has its roots in a collective trauma of the loss of glorious past and slavery of the present. This is the fact Fanon highlights in his re-interpretation of Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis. He suggests that anguish of the colonizer is not of an individual but of a collective consciousness of a whole race or community. The novel “Twilight in Delhi” reiterates this reality by presenting the psychological condition of its characters that have been bounded by the colonial tactics to languish in a state of racial discrimination, exploitation and subjugation. These living conditions are the cause of their anger and perturbation which are well represented in the novel.

It is a historical fact that the British captured the power from the Mughals whom the Muslims of India considered their true rulers. Even, the weakest of the Mughal emperors, Bahadur Shah Zafar, was never disrespected. They felt patronized by these emperors and accepted their authority under all kinds of circumstances. The British rule changed everything for everyone in the Indian subcontinent, particularly for the Muslims of India who became slaves after a thousand years of rule. This situation is presented in the novel as "New ways and ideas had come into being." These 'New ways' created a cultural hybridity that had its impact on the masses in the form of their liking for English dresses and manners.

The title of the novel "Twilight in Delhi" is very important in the backdrop of its theme of British colonialism in India and its effects on the psyche of the colonized. Twilight is the time before the prevailing of complete darkness of night. As the dawn signifies the end of a night and arrival of a new morning, the twilight refers to the beginning of a night that is about to spread its darkness around. Mentioning of twilight in the title suggests deteriorating economic and political condition of Muslims in India in the era of colonization. It signifies, under colonial rule, the beginning of a long night of the deterioration of Muslim civilization that saw its period of glory during the reign of Mughal emperors. It all happens as a result of colonial encounter that caused the suppression of Muslims by the colonial power and authority of the British colonizers. The colonizing power, during this encounter, maligned the symbols of Muslim prestige and honor to give their world view authenticity and privilege. This process undermined the Muslim culture that caused Muslims in India to be caught between a milieu of confusion, degeneration of their social condition and convulsive behaviors signifying their psychic disorders.

The novel not only discusses the change brought about by the British rule but also the disaster caused by the British colonialism.

This proposition is aptly presented by Ali in the title of his novel. 'Twilight' is not just a passage of time but represents a complete picture of Muslims in India under the British colonial rule.

Deteriorating state of social conditions of Muslims is found everywhere in the novel. Due to their marginalized position and loss of political authority, they have nothing to do meaningful in life. They, like the protagonist of the novel Mir Nihal, pass much of their time in doing petty things as keeping pigeons or going to the concubines. Moreover, the whole atmosphere in the setting of the novel presents a gloomy picture of the British colonial rule. Stink attacks the citizens from the gutters and sand comes over them due to the demolished walls of the city. The Jama Masjid also projects a dejected cite under the cover of cheap garlands to mark the Coronation Day of King George V. Seared and yellow tree of date-palm shedding its leaves in Mir Nihal's courtyard enhances the effect of destruction caused by the British occupation. All these images underpin the fact that how

colonial rule creates an atmosphere of unequal power relationships and suffocation having contained every passage of the means of living by the colonial power. The images of stinking gutters, broken walls, weather-stricken tree and cheap decoration of Jama Masjid speak themselves of the ways colonial power treats the colonized. It clearly suggests that colonial powers use the colonized territories for plundering their resources without any concern of the people of the land.

Considering the whole scenario of the colonial rule in Indian subcontinent and treatment of the colonizers to the colonized Muslims in the novel is very important. The most of the action in the novel takes place in Delhi that had been a center of Muslim civilization and culture in the time of their splendor and fervor. It keeps great monuments of artifacts of Muslim art and architecture that still give the Muslims of India remembrance of their glorious past. Among these objects of splendid craftsmanship is the Jama Masjid Delhi that marks not only the grandeur of Islam as religion but also its power and political significance in history. Its importance grows manifold in the novel when Mir Nihal sits on the steps of the Jama Masjid in his distressed mood after seeing the congregation celebrating the anniversary of the coronation of King James. The juxtaposition of coronation and Jama Masjid symbolize two civilizations. The one is the currency of the day and the other has receded after seeing its prime and glory. The distressed Mir Nihal signifies the whole Muslim community that passes through the same moments of convulsion on seeing their ruling masters and simultaneously remembering their heydays. They cannot bear up the burden of their slavery under the British rule.

Mir Nihal's psychological condition and his return to Jama Masjid have an important interpretation in Fanon's description of psychoanalysis. His perturbation on the sight of congregation of Coronation clearly represents the general reaction of Muslims to colonialism. They never accept the situation of their living and cast their emotions in different ways. The condition of abject deterioration of their economic and political state keeps them awry. Mir Nihal's return to mosque in this situation contains much significance in the novel. His coming to mosque is akin to the violence of the colonized on finding no space to demonstrate individuality. Sometimes, this violence can take the shape of physical fighting between the colonizer and the colonized, but it can be as mild as finding one's own center of the world view. Mir Nihal, being unable to carry out a violent attack on the British chooses the second option and sits on the steps of the Jama Masjid; a place of centrality for Muslims to conduct their religious code. It is a symbol of their relationship to a higher authority that is the sole regulator of the universe. Moreover, sitting on the steps of the Jama Masjid has a soothing effect on Mir Nihal that signifies the strength of Muslim's world view. It provides them a center that colonial power tends to replace but cannot.

The psychological trauma of colonialism becomes obvious at the end of the novel where Mir Nihal is lying paralyzed on his bed. He symbolizes the Muslim



civilization in the cultural center of Delhi. Fanon's approach of psychoanalysis is therefore very much applicable on the fictional narrative of Twilight in Delhi

## **Conclusion**

The application of Fanon's approach of psychoanalysis on the text of the novel Twilight in Delhi shows that colonial trauma seriously effects the psychological condition of the people living in colonial situation. The people living in colonized world are seriously affected by the colonial rule. Their psychic condition is reflected in their social behavior. The psychological disturbance is reflected in the emotional and social behavior of the characters in Twilight in Delhi. The imitation of western ways of life in dressing and behavior shows a split personality. The psychic disorder shows that the colonized Muslims in India underwent psychic and social paralysis. The legacy of this trauma still persists in the political and social behaviors of Muslims in India and Pakistan. A socio-diagnostic analysis may guide a way out of this Trauma.

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