

Gaps And Silences In Ahmad Ali's Twilight In Delhi: A Marxist Critique

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the function and significance of gaps and silences in Ahmad Ali's *Twilight in Delhi*. Analyzing the text to identify and interpret gaps and silences implicit in the delineation of Ahmad Ali's narratives, characters and themes in *Twilight in Delhi*. Such examination plays a pivotal role in understanding how narratives, words, ideology, gaps and silences are simultaneously at work in the creation of textuality. Being the workings of a certain ideology, the occurrence of gaps and silences can be both conscious and unconscious, hence, Marxist literary theory has been adopted as the theoretical base for the study. Gaps and silences cannot be avoided in written or spoken expressions as something is always left unsaid or unspoken in our discourses. The basic argument of this study remains that a text also says what it does not want to say.

Keywords: Gaps, Silences, Ideology, Marxist theory, Class, Discrimination, Power

INTRODUCTION

The occurrence of gaps and silences in human speech (language) is a natural phenomenon. Every literary text is an ideology in itself and has a certain amount of gaps and silences wherefrom it can be deconstructed in different ways giving different new meanings. The current work is on Ahmad Ali's novel *Twilight in Delhi*, the researcher has focused on his narrative techniques bringing to the front such areas of the text where gaps and silences act as defensive

tools for hiding, deflecting, and distorting stories, recounted. Gaps and silences always escape cognitive approaches because of their lurid, implicit and floating nature. To a greater extent, they are the conscious or unconscious implications of a certain ideology or of some culturally constructed assumptions. They can be located and analysed through an in-depth analysis of a literary text. Therefore, this study explores the floating and concealed nature of gaps and silences through the lenses of Marxist Literary

Criticism to bring forth the hidden realities of the text under investigation.

In Freudian terms “Gap” is a particular place in a text or speech where something is left out, skipped or overlooked and the reader or listener has to fill in the blank or may not. A “Silence” is when the viewpoints/ voices of a certain person or a group are left out or never heard. “Omissions”, “gaps” and “silences” are related to memory gaps preventing some painful and therefore repressed material coming from the unconscious to the conscious mind or coming directly from our unconscious (Freud, 1961). In *Twilight in Delhi*, “gaps” and “silences” reveal more than the reader would anticipate at first. In addition to this, the writer invites the critical reader to contribute to the ongoing process of revealing and concealing. In this context, Pierre Macherey in his *The Theory of Literary Production*, argues as follows;

“The speech of the book comes from a certain “silence”, a matter which it endows with form, a ground on which it traces a figure. Thus, the book is not self-sufficient; it is necessarily accompanied by a certain absence without which it would not exist. A knowledge of the book must include a consideration of this absence (Macherey, 1978).”

The topic of gaps and silences in a text, in the contemporary literary discourse, is centered on the question of “what isn’t it”? Based on Derrida’s (1983) argument, that language is more about absences than presences, as writing – not speech – is more characteristically a linguistic mode, it is probably more tenable to suggest that Ahmad Ali’s novel is more about what is not said in the form of absences, silences and gaps than what is apparently said. Putting it psychologically, we are never completely self-conscious while writing or speaking, owing to the normally detached position of our unconscious mind from our conscious mind. Therefore, by a

critical reading, one can grasp, what stories, histories and realities have been partially displaced or utterly replaced or completely omitted by the very act of telling the story or history this way and not that way. Terry Eagleton in his book *Criticism and Ideology* elucidates it further;

“In putting ideology to work, the text necessarily illuminates the absences and begins to ‘make speak’ the silences, of that ideology. The literary text, far from constituting some unified plenitude of meaning, bears inscribed within it the marks of certain determinate absences which twist its various significations into conflict and contradiction. These absences - the ‘not-said’ of the work - are precisely what bind it to its ideological problematic: ideology is present in the text in the form of its eloquent silences. The task of criticism, then, is not to situate itself within the same space as the text, allowing it to speak or complete what it necessarily leaves unsaid (Eagleton, 1976).”

Literary Marxism has greatly influenced contemporary literary theory, especially in the analysis of ideology concerning power and class struggle. In Marxist theory, the concept originates from Marx and Engels’ *Critique of the Young Hegelians*, where they used the term “ideology” to mean something false or illusory beliefs. For Althusser (1969) it is more important to see how ideology makes us perpetuate, the unjust political systems and social structures in an unconscious way. According to him, ideology is both material and immaterial, both imaginary and real in relation to the world. He uses the term “interpellation” in connection to the workings of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) that make us feel like free agents making our own choices, while in fact, we are doing exactly what is in line with the ideology of the dominant class or system.

Since ideology is illusory and “what is significant in a literary text is what it does not or cannot say. It shows the limits, the gaps of the text and thus forces its silences to speak” (Haslett, 2000). Thus, through literary criticism, it is possible to break the spell of ideology and approach an understanding of it. An analysis of ideology allows one to see how it affects the setting, themes and narrative of a literary work. – This analysis also reveals how ideology determines what can be done and said, and what cannot be done or said. It shows how the characters are interpellated to perpetuate the system they live in. What is permitted in a setting is best learned by looking at what is not permitted and what does not exist in a setting is just as important as what exists. Lastly, the reason for the analysis of ideology present in the narrative is that it allows one to find the ideology of the text itself, to see what the text is saying about its subject matter and how it relates to the real world. In order to explore and demonstrate how readers are required to participate in the ongoing process of revealing and concealing, the study of the sequential order of narrative chapters demonstrates the development of the narrative technique within the text. In this regard this study aims, what type of new story is formed after reconstructing and bridging the “gaps” and uncovering the “silences” in the narration of *Twilight in Delhi* as Terry Eagleton describes in the following words:

“On the contrary, its function is to install itself in the very incompleteness of the work in order to theorize it - to explain the ideological necessity of those ‘not-said’ which constitute the very principle of its identity. Its object is the unconsciousness of the work - that of which it is not, and cannot be, aware. What the text ‘says’ is not just this or that meaning, but precisely their difference and separation: it articulates the space which both divides and binds together the text’s multiple senses. It is criticism’s

task to demonstrate how the text is thus ‘hollowed’ by its relation to ideology - how, in putting that ideology to work, it is driven up against those gaps and limits which are the product of ideology’s relation to history (Eagleton, 1976).”

LITERATURE REVIEW

In postmodern literary criticism, the question of gaps and silences is of great importance, as the topics of realism and representation, foregrounding, and backgrounding are repeatedly raised in contemporary literary analysis. The idea of gaps and silences is based on the question of “what it is not” because the questions that “what it is” or what it is about” cannot cover all about any literary work. Keeping in view the famous argument of Derrida in his “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” that language is more about absences than presences and that writing is more characteristically a linguistic mode than speech. He further claims that Western systems of thought are mostly dominated by the idea of “presence” and “essence”, whereas the philosophies of the East emphasize “what is unknowledgeable and unidentifiable with the ordinary approaches”(Derrida, 1988). I find this argument of great importance in the reinterpretation of Ahmad Ali’s novel “*Twilight in Dehli*”. Putting it more psychologically, our unconscious normally remains absent from our conscious mind due to which we can never be completely self-conscious in any situation. Therefore, histories and stories have been utterly replaced or partially displaced through the very art of writing and telling them. The role of a critical reader then, is to read between and beyond the lines to construe the presences of a narrative and absences as well. The analysis of absences and incoherencies of a text reveals the silenced and clandestine accounts of information that the author might have consciously or unconsciously omitted, repressed, or disowned.

In the Freudian perspective, gaps, silence and omissions are psychological phenomena that show repressed and painful accounts about acts and events from becoming a part of the conscious mind. In literary discourse analysis gaps and silences are not only preventive tools for painful, tabooed, or socially unacceptable things but they also function as defensive tools, means, repressed and painful things are excluded from the conscious memory in a defensive manner. As Freud argues “The essence of repression lies simply in turning something away and keeping it at a distance from the conscious mind” (Freud, 1915). My inquiry of Ahmad Ali’s “Twilight in Dehli” can be connected with Freud’s own work on the case of “Dora” which remained unnoticed for a long time but recently critics have considered it his own narrative gap. The critical analysis of it in the perspective of silence or muteness not only shows his narrative skills but according to Ruth Parkin Gounelas, (2001) it also shows Freud’s discomfort in 1901, with his scandalous strand of Dora tale, created a “silence” in his own text, due to which Freud was accused of patriarchal blindness by feminists of 1970s and 1980s (Parkin, 2001).

Ruth further argues in her book “Literature and Psychoanalysis” that the case of his other patient Anna is completely different due to her expression of cultural repressions in the form of anger and resentment. She further elaborates the topic by arguing that gaps and silences play the role of nodal points for analytic attention as the sign of some absence or omission for the implication of converting them into speech or making them speak because silences in a speech or text signify the absences or omission of something culturally tabooed or ideologically unspeakable or unutterable (Parkin, 2001).

According to Lacan (1977), our conscious interpretation of the world through words and their different categories is always incomplete and can never be expressed to the

fullest because of the potential ever-presence of our unconscious which disturbs this process. It means that the construction of discourses and other social interests are affected by our unconscious mind. Therefore, silences and gaps incorporated by the unconscious can be deciphered by “reading beyond words and language” (Lacan, 1977).

Patricia Ondek Laurence argues that the unconscious being devoid of language cannot be accessed directly, hence, the analysis of narrative techniques of silence means “silent discourse” “interior discourse” internal monologues “inner speech” and inner dialogue can be explored by breaking the “rhetoric of silence”. To investigate the different modalities of silence is to bring to the front the reason of “being silent about anything” “refusing a subordinate position to enact” and “letting something to be excluded”. In narrations “silence” denotes “audible spaces”, “contemplative soliloquies” and “psychological issues” (Ondek, 1993). According to Leslie Kane’s view, silences and gaps are neither completely absent from a literary text or speech nor in a neutral position and nor outside of it rather silence is a moment in language or it can be termed as an implicit expression where speech is absent (Kane, 1984).

Adam Jaworski approaches silence in another way, according to him silence is such a category in narrative discourse that can be compared and contrasted either with speech or sound which are physical and audible. He further argues that the forms and functions of silence are the expressions of cognitive or emotional states as hate, anger, indifference, intolerance and embarrassment. According to him the second category of silence shows a state of transition as sacrificial, ceremonial or celebratory silence. He termed the third type of silence as the silence of self-censorship or a mechanism of building resistance (Jaworski, 1993).

Shoshana Felman (1982) raises different questions about silences and gaps in a narration, being a psychological critic she asks “where does the silence live in the writer or reader experiences and how the reader approaches it”. Felman further argues that; reading the unreadable means silences and gaps and one should not be focusing only on what “meaning” is conveyed by words rather one should also concentrate on what is being escaped from words and language (Felman, 1982). These are such questions that inspire my investigation of Ahmed Ali’s “Twilight in Delhi”. In my opinion, Ahmed Ali’s silences are not figurative but rather a symbol of the deep-rooted trauma in the troubled psyche, a haunting of the glorious past before the colonialization of the Indian subcontinent. It also functions as a strategy for keeping the painful memories of the past latent via narrative silences and gaps. These dynamic absences show some missing information from the story narrated. Furthermore, a concise method of research is needed to make these silences speak because silences are not physical rather they occupy a psychological and implicit structure.

According to Ondek Lawrence, there are three different types of silence, a writer makes use of. The first type of silence is the “unsaid” which refers to something felt but not uttered, the second category is the “unspoken” which means something not yet expressed and the third one is the “unsayable” a very important category which means something culturally, religiously are socially tabooed (Ondek, 1993). I would use this categorization for my textual analysis of Ahmad Ali’s “Twilight in Delhi” because the same also happens with him where he invites critical readers to enter into the obscurity and to consult our own minds and critical senses for going beyond the screen in search of the unsaid and unsayable.

In the Marxist view silences and gaps are the conscious or unconscious implications of

ideology, being internalized through different ideological state apparatuses, compelling us all to go in line with the same ideology while doing anything and thinking about anything, even belief systems and all other channels of expression and communication, cannot escape ideology. It means all our physical and conceptual being, is shaped by the ideology constructed by the upper powerful class, also our worldview is shaped by them through the same process.

Marxism is a theory of production that disregards any possibility of an idealist theory of history. Contrarily, in the Marxist perspective just like other material production ideas are also material products, and no spiritual or supernatural forces are involved in the production of ideas as Marx does not believe in anything beyond matter. Similarly, both tangible and intangible social goods in a society are produced through social practices of transforming material into products. The determining factor in this transformation is neither the raw material nor the product itself, rather it is the very factor of transforming labour of technical methods in a particular structure of men and means, which is of core importance in all the social practices. Here it does not focus on how goods are produced technically rather it concerns itself with the social conditions that determine them to be produced. It means that in a society anything cannot be made or produced rather only such things that the prevailing set of social and political conditions allow, can be produced.

Althusser argues that Marxism can also be taken as a theory of determination, an idea looming in the history of Marxist thought. It means the social and political environment of a society determines the production of things. On the other hand, if we think about Marxism just as a theory of production it will really seem just a set of directions. It is very obvious that the concern of Marxism is not such a set of rules rather it raises the question as who writes the directions

and who is going to follow these directions. In other words how different social groups interact for the production of what is being produced in a given society. While further describing some more complex relations at various levels of social formation uses the term over-determination as he categorizes the social practices into three different aspects. Firstly, the economic aspects which can also be called the base, secondly, the political aspect which can be called the superstructure. Thirdly and most importantly, the ideological aspect which concerns itself with dominating the minds of human beings through different ideas. He argues that all these spheres function in their own autonomy and also interact with each other. Similarly, the interaction among these spheres influence every practice of human beings (Althusser, 1970).

According to the famous Hungarian Marxist, Georg Lukacs (1922) Marxism is also a scientific method of critiquing art and literature as to bring to the front the underlying forces and values that have produced the text or a piece of artistic creation and which are reflected in it. Also it tells us as how these creative products cannot be separated from the context in which they have been produced (Lukacs, 1922). This claim is the very basic principle of Marxist literary theory and it reflects the stance of Marxism that the physical superstructure of a society is inseparable from its hidden economic base.

While looking at the setting of *Twilight* in Dehli my analysis will concern itself with the economical political and ideological aspects as how certain “gaps” and “silences” have been incorporated in the text consciously or unconsciously under the influence of the determining social and political forces. The main concern of traditional Marxism was critiquing capitalism but later on its application started in almost every aspect of society. Being a Hegelian philosopher, Marx himself, in the beginning,

ascribed to Hegel’s philosophy that humanity being alienated is deprived of its true state of freedom. However, Hegel being an idealist philosopher is considered idealistic reasons for the alienation of humanity while Marx as a materialist philosopher rejected the idealistic grounds and arguments for this hegemony rather he believed in the materialistic reasons responsible for the sufferings of humanity under the capitalist system.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study in its nature is investigative, interpretive, descriptive and qualitative and employs textual analysis of the novel. Qualitative tools like definition, interpretation and comparative analysis are applied to analyse the data for drawing generalizations and conclusions. Furthermore, the purpose of descriptive research is to find new truth, the truth may have different forms such as increased quality of knowledge, a new generalization or a new law, an increased insight into factors that are operating the discovery of new causal relationship, a more accurate formulation of the problem to be solved and many others.

There are two entities involved in conducting a literary criticism: text, and reader or analyst. In order to interpret the meaning of the text, the analyst or the reader goes into a dialogue of reflexive nature between the text and himself. It is extremely important for the researcher here to not become a judge or teacher. Analysing a text means reproducing it, an amalgamation of the thoughts of the researcher with that of the world of the text. Ronald Barthes (1973), in *Elements of Semiology*, argues that the relation between the signified and the signifier is not just denotative i.e. related to the literal meaning or common sense only but also connotative i.e. it also refers to associations that are socio-cultural, symbolical or emotional. Thus the deciphering of

meaning is also an interpretation of the text (Barthes, 1973). According to Alan McKee,

“We interpret texts (films, television programmers, magazines, advertisements, clothes and so on) in order to try and obtain a sense of the ways in which, in particular cultures at particular times, people make sense of the world around them. And, importantly, by seeing the variety of ways in which it is possible to interpret reality, we also understand our own cultures better because we can start to see the limitations and advantages of our own sense-making practices (McKee, 2003).”

It shall be kept in mind that the bend in interpretation will be more towards inductive reasoning as the researcher will be consulting particular research articles for inferring conclusion and the reinterpretation of the text. In this framework, understanding is going to be more focused than judgement as the purpose of this study is to understand and interpret the text through Marxist Literary Criticism. Furthermore, this thesis lies in the academic category of textual analysis the sole purpose is to further the process and understanding of the subject in question.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Ahmad Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* provides an ample amount of gaps and silences. The occurrence of gaps and silences is an unavoidable phenomenon in human speech more especially, in literary productions. Beginning with the very title of the novel *Twilight in Delhi* we encounter the first gap wrapped in silence. The title or name of the novel reflects and mourns the whole story of the downfall of Delhi which was once a great kingdom. The history of this great empire starts with the advent of Muslim conquerors, who invaded India centuries ago and subjugated the

native Indians and ruled them for many centuries. Muslims being the ruling class, established their prestige and similarly their religion, culture and language achieved the supremacy of their class. Muslim scholars and missionaries started preaching their religion and culture to the people of India and it was due to these efforts under the patronage of Darbar that hundreds of thousands of Indians got converted to Islam. But still, in the entire history of Muslim rule in India, the Muslim population remained a powerful minority ruling the majority of Indians who were suffering under the menace of the severe class system. It is a fact that Muslims ruled India for a very long time till the imprisonment of the last Mughal king through the hands of Western Imperialists but through any definition, it would be highly unjust to say that Delhi only belonged to the ruling class of Muslims or to the Muslims of the subcontinent.

In the same way, we cannot say that the downfall of Delhi only affected or subdued Muslim population of India. As Delhi belonged to all Indians as an Indian Nation, her downfall also affected them equally without any difference in religion and culture. But Ahmad Ali in *Twilight in Delhi* portrays a very different picture of the downfall of Delhi as he relates it only with the misfortune of Muslims in such a way as if Delhi was only the residence of Muslims. The big majority of Hindu population has been totally excluded from it by Ahmad Ali in his narration. They have got no representation in the narrative as if they did not belong to it in any sense of the relationship between a country and her inhabitants.

Looking into the matter through Marxist literary criticism, this phenomenon can be analysed in relation to power and dominance. Ahmad Ali depicts the painful story of the fall of Delhi, as a calamity, destruction and slavery only for Muslims and Delhi in *Twilight in Delhi* is represented as a country inhabited only by Muslims. It is because they were the powerful and

ruling class of India at that time. That is why the majority Hindus and other minorities have not been given a slight representation in the story. There develops a gap in the story of the narrator in terms of representation. This gap is covered by a complete silence on the part of the narrator and any critical reader can feel the absence of something in the story which makes the story incomplete and biased. The majority of Hindus have been excluded from the story because they were not the ruling class rather they were the ruled and the ruled had no presence though they were the original native of the land.

Ahmad Ali is unconsciously fearful about mentioning the majority of India because with this the story would have taken a different but a realistic turn in which Muslims would seem the first invaders of India before the English, who subjugated the native people of India and ruled them for centuries. But it's a historical fact that Ahmad Ali is unable to mention it because, with the advent of English, there happened a change of masters in the fate of the Hindu population who were already subjugated for centuries. This silence on the part of the narrator actually originates from religious and class ideology. The narrator of *Twilight in Delhi* is definitely a Muslim and is preoccupied by his belonging, the once ruling class of India, revealing the class consciousness of the narrator in his narrative. Politically speaking the word Dehli is representative firstly of majorities and secondly of minorities of India but according to Marxist literary criticism, representation goes in line with power and ideology.

Naturally, this contradiction and gap can be seen between the story and its title as the title is representative of all Indians means the fall or defeat of the whole Indian nation because English people enslaved them equally but the story of the novel is not representative of all Indians. The story is about the defeat and mourning of Muslims. In the post-colonial literary criticism,

Antonio Gramsci while describing cultural hegemony coined the term subaltern by which he means a dominated social group that is excluded from the socio-economic and political institutions by the powerful groups of the society in order to silence their political voices and curb their identity. In other words, the term subaltern identifies the dominated population who are socially, geographically, and politically excluded from the power hierarchy.

We argue that the phenomenon of silence on the part of the author and his characters, can be both conscious and unconscious and the mechanism of silence withholds the memory of the unconscious from becoming a part of the conscious mind also protecting its manifestation in real-life activities. For example, if we look at the very title of the novel "*Twilight in Delhi*" the word Delhi is politically representative of the whole country of India where a great diversity of cultures and religions existed at that time. All these people coming from different cultures and religions were geographically bounded in one big country, therefore, they were one Nation in terms of nationhood and Delhi as the capital of this country was representing all cultural and religious majority as well as minorities. Similarly, the fall of Delhi affected all these people as one Nation, suffering from the domination and occupation of western imperialist powers.

Similarly, all major and minor characters of Ahmad Ali are Muslim, even a single other than Muslim characters is not there. This depiction of Delhi seems very partial and incomplete. In fact, Muslims and Hindus lived together mostly mixed in one street and often wall by wall. In other words, the story of the fall of Delhi is kept consciously restricted and represented by Muslims means Ahmad Ali ignored the nationality or nationhood of the Indian people and narrowed down his depiction to religion and class. Also in the setting of the

story from start till its end we more often come across mosques in almost every mohalla, azan is heard everywhere but physically we do not see any mandir or temple anywhere in Delhi nor do we hear the ringing of their bells. It does not mean that there existed no mandir or temple in those streets and mohalla but they have been skipped and ignored. As Ahmad Ali on the very first page while talking about the city, says:

“Here and there in every mohalla the mosques raised their white heads towheads the sky, their tomb spread out like the white breasts of a woman bared, as it were, to catch the starlight on their surfaces, and the minarets point to heaven, indicating, as it were, that God is all high and one (Ali, p. 1).”

The Marxist theory of history asserts that history must be read and interpreted from the perspective of the proletariat, which reveals that the economic and power relations among social classes of any society determine the Who and What of a social group. Simply that is another type of discrimination in which the dominated group has no voice and no representation. This at the end changes their identity. Though without them, means without the subjugated or enslaved class there can be no reason for the existence of the ruling class as per the principles of binary opposition means there can be no rulers without the ruled in fact the existence of a ruler is because of the ruled but still there can be no sense of equality in the identity and representation of both of them. The ruled have been always marginalized in social, political and literary affairs because power and class determine who is to say what is to be said, how to be said and who cannot say. Thus, what cannot be said and who cannot say go into silence which develops a gap in stories and historical accounts of a society, country, nation and not the least in literary productions.

The same we find with Ahmad Ali, who has got no representation for the suppressed groups of long been enslaved population due to the dominating religious and powerful class ideology. Naturally, there develops a gap of discrimination which is covered by silence on the part of the narrator and consequently, his depiction remains partial in terms of a complete impartial representation of the society. Though, this gap is of a slippery nature as the reader can hardly get a chance to think beyond the story of the text for a relatively complete understanding of the text in a critical manner.

E M Foster in his famous novel “A Passage to India” writes that India is a country with rich cultural and religious diversity. This means he accepts the existence of different religions and cultures in India, similarly, his depiction and representation of native Indians are impartial to a greater extent, though he himself comes from the western world of colonisers, on the other side, Ahmad Ali belongs to the very society he depicts.

The story of *Twilight in Delhi* is of an Indian Muslim noble family who lives in Delhi. They claim their lineage as sayyeds means hailing from the respectable family of the holy prophet. The head of the family is Mir Nihal who is a well-built and attractive personality with a long good looking white beard on his face. Mir Nihal is the representative character of Indian Muslim culture, religion and past glory who throughout the novel mourns the replacement of Muslim culture by the English culture. Mir Nihal is proud of his cultural heritage and of his ancestry, the line of blood he belongs to. This makes him both a religious and cultural representation of Delhi. He first appears on the scene when after dinner children were insisting on listening to another story from their aunt and mother. They were asking the children to go to bed as it was very late.

It must be eleven O'clock your father has not come back yet, Begum Nihal says to her daughter. You'd better go to sleep. It is very late. (Ali, p. 7)

When her children go to sleep and after some time the main door creaks, Mir Nihal comes home clearing his throat to ensure his presence. His wife asks the maidservant Dilchaine to be up as the master has come. When he appears his wife asks him:

You went out today without a meal, Begum Nihal says to him in a slightly annoyed tone, and have kept me waiting. It must be past midnight. It's only eleven, he replies in an apologetic way. (Ali, p. 7)

After having his dinner Begum Nihal start discussing the engagement of their son Asghar with him and goes on. By making a deeper look to the above excerpt, there are two points where something important remains unsaid, due to the fully male-dominated Muslim society and culture. The first unspeakable point is that Mir Nihal comes home very late at 11 O'clock at night. His age seems to be almost sixty years and it was not only on that night that he kept his wife waiting for him till late but later on we come to know that coming home late at night is his permanent routine. But who can ask him as why he comes late, what for and where he spends this time. All these questions remain in silence unasked and unanswered. The second point is that after coming home his wife tells him that it was almost midnight and he replies to her in an apologetic and polite manner that it was not midnight, using a tone that is not his routine way of talking at home because he is often direct and harsh. Here he uses an apologetic tone and polite manner because he was feeling guilty in his unconscious and he wanted something very grave and heavy to remain in silence in the unuttered and unspoken form. His wife being a simple Indian woman is unable to get or check the

routine late coming of her husband. Therefore Mir Nihal makes clever use of his dominant position and exploits her simplicity. The reality of the situation is that Mir Nihal comes home very late and on a routine basis because he cheats on his wife and every night he first attends his Mistress Babhan Jan. Babhan Jan is a young attractive and very beautiful cultured prostitute kept by Mir Nihal who serves only him and he has rented a separate house for her and also runs her domestic affairs. Mir Nihal, besides his old age, position and very religious background abuses his dominance and exploits the innocence of his wife, though apparently he is very proud and all his family members give him great respect. But looking at his majestic noble face this gap between the inner and outer of Mir Nihal is very unbecoming of him as far as the social, religious and moral code is concerned and of which he is a representation.

Mir Nihal as usual comes home after attending his Mistress Babhan Jan. Begum Nihal starts the discussion by using her sixth sense and asking a very meaningful question from Mir Nihal:

“You never seem to take any interest in the house; said Begum Nihal. “Then what shall I do? Shall I start cocking? Your ways are always funny; either on this pole of the earth or on the opposite (Ali, p.31).

Here being a critical reader one can observe that what Begum Nihal says is hundred percent right that Mir Nihal has no interest in his household activities but he copes with this statement of his wife in a smart way. In response what he says is apparently a joke but actually, he uses this joke to conceal some unspeakable truths and keep them unsaid in silence in such a way that his wife can never understand those hidden truths. In fact, Begum Nihal does not know the reason behind his lack interest in the activities of his house and children though apparently, he seems

very much concerned but in reality, these things are no more than liabilities for him because his heart and mind are somewhere else. Mir Nihal never cuts jokes except when his unconscious fear is about to be touched so he makes the situation a bit funny to avoid the chance that the cat may not come out of the bag. After this Begum Nihal tries to make her point. She with all her courage and intimidation tells him that Asghar wants to marry Balqees the daughter of Mirza Shahbaz Beg. Hearing this Mir Nihal burst into rage. All his class consciousness evokes and he says;

“How can he! It is impossible, Mir Nihal said with an air of finality. He must be mad to think of it. (Ali, p. 69).”

Here the unconscious mind of Mir Nihal is fully released. He seems very conscious about his class, honor and his lineage. He uses very strong words and goes into a furious mood to stop what is apparently not expected of him and his family which is going against the pride in his own blood and class. In other words, nobility and virtue belong to a good kind of blood that Mir Nihal and his family possessed. To maintain that purity he did not want his family to get mixed with a low-blood who always fail according to them. Previously, Begum Nihal had also denied Asghar's choice when Begum Waheed was discussing this matter with her for the first time and Begum Waheed said that Balqees would a nice match for Asghar.

At the end of chapter two when Mir Nihal is busy with his pigeons Ghafoor, his servant comes hurriedly with the news that Babhan Jan Begum was in a very critical condition. Mir Nihal, hearing this even forgets to close the door behind his pigeons and steadily leaves for Babhan Jan, worried and frightened about her death. The narrator puts it like;

“Who would care for him when she has gone? His wife was there, no doubt, and so were the children. But the world they lived in was a domestic world. There was no beauty in it and no love. Here, at Babhan Jan he had built a quiet corner for himself where he could always retire and forget his sorrows in its secluded peace. It was over five years that he had kept her as his Mistress, and a bond of love had grown between them. He felt it more deeply perhaps because he was old, conscious of the lengthened shadows of life (Ali, p.23).”

In this excerpt we come across another big gap in the personality of Mir Nihal, rather we can see his other self or real self. Away from anyone he has built a secret world of his own which he regularly attends in a clandestine way. In fact, the joys of Mir Nihal's life depend on these unspoken realities. Babhan Jan is a great joy for him as long as she remains his unspeakable secret as apparently the honour, family and status of Mir Nihal do not allow him any such things rather while discussing the girl Asghar loved, Mir Nihal and Begum Nihal both were of the view that the grandmother of Balqees was a whore. There is a big gap between what they speak of and what they do not speak of, especially on the part of Mir Nihal. The spoken and the unspoken realities are quite contradictory, in the spoken realities they take the utmost care and pride in their family norms but in the unspoken realities Mir Nihal himself does not care about those norms and values rather he is involved in more grave activities than Asghar. Combining both the spoken and unspoken realities we realize that Mir Nihal is indulged in the same practice that they do not want to be in their family and because of this they hate other people and also look down upon other people. The only difference is that the actions of those whom they hate are known to all other people and people speak about them openly but in the case of Mir Nihal the same practices

remain unspoken which does not mean they do not exist, they exist in the realm of silence. The love, the pleasure and the warmth that he gets from Babhan Jan's sensual talk and beautiful body are not available in his own home. That is why with the death of Babhan Jan the dream world, the secret corner of his happiness is collapsed and an overwhelming grief overcomes him. He loses even his little interest in his domestic affairs. The effect of this unspeakable tragedy was so devastative and detrimental that when Mir Nihal came home after seeing the dead body of his beloved mistress, he was unable to say anything even while eating his meal, the food stuck in his throat because of the grief and tears came in his eyes but he took them back. Begum Nihal also noticed because his face was too sad and drawn but she thought that he was sad because some of his precious pigeons have died of severe heat. She came near him to console him and said that even our own life is not permanent and you can buy other good pigeons, such a simple Indian lady she was and only Mir Nihal knew the real fact but that was something which must necessarily be absent from the scene of domestic life. In the text even, it goes through silence like;

Mir Nihal looked at her with reproachful eyes which seemed to say; "That's not it, that's not it at all. What do you know of my grief?" But he merely said to her; "No, that's alright. I won't keep the pigeons any more. (Ali, p. 83)

It is evident from the above excerpt that Mir Nihal passes through a great tragedy of his life but he is unable to share it with anyone even his wife. It is because that the story and the relation were not supposed to be expressed. Though everything was floating in his mind disturbing him to the most but all it was extremely unsayable, of course, it was the great silence in his noble and majestic personality and as his dream world smashed to nothing he quit keeping

pigeons because he had lost all his power for these interests due to the death of Babhan Jan. In fact it was she, who has kept her still energetic and playful. Despite all this story, Mir Nihal was against the marriage of Asghar with Mirza Shahbaz Beg's daughter for five years but as Babhan Jan died Mir Nihal never interfered with any activity or decision regarding his family. That's why Begum Nihal was continuing the preparation of her son's marriage with Balqees because Mir Nihal is no longer the same as he was. Now he just wanted to pass his life like silent spectator.

Though Begum Nihal once claimed that money is nothing compared to the family name and honour but of course, it's the same money that worked for Asghar and he succeeded in receiving his father's forgiveness by giving him only a thousand rupees. As according to Marx the unseen base of all familial, social, religious and political constructions is capital. It is capital that indirectly and directly governs all human relations. Mir Nihal did not refuse Asghar's gift nor did he say anything he just remained silent. It is the same discursive use of silence whenever it is beneficial for the powerful. In fact, that pride is no more there in Mir Nihal.

To sum up Hindu people, places and cultures are going through a deep silence in Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi*. They are the silent slots of his memory kept consciously or unconsciously under the influence of a certain type of ideology. It is the job of a critical reader to delve deeper into the text to find out the "unsaid" and "unspoken" realities of the author for a full and better understanding of the text and its relation to the real world. It is possible when we try to read the unreadable so as to bring to the front what is kept in silence and also to find out the reason of keeping silence about different things and throwing others into silence developing gaps.

CONCLUSION

Indeed, silence is a meaningful, inseparable part of the language. It means responding without words but the absence of repose is a response in itself because evasions, pauses, gaps and reticence often convey more than they try to hide and control. Though the presence of silence is equated to absence but it can be brought to speaking through analysis to fill the gaps left out so as to make our understanding complete by combining the said and the unsaid. The presence of silences and gaps is a necessary part of any text and speech because it is the very silence that enables the existence of the physical shape and linguistic structure of a text. In other words, it is the linguistic structure of a text or speech that necessitates the occurrence of silence, means whenever, something is said or written about anything by anyone a portion of the information intentionally or unintentionally remains unsaid in the form of silence between the lines, in gaps, pauses, in secrets and through avoidance, depending on the approach, attitude, caste, religion, the socio-cultural and ideological background of the narrator. The dominant ideologies of patriarchy, religion and class have always made a discursive use of silences and gaps in different ways as a defense strategy suppressing and concealing some bitter realities and facts present in the unconscious against the ruled or dominated ones. It means that silence is a powerful linguistic phenomenon that creates ambiguity by being a meta-part of it and also apart from it but the full understanding of a text is only possible when all silences are given speech and similarly all gaps get filled. The speech of silence enables the dominated ones to potentially control language being an audience, listeners or readers and similarly stop themselves from being controlled by language and indirectly by the so-called different ideologies working against them and shaping them as required to the powerful minority of the same society they live in. Voicing the silence puts things in the opposite

direction than the direction of the author of a text because of silence being a purposeful tool and strategy which is why it is an act of resistance to one's experience.

After analysing the text *Twilight in Delhi*, by looking into the gaps and silences it comes to the front that the primitive outlook about women, negative attitude towards modernity keeping in view new developments in the basic and major fields of life, especially in education, science and technology left the Indian Muslim society very vulnerable for the assaults of other powerful nations. Beside this, the internal conflicts of class, race, religion and social inequality sabotaged the nationhood and politics of India which accelerated the fall of this society from inside and similarly it started giving place to the western culture, in fact, more advanced in all aspects as compared to Indian Muslim society. Last but not the least, *Twilight in Delhi* is an ideology-stricken text in terms of representation, power, gender and class.

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