



Naturalistic Elements in Ahmed Ali's Novel "Twilight in Delhi"

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Abstract *The paper aims at analyzing the novel Twilight in Delhi written by Ahmad Ali in the light of naturalistic elements. Naturalism as literary theory originated in the late 19th century focuses that human actions are controlled and determined by hereditary, fate, environment and other social obligation, thus represents a very grim picture of life. Besides these features, the study has also explored many other features of naturalism in this literary work by the researcher in the current study through qualitative analysis. The researcher has selected the text which clearly represent such features. The study resulted that the text and themes of the said novel represents many key features of naturalism.*

Key Words: Naturalism, Naturalistic elements, Twilight in Delhi

Introduction

The purpose of the study is to highlight the naturalistic elements in the novel *Twilight in Delhi*. The researcher has pointed out certain key features in the novel through qualitative analysis focusing on the language used by the writer, themes in the novel and the settings of the novel. Naturalism is the extension of realism which focuses on human actions in control of external factors. It is a philosophy that is greatly affected by Darwin theory of evolution and explains natural laws that determine human actions. Humans in such writings are represented as human beasts without free will. *Twilight in Delhi* is one of the famous novels written by Ahmed Ali. The story of the novel has been represented in four parts. The novels depict the story of Nihal's family while side by side Ahmad Ali also depicts the condition of Dehli city of India. The novels show that Nihal's family is living a standard life but with the passage of time the family's standards go towards the downfall due to the effects of independence war in India. The young ones in the family are unable to retain the social status of the family. Exactly the same happens to Dehli city and Mogul empire. Just like the young ones of Nihal's family, the last king of Mogul empire, Bahadar Shah is also unable to retain the status quo of the empire. This catastrophic condition depicted in the novel makes the novel a rich text in terms of Naturalistic elements and that is why this novel has been focused on the current study.

Objectives of the study

To find out the elements of naturalistic in the novel *Twilight in Delhi*

To highlight the influence of fate and nature on the characters on the novel

Literature Review

The word naturalism has been derived from the word nature and it suggests that human beings should be presented in art and literature the way they are in their daily lives (High, 1986). Naturalism is used synonymously with realism and was started in France around 1870 with the first novels of Emile Zola (Cunliffe,

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1986). Naturalism is an offshoot of realism is standing in opposition to the restriction inherent in the realistic touch of the general, as naturalists forced that extraordinary is true too.

Naturalism was deeply affected by the social and psychological trends of that society (Lehan, 2005). There were two steering agents which shaped the propositions of naturalism. These were Darwinism and French literary Naturalism.

The Influence of Darwinism

Darwin's biological theories widely affected Comte's principles of scientific thoughts to study society, and Taint's propositions of deterministic theories, they were mostly concentrated on giving a picture of the social background. (Cuddon, 1977).

In the last few decades, America has seen some dramatic changes. People are trying to explore novel ways of dwelling and their mental disposition. They have come in opposition to traditional dogmas and regulations (Ahnebrik, 1961).

Charles Darwin (1809-1882) had a deep reflection on American literary traditions in the late nineteenth century. He formulated a theory of evolution in his publications which are "*On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection*" (1859) in which he focuses on the point that life is evolved by some natural forces where a fit will survive who can oppose these forces. It was a "biological blow to human narcissism"; persuading the man to identify its place within the community of common offspring" (Lamb & Thompson, 2005:377).

Darwin strongly supported the idea that there is nothing innate in human life rather some biological forces are there which molds human lives. In this age, American Naturalist came on the screen who were deeply convinced by the French Naturalism in which the leading figure was Emile Zola.

The Influence of French Literary Naturalism

American literary naturalism was deeply influenced by the French naturalism, which was leading by Zola. Zola was a novelist who transformed many realists into naturalist (High, 1986). He was inspired by the biological assumptions of Darwin and wanted to change it into literary form. He is known as the pioneering figure of French literary Naturalism; he depicted the real picture of the contemporary society in his novels gave (Ahnebrink, 1961). The center of gravity for Zola was genetics and ecological factors which molds human character. He was of the opinion that human lives are represented by the environment and genetic factors and he was truly claiming to be a naturalist. The fundamental feature of his novels was Naturalism.

The Characteristics of American Literary Naturalism

In 1890, science was on the climax due to which many of the realists transformed into naturalist and they supported the objective depiction of science (High, 1986). American literary Naturalism developed out of literary Realism always go parallel and overlap each other.

Naturalism got its roots in the nineteenth century after it was initiated in France in 1870, with the publication of the first novels of Emile Zola. Romanticism and Transcendentalism were not potentially able to describe the life and its happenings in its true form and are giving a fake picture of life. Romantic novels take man away from the events of real-life (High, 1986:86).

Ferrell notes that when the environment is controlled by the characters in a text, it becomes a romantic piece of art but when the characters are controlled by the environment, it is naturalism. On the other hand "*Realism appears in the middle; allowing some control over and some effect by the ecological factors*" (Ferrell, 2000:48). The Works of Naturalism explored the dark aspects of life so the naturalists were harshly blamed to be pessimistic as they were focused on man's fret and fever. Their novels show that nature is indifferent to human actions. We will always see a conflict between man and nature in these novels. Similarly, Naturalism was also affected by Marxism and evolutionary theory.

The style of naturalists is defined in terms of grim and depression and the characters portrayed by naturalists are generally support less, poor and dependent. They do not have their free choice and are presenting the pessimistic view of realism.

Themes and Styles of Naturalists

Naturalist writers mostly share the same pattern and themes. Hamlin Garland (1860- 1940) was one of the naturalist writers from America and almost all his writings were in the form of social protest. His work “*main traveled*” (1891) is one perfect example. He has artistically depicted the pathetic condition of the time where the farmers’ lives were miserable due to the situation of the state. The people were living a miserable life under the pressure of economic and social frames of the time. The description in one of his works truly depicts the naturalistic atmosphere when he states “unpaved streets, drab-colored, miserable rotting wooden buildings” (high, 1986:90). He has combined emotions with colors and sights in a very artistic manner in his works. The same miserable population in a grim condition has also been represented by another writer California, Norris (Lamb & Thompson, 2005).

“*Maggie: a girl of the streets*” is another naturalistic literary work by Stephen Crane. The story revolves around a female prostitute who lives a miserable and tragic life (Lamb & Thompson, 2005). His other major naturalistic work *The Red Badge of Courage* depicts the tragic picture of the post-war life of an individual (Rozaklis, 1999 & high, 1986).

The literature review presented here shows the following features of naturalistic writings.

Their writings are mostly pessimistic in tone and the life they portray is mostly pre-determined by the external forces. The stories of these works present life in a very sad and gloomy form. The characters in these writings are mostly controlled by hereditary, fate and surroundings. The themes are tragic in such writings. Every character and especially the main character in such works meets a tragic end. Mostly hopeless people are shown struggling uselessly against the social conditions they live in. Along with long descriptions, the writings present the nature as indifferent towards the sufferers.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study in which the researcher has analyzed the text of the novel *Twilight in Delhi* through the lens of naturalism. The researcher has thoroughly studied the primary source (the novel) as well as the other secondary sources such as research papers and books in order to bring out the naturalistic elements in the novels. The researcher has provided textual references from the text in the analysis presented below.

Analysis of the Novel

The researcher has focused on pessimism, fate and determinism, hopelessness, struggle, nature, and description. One of the basic features of the naturalistic novel is that the characters are from middle class who suffer due to certain external forces and conditions and thus one can see the middle-class characters in the novel suffer from the external forces. Every character goes through tragic incidents in the novel and it seems that they are helpless in changing their life. They seem enchained in a kind of external force that does not allow them to live freely and happily.

Pessimism in the Novel

The pessimistic tone is very much dominant in this novel and this is a significant feature of naturalism (Lamb & Thompson, 2005). Zola (1882) is of the view that naturalistic writings are most of the time very grim and pessimistic. As this writing represents the humans are in the control of fate and nature and thus this predetermined approach makes the writings more pessimistic. The following lines clearly exhibit his very feature of naturalism.

“You know, sister,” Asghar said to Begum Waheed, “there are some people who are lucky; but there are many unfortunate creatures in this world who have never known any joy or happiness. There is only one sorrow wrote in their kismet”. (Ali, 2000)

Asghar in these lines clearly says to Begum Waheed that all the people cannot enjoy this world, only some fortunate people can enjoy this world. The structures like “unfortunate creatures and kismet” clearly represent that the outer world and surroundings have controlled the characters in the novel and they are helpless and

Miserable. The remarks of Asghar regarding "kismet" show that his fate is determined and he does not see any positive change in the near future. He is extremely pessimistic in this regard and thus his dialogues make the situation much gloomy for the other characters as well as for the readers. His view about the many creatures in the world also shows that according to him many others also live a tragic and sad life due to their ill fate. Free will is something that is invisible in the thought pattern of Asghar. This very feature of invisibility of free will and determined fate make the novel naturalistic work. Another interesting fact is that there is no joy in the world for many people according to Asghar.

At another place when the character Asghar says;

"Ever since I have set foot in the world," Asghar continued, 'I have known neither love nor happiness'. (Ali, 2000)

The last line of the dialogue again is a sad and pessimistic representation of the life where Asghar loses all his hope and now is unaware of the meanings of love and happiness. He is so upset and sad that he does not see any hope. Throughout his life, he has seen only problems and sorrows. We can also see this pessimistic tone towards love when Mushtari Bai says;

"Never fall in love. It's better to commit suicide than fall in love..." (Ali, 2000)

Just like Asghar, this character in the novel has lost belief in love. Such a representation of characters and their views makes this novel a tragic as well as naturalistic.

Fate and Determinism

Such writers portray their characters as the puppets controlled by fate and they are in total control of their pre-determined written fate and thus these writers present their character's real existence. (Cunniff, 1986). The deterministic view of the characters about their lives is very much visible in Ali's novel Twilight in Delhi. For example at one place Asghar says;

*"There are sorrows and miseries which grip you in their claws
And there seems no escape from them"* (Ali, 2000)

These lines from the novel again highlight the grim picture of life. The characters in the novel seem to be prisoners in their surroundings. They are unable to escape their issues and they seem to believe that all these miseries have been written in their destinies which cannot be altered.

Asghar is clearly a victim of fate when he tried hard to marry Zuhra, sister of his first wife Bilqees but he is totally failed. The moment he comes back to his house after his brother's funeral he is informed by a maid that Balqees has been married to someone else ;

*"He looked at Chanbeli stopped the marriage
Or informed him at least..... said: Who can meddle in the
affairs of God?...Asghar forgot his food and, holding his head"* (Ali, 2000)

Another reference to the same controlled life by fate can be seen in the novel, when Asghar explains his love for Balqis to his sister. The direct narration of this type of control makes the novel very much naturalistic.

*"That is the difficulty," Asghar persisted in avoiding the issue. 'Fate
Seems to be against me'"* (Ali, 2000).

All these instances from the text clearly exhibit that the dominant naturalistic feature of pre-determinism is very much visible in the novel. The characters seem to have no free will and they are at the mercy of their fate. Whatever their fate decides for them, they go through it.

Hopelessness in the Characters of the Novel

The novels of naturalistic writers in many ways present the theme of hopelessness. This feature of naturalism is visible in the novel from start till the end. This feature disturbs the life of everyone in the novel and thus all the characters look cynical and morbid. It can be seen that everyone in the family of Nihal is hopeless and can't help the situation. Apart from the characters of Asghar, the other character Bari who also suffers in the novel thus becomes hopeless.

*"How are things progressing?" asked bari.
Can there be any hope for the unfortunate like me?"* (Ali, 2000)

The researcher also finds hopelessness in the description of surrounding of author, when he describes the atmosphere; hopelessness is dominant in his tone. The following description of the surrounding shows a direct reference of this sand condition human's life.

"It was about twelve o'clock of the day and a dusty wind was blowing. There was a heart-rending hopelessness in the atmosphere" (Ali, 2000).

Bilqees is also hopeless. She does not see any change in her miserable life and therefore she does not want to live. The only reason that kept her alive was her daughter. She is worried about her daughter Jehan Ara. Her worry about her daughter can be seen in the dialogues of Balqees below.

"Promise me one thing mother. You will take care of Jehan Ara when I am dead" (Ali, 2000)

Human Unsuccessful Struggle

Mir Nihal, Asghar, Habibudin they all are struggling in their lives as depicted in the novel. When a sudden disease attacked Mir Nihal and almost his half body become useless still he struggled to recover himself which is shown as useless;

"As the months dragged on his condition improved to the extent that He could sit up of his own accord by catching hold of the wooden side Of the bed, and he could drag..." (Ali, 2000)

When Asghar's brother Habibudin becomes a victim of T.B they try too much hard to save him but the whole struggle ends unsuccessful and Habib dies. Apart from the struggle of the main characters in the novel, it is shown that all the Hindu and Muslim communities struggle against the British rule in India but each and every try on the part of the people is fruitless. The novel ends showing this key feature of naturalism that human struggle in any form is useless and they can never bring change in their determined lives.

The Indifferent Nature

One of the features of naturalism is the indifference of nature. Naturalist's novels and stories present scenarios in which nature is almost always indifferent to human beings. In such novels one can see that sometimes the man is against nature while other times nature is against the man and even sometimes nature is indifferent to the sufferings of human beings.

In the novel characters are struggling and affected by the environment but nature is totally indifferent towards them. It seems that nature does not care, what is going on;

"His days were done and beauty had vanished from the earth. But life remained Over which men had no command..... His world has fallen to pieces all round him, smothered by Indifference and death". (Ali, 2000).

Here Mir Nihal became totally useless due to deadly disease and nature is indifferent towards him. He was all but a puppet in the clutches of his fate. Fate and nature are not only indifferent towards the characters in terms of illness and cure but also in terms of love. In case of Nihal the fate is indifferent towards his illness while in case of Asghar fate is indifferent towards his love and feeling for Balqees.

The indifference of nature is also noticeable when Bilqees dies and Asghar thinks of her every time and his heart bleeds and still nature has no response;

"But when she has gone the eyes look for the well-known face; the ears Long to hear the familiar voice; but in vain". (Ali, 2000)

The lines above are the true depiction of the feelings and thoughts of the character. He is in pain but nothing can be of any help for him. He believes that his sorrows are written in his destiny.

Furthermore, the indifference of nature is visible when Asghar says to Zuhra;

"Asghar heaved a sigh and said in a voice full of self-pity: Who would care to hear to my woes? I am the cry of some world-forsaken Sole: I am the pain of some broken heart". (Ali, 2000)

Asghar is totally hopeless and he knows that no one is going to help him. This indifference of the surrounding people and nature can be traced to Asghar's words when he says "who would care to hear me".

Description

The description is a key element in novel writing and the writers always describe the humans and the scenes in their novel but the naturalist novels usually have long description of the surroundings as these novel shows the effect of the surrounding on the characters. In the novel understudy the main character is described as;

*"Mir Nihal comes in. He is tallembroidered round cap
Is put at a rakish angle on his bobbed head. His white and well-combed
Beards noble face a majestic look".* (Ali, 2000).

The character above has been described in such a way that the picture becomes visible for the reader. This type of description is a key element in the writings of naturalistic writers.

Ali also is a strong depicter of environment, he describes environment in a very clear way and creates a vivid and clear picture of surrounding around. This is clear in the very start of the novel:

*"Night envelops the city, covering it like a blanket. In the dim starlight roofs
And houses and by-lanes lie asleep, wrapped in a restless slumber, breathing
Heavily as the heat become oppressive or shoot through the body like pain.."*

(Ali, 2000)

Even the description highlights the atmosphere in Dehli is somehow in pain, sad and near to downfall. It also suggests that these gloomy and sad surroundings have enchained the life of its inhabitants and thus they are all sad and miserable. Everything in the city of Dehli has been represented as controlled and thus all the city is under the shadow of sadness.

Conclusion

The researcher has highlighted the main features of naturalism through the novel *Twilight in Delhi*. The literary work represents the life of Mir Nihal and his family's downfall. Besides this downfall, the novel also exhibits the downfall of the city Dehli. It is a historical as well as a family novel in which the downfall of Dehli and Nihal's family have been shown by the writer in the time of English rule over subcontinent. It was a time when all the Muslims and Hindus were fighting the war of independence and all the situation was disturbed around in United India. The novel presents the story of a family that goes through a very tragic situation due to the social issues and social changes that are not in the control of the family.

The analysis shows that the novel *Twilight in Dehli* has many naturalistic elements that make the novel a naturalistic novel. The characters in the novel are controlled by their surroundings and they seem puppets in the hand of their environment. They are unable to bring any positive change in their lives and they are extremely hopeless. The decline of the family and Dehli city highlights the tragic picture of the time. It seems that everything in the city is controlled and conditioned. All the characters live a very pessimistic life. There is no positive change in the novel and the situation goes toward the downfall day by day. This grim and tragic atmosphere in the novel provides many instances that are naturalistic in nature. The tragic and sand end of the family and the city is visible in the novel. Thus, the study highlighted that there are many naturalistic elements in the novel *Twilight in Dehli* by Ahmad Ali.

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