



## A Comparative Study of Ahmad Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* and Edgar Morgan Forster's *A Passage to India: A Feminist Perspective*



**Sardar Ali**

Lecturer, Department of English, University of Buner, Buner, KP, Pakistan.

**Asad Ali Khan**

Graduate, Department of English, University of Buner, Buner, KP, Pakistan.

**Abstract:** *The study was designed to do a comparative study of Ahmad Ali's novel Twilight in Delhi and E.M. Forster's A Passage to India. The study is a comparative textual analysis in the light of Feminism. The focus was on finding similarities and differences between Ali and Forster. In both novels, women's exploitation is the main issue. Women are shown as voiceless and inhuman creatures. They are used as an object having no feeling or emotion. They are presented as the tool of sex for the men of society. They are portrayed as having no role in the social and political affairs of the family. The investigation has shown that both Ali and Forster have presented women as inferior to men but Ali is harsher as compared to Forster. Ali pictured only Muslim women while Forster portrayed Muslims, Hindus as well as British women. Which was the main focus of the study. The Comparative Feminist analysis was taken to give a new dimension to the study and carried out women's issues in society.*

**Key Words:** Exploitation, Comparative, Patriarchy, Objectification

**Corresponding Author:** Sardar Ali (Lecturer, Department of English, University of Buner, Buner, KP, Pakistan. Email: [sardarali.awkum@gmail.com](mailto:sardarali.awkum@gmail.com))

### Introduction

Feminist Analysis is not a new phenomenon in the investigation of pieces of literature. Talking of women's rights is not a new concept deflected by writers. But it expand very quickly due to the first wave of feminism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first wave of feminism focused on the right to vote for women. The second wave gave them the right to equal chances in jobs etc. and the third wave started in the '60s focused on the rights

of black women. The 20<sup>th</sup> century is the century, in which many literary theories have emerged, and feminism is one of them. Many writers have taken this issue and realized the facts of gender-based discrimination, which has given birth to feminism theory. The feministic theory makes use of different tools for investigation. These tools work in a hub to form the theory. Objectification is one of them. Considered women to be inhuman and treated as objects. The difference between humans and objects is to make choices and

make their own decisions in the socio-political sphere of their life. Quinn describes this term as “This term stands for a social process that involves the transformation of a woman into an object (Quinn, 2006). In a male dominant society, men change the identity of women into an object. Patriarchal society is the basis of feminist criticism. Certainly, this is the main concept that makes the position of men dominant over women. Men are considered mentally, psychologically, physically, politically, and socially superior to women. Women have got a limited role in the affairs of the family. Hughes (2002) discusses in detail the roles that men allot to women in their social existence. She says that the females in their roles appear like a choiceless and voiceless animal that is dedicated to the service of the male sex” (Hughes 2000. p.99). Both Ali and Forster have thrown light on the identity of native women, their role, and their status in socio-political affairs. Moreover, they have highlighted how women are used as a tool of sex, considering them as others. Ali as a native has addressed the issues of Muslim women while Forster has presented native women, even British women. The current study will investigate the similarities and differences, between Ali’s *Twilight in Delhi* and *A Passage to India* by Forster through the lens of feminism.

## Literature Review

Nowadays, the feminist analysis is one of the most used analyses in literature. Feminist literary theory is now an established analysis in literature. This theory investigates a piece of literature through the eye of women. This concept is not a new one but a direct result of the ‘Women’s Movement’ of 1960. The struggle for women’s rights started at the very beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first wave of feminism has worked for the political right of the fair sex, i.e. the basic human rights for women. Different movements started in different

countries like British, France, and America. Peter Berry in his book ‘*Beginning Theory An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*’ traced back the background of feminist criticism” A major division within feminist criticism has concerned disagreements about the amount and type of theory that should feature in it. What is usually called the ‘Anglo-American’ version of feminism has tended to be more skeptical about recent critical theory” (Berry 2005, p.86). He further explains that “‘French’ feminists, who have adopted and adapted a great deal of (mainly) post-structuralism and psychoanalytic criticism as the basis of much of their work” (Berry, P.86). Berry in his book differentiates British Feminism from the above as quoted “it tends to be ‘socialist feminist’ in orientation, aligned with cultural materialism or Marxism so that it is unsatisfactory to try to assimilate it into a ‘non-theoretical’ category” (Berry, p.86).

There are so many reviews, articles, and research projects done investigating women’s problems. One of them is “The Image of the Woman Paralleled with the Decline of Delhi” by Sadia Riaz (2015) which is a good analysis that compares the fall of Delhi with the fall of women in the novel *Twilight in Delhi*. Riaz compares the condition of women with the decline of the city of Delhi. She concludes the text. He metaphorically shows Delhi as a character. He describes the miserable situation of the city quoted from the text and further explains it. Then concerning it picks up a different character and makes similarities between the city of Delhi and the female character of the novel. And when the colonizer came to India the environment changed negatively. The old walls of the building become cracked. The mighty building become razed to the ground. As quoted “Ahmed Ali is both a feminist writer who brings out the voice of the suppressed female as well as a writer who laments the change that the Delhi city and the people of India were wrought. In tracing this decline,

Ahmed Ali's feminist stance is also revealed, where he likens the beauty of Delhi city to the beauty of a woman. It is thus, that the image of the woman: the courtesan as well as the domestic woman reign important in the novel" (Riaz 2015, p.150) the colonizer has come with a changed mindset up. Riaz has taken symbolism to defend her argument.

Many scholars and researchers have done work on the thematic concerns and Forster's view of society is mirrored in his works. He is considered a Liberal humanist. But his works have been investigated through the lens of postcolonial as well as feminist theories. His women characters are much stricter as quoted from Bolton Emily's article *Forster Females* "His attitude towards women was much stricter in moral code than his sex, superior in both strength and mental capacity which were standard social positions for women of Edwardian period"(Emily 2013). He has portrayed his characters realistically. His female characters are usually suppressed by the male dominant society but not objectified.

Both E.M. Forster and Ahmad Ali have been compared with other writers. As both writers are in the colonial regime, a lot of work is done from the perspective of post-colonialism. One such example is the "Representation of the colonized in *A Passage to India* and *Twilight in Delhi*" by Muhammad Tufail Chandio and Waseem Malik. This is a comparative study of E.M. Forster and Ahmad Ali's *A Passage to India* and *Twilight in Delhi*. Colonial literature reflects colonized as uncivilized, uncultured, unable, and superstitious. They came with the ideology of, the white man's burden. The above mention work is about how both writers have presented India in their novels. They presented their attitudes and behavior toward the British, their relationship with each other, their practices and beliefs, and their organization and priorities. Chandio and Malik investigate the human relationship with each other in the works of

Ali and Forster. They further assert that "Forster does not present the colonized as caricatures, yet his presentation of natives is fallacious, whereas Ahmed Ali presents the old as anti-British while the young seem attracted towards the English culture. Both novelists present that superstition and sex are common traits among natives and the women are without entity and role. Forster shows the natives develop anti-British feelings after enduring oppressive and inhumane treatment of the colonizers, whereas Ahmed Ali traces the consequences of such treatment. Forster implies that Macaulay's conviction about the English Education system seems working upon the Hindus whereas the Muslims remain unmolded. The Muslims are portrayed as a fatalist, the Hindus are shown as an opportunist, whereas the English people are exploiters and racists. Forster shows the divide between the Hindus and the Muslims when Ahmed Ali does not refer to such polarization. Neither of the novelists is pro-race, nor do they stereotype the natives, both present the collective life with certain limitations" (Tufail & Malik, p.35). Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* has investigated with a comparison with Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* through the lens of feminism, but these two are still not taken into account with each other through critical analysis of feminism. Before the Colonial-era women were like slaves to men and during the colonial period become double colonized. This condition of women has been presented as "The womenfolk, who were the slaves of the male members of the society in the pre-colonial era, now have become the prey of double colonization. Very disturbing to the reader is the fact that women have no sense of self-reflexivity" (Abbas & Mahmood, 2017 p.88). Abbas and Mahmood further explain "Even in the times when their fleecing has multiplied, they are not ready to confront the challenge courageously. They have no sense to be modern souls. Not even a single female

character is depicted by Ali in the novel under discussion that has a spirit to cough out her rebellious reaction to multifaceted oppression” (Abbas & Mahmood, 2017 p.88). These two are still not explored in comparison with each other through critical analysis of feminism. The current study will dig out the comparison between E.M. Forster and Ahmad Ali's *A Passage to India* and *Twilight in Delhi*.

## Research Methodology

This study follows a qualitative approach. The present research is a comparative study of *Twilight in Delhi* and *A Passage to India*. The researcher has applied comparative textual analysis to the data collected from the selected works of both novelists to find the results. According to Cramani (2009), “Comparative research design can either focus on similarities or focus on differences. Sometimes we ask questions about similar outcomes” and “to explain similar outcomes we look for common factors” (p.14). He further argues, “Sometimes, however, we use the method of agreement (or most different system design) in which we ask questions about different outcomes” (p.14). The undertaken study deals with both the questions of similarities and differences between *Twilight in Delhi* and *A Passage to India* by Ahmad Ali and E.M. Forster. Usually in the research of literature, a theoretical framework is used. The present study is a combination of Feminism and Comparative Analysis. This literary theory makes use of the various tools that lie in its kit. One of these instruments is the concept of objectification. This term stands for a social process that involves the transformation of a woman into an object (Quinn, 2006). Along with this, other concepts like Patriarchy, which is the backbone of Feministic Analysis are investigated in the current study. Patriarchy is the exploitation of women in the male dominant society. Comparative Feminist Analysis is carried out to dig out the

similarities and differences between Ahmad Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* and E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*.

## Data Analysis and Discussion

E.M. Foster and Ahmad Ali both wrote about the colonized society. Forster from being the race of colonized wrote about both the communities of sub-continent i. e Muslim and Hindu. While Ali wrote only about the Muslims, and his community. Ahmad Ali mirrored only the condition and situation of Muslims. Both Forster and Ali portray Muslim characters as Anti-British not all the characters, but some of the major characters like Dr. Aziz in *Passage to India* and Mir Nihal in *Twilight in Delhi*. They represented colonized women as oppressive and suppressed. Colonized women have been pictured as the victim of double colonization but both have portrayed it differently. There are some similarities and differences between them.

## Similarities between a *Passage to India* and *Twilight in Delhi*

### The Issue of Native Women's Identity

Both E.M. Forster and Ahmad Ali have introduced, presented, and portrayed most of their women characters not with their real names. Ali mirrored women de-attached from the outer world. They are pictured as suppressed and are called out with the names of their husbands like Begam Nihal, Begam Jamal, Begam Shahnawaz, and Begam Waheed. As Chandio and Malik in their research “The Representation of the Colonized in the Forster's *A Passage to India* and Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* state that “They do not have their own identity and individuality. They further explain that the unmarried women blush and get annoyed when their husbands “names are mentioned before them, like Mehro, who loses her tempers when Masroor utters the name of her fiancé, Meraj. Her inner vistas get relieved and she

likes that name but perhaps she cannot express her long-repressed emotions so openly in such a stagnant and arid society, therefore, she projects diametrically to realize that she does not like that name. It is the tragedy of every Indian woman who was confined within the house and whose emotion had remained long repressed and never found expression and ventilation" (p. 43). Forster like Ali also pictured colonized women not with their names but the name of their husbands like Begam Hamidullah. He further explains the life of Indian women as quoted from the text "Wedlock, motherhood and Power in the House" (p. 34). She is also concerned with the condition of the unmarried females of their native land.

### **Representation of Native Women as Other**

---

Ahmad Ali has pictured women as others. What was going on in the houses within the walls but they were not aware of what is going on outside of their houses. Ali shows their condition although he doesn't know about the women inside the walls "The world lived and died, things happened, events took place, but all this did not disturb the equanimity of the zenanas, which had its world too where the pale and fragile beauties of the hothouse lived secluded from all outside harm, the storms that blow in the world of men. The day dawned, the evening came, and life passed them by. (Ali, p.39). Ahmad Ali has portrayed the women of the novel as the other --- the other whom Ali hardly knows about, women who live and die within the four walls of their houses, and Ali it seems is appreciating them for their futile existence. As is the case with Forster, he through the conversation of Aziz and Hamidullah portrayed the situation of native women as "yet the missionaries inform us our women are downtrodden" (Forster, 1985, p. 244). Forster has pictured the women as a class.

### **Representation of Native Women as Tool of Sex**

---

Both novelists represented women as a thing of sex and lust. The male characters are portrayed as involved in sexual activities and premarital affairs. They are morally weak and lost their values. A conversation between Dr. Aziz and Fielding about Mrs. Moore. "She (Miss Quested) has practically no breasts ... for the City Magistrate they shall be sufficient perhaps", but he proposes to Fielding, "For you, I shall arrange a lady with breast-like mangoes ..." (Forster, p. 120). Adding more Mr. Turton says to Miss Quested about Muslims that they usually have four wives. Forster reflected as "Mohammedans always insist on their full four" which means they like to marry four wives (Forster, p. 148). Ali mirrored the condition more than that. The male characters young as well the old are involved in sexual activities. Asghar was inclined toward, Mushtari Bai, a cultured prostitute, who loved Asghar from the core of her heart, then shifted toward Bilqeece and again towards her younger sister Zehra, who was young and beautiful. Even his father who was an old man involved with his maidservant Dilchain and she gives birth to an illegitimate child. He keeps Babban Jan as his mistress along with Begam Nihal but in secret.

### **Differences between a Passage to India and Twilight in Delhi**

---

#### **Representation of Native Women as Objects**

---

Both Ahmad Ali and E.M. Forster have portrayed native women as not like human creatures. Women are always seen as a victim of the male dominant society. They have no right to give their opinion on the socio-political matters of their family. In comparison to Ali; Forster has sympathy towards the native women characters. While on the other hand, Ali pictured them as inhuman and equal to animals. Even he has



deflected them as material objects as he writes “Walls stood surrounding them, shutting the women in from the prying eyes of men, guarding their beauty and virtue’ (Ahmad Ali). Here women have been equalized with material things. Further pictured the restriction of women in houses. They are restricted to the *Zenana* portion. Forster pictured this condition as “things went on with the monotonous sameness of Indian life. No one went out anywhere” (Ali, p. 39). He further explains that few relatives are supposed to visit there a month for religious festivals. They are not allowed to interact with other people. Their life is still and silent. They are usually busy with household work or in talking like “The time passed mostly between eating, talking, cooking, sewing or doing nothing” (Ali, p. 39). Comparatively, Forster has reflected Indians as not an object or inhuman. But as a class like in the Bridge Party, they have been marginalized as Forster writes “A little group of Indian Ladies has been gathering in a third quarter of the grounds, near a rustic summer-house, in which the timider of them has taken refuge. The rest stood with their backs to the company and their faces pressed into a bank of shrubs” (Forster p.61). Forster does not present the colonized as caricatures, furthermore, Forester presents that natives regard Indian women as passive, unreceptive, and unmanageable; she does not incline change and improvement.

### **Representation of Muslim Women by Ahmad Ali**

---

Neither Ali nor Forster portrayed the positive aspects of women. Women have been represented as submissive and oppressed by the men of society. But the difference between them is that Ali pictured only the Muslim women as their characters like Begam Nihal, Begam Waheed, and Begam Jamal, etc. He has shown the worst image of Muslim women. Ahmed Ali depicts women observing strict purdah, living in the

monotonous life of zenana altogether detached from the outer world. While on the other hand, Forster presents not only Muslim women but even English women as well like Miss Qusted, And Mrs. Moore. He has taken Miss Qusted as one of his prominent characters. Forester presents the “The Muslims are portrayed as a fatalist, the Hindus are shown opportunist, whereas the English people are exploiters and racists. Forster shows the divide between the Hindus and the Muslims when Ahmed Ali does not refer to such polarization.

### **Representation of Native Women as Inferior to British Women by E. M. Forster**

---

As Edward Said (1993) says that literature cannot be politically innocent. E.M. Forster being from the race of colonizer has come up with the mindset of the colonizer. He has presented the land, the weather, and the people of India as inferior, stereotypical, and lesser compared to the British. As in the Bridge Party, Mrs. Turton has described Indian women as are ‘shorter ladies’ and the others are ‘taller ladies’ Forster through her defects that native women are inferior to her “All the Indian ladies, were uncertain, cowering, recovering, giggling, making tiny gestures of atonement or despair”. Adding more Mrs. Moore and Miss Qusted have turned down the invitation from Bhattacharya on appointment day when they send their carriage to pick them up. While in contrast Ali from the race of natives just only presented the native women, their condition, their role in socio-political matters, and their status in society. Ali wanted to become the voice of Indian women. Chandio in his research interprets it as “Ahmed Ali wanted to become the voice of suppressed women.

### **Conclusion**

---

The study was taken to explore the fundamental rights of women and how

literature has become the voice of voiceless women. The study was a comparative study of *Twilight in Delhi* and *A Passage to India* in the Light of Feministic Analysis. Both the novelists Ahmad Ali and E.M. Forster have pictured the native women, inferior to men. But Ahmad has shown native women are more suppressed as compared to E.M. Forster.

The application of Feminism to *Ahmad Ali's novel Twilight in Delhi and A Passage to India* by E.M. Forster produced very significant results. The study proves men characters in both novels are superior, dominant, and patriarchal compared to female characters. Women have been exploited by men in many ways. In Ali's novel, women are shown as objects. Mir

Nihal and Asghar have used them as a tool for sex. Women have a very limited role in the socio-political domain of their life. They are considered as others in society. They are just in the role of daughters and mothers. Even though they have no identity, they are known by the names of their husbands. Ali has pictured only Muslim women while Forster has portrayed Muslims, Hindus as well as British women. Both have represented native women as a tool of sex. But Ali has mirrored them as an object while Forster is a class. In contrast, Forster has shown Indian women as inferior to British women. In short, women, which is the counterpart of males become the victim of men's patriarchy. The study proves that women are considered material objects and properties of men, having no feelings or emotions.

## References

- Abbas, N., Dogar, S., & Mahmood, Z. (2017). Female Coercion in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Ali's *Twilight in Delhi*: A Feminist Reading. *Gomal Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 1(1).
- Ali, A. (2007). *Twilight in Delhi*. New Delhi: Rupa Co.
- Askari, M. H. (1949). A novel by Ahmed Ali. *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, pp.27-38.
- Barry, P. (2002). *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. (Feminist Criticism). p. 121-136.
- Caramani, D. (2009). *Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chandio, M.T., & Malik, W. H. (2015). Representation of the Colonized in the *A Passage to India* and *Twilight in Delhi*: A Postcolonial Critique. *The International Research Journal*, 4(2), 320-336.
- Emily, B. (2013). *Forster's Females*. <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>
- Forster, E.M. (1981). *A Passage to India*. London: Penguin.
- Madsen, D. L. (2000). *Feminist theory and literary practice*. London: Pluto Press.
- Quinn, E. (2006). *A Dictionary of Thematic and Literary Terms*. NY: Fact on File.
- Riaz, S. (2015). The Image of the Woman Paralleled with the Decline of Delhi. *Language in India*, 15(6), 150-163. <http://www.languageinindia.com/june2015/sadiawomendelhidecline.pdf>
- Said, E. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Showalter, E. (1985). *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*. Pantheon.
- Yaqub, H. (2018). Reconstructing the Orient: A Study of Ahmad Ali's *Twilight in Delhi*. *BI.-Annual Online Literary Journal*. 14(1), 1-9. [https://worldlitonline.net/jan\\_2018\\_vol\\_14/article\\_7.pdf](https://worldlitonline.net/jan_2018_vol_14/article_7.pdf)