

Review Article

Critical Discourse Analysis of Discontinuity of Life in *Twilight in Delhi* by Ahmad Ali

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Abstract: This paper focuses on discontinuity of life in Ahmad Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* (1940). The aim of this study is to highlight the causes of discontinuity of life while the objective of the study is to explore that how characters' lives discontinued. For this aim, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model is used. This paper concludes that critical discourse analysis at sentence level appears effective in analyzing the deep meaning of discontinuity of characters' life. It is also concluded that critical discourse analysis techniques helps in finding that the writer has juxtaposed the national, social, domestic and personal discontinued life of characters but with gradual decline.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, discontinuity, life.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the discontinuity of life in *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) with critical discourse analysis (CDA) techniques. This paper aims to explore the causes of discontinuity of life. It also investigates the process of discontinuity of characters from everyday activities while the objective of this paper is to explore how characters declined.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The word discourse means written or spoken speech. It has two categories. One is 'text' and second is 'speech'. The purpose of discourse is to analyze language in human use in their social practices. Discourse can be done at sentence level, paragraph level and at speech level. Critical discourse analysis comprehends several approaches towards social analysis of discourse. Notably, there are three approaches to critical discourse analysis. First is description that deals with the text, second is interpretation; it deals with the relation of text with its social context, and the third is explanation; it deals with interpretation and social context, the production, interpretation and their social effects (Fairclough 1, 26).

In this context, the analysis of any story/novel from sociolinguistic context is specified to "who can tell to whom, under what circumstances, how greetings,

rituals or speech and events are taking place in that particular culture (Dijk 4). Likewise, "CDA gives attention to the dynamic interplay between text production, the text itself, and text interpretation or consumption" (Coffin 99).

Similarly, six components of a story are essential to be analyzed. These are (i) setting, (ii) characters, (iii) aim of the story, (iv) statement of the problem, (v) resolution, (vi) and conclusion (Hatch 5). Likewise, the plot of a story is important as it describes the chain of events that relates to the characters (Aune 6). For this study, a model of CDA (three dimensional) is used. It is (i) text, (ii) discursive practice (i.e. production, distribution and consumption (i.e. how text is made, circulated and used, (iii) and social practice (Fairclough 73). Particularly, CDA model is used to analyze the story of the novel with above mentioned six components of the novel to analyze the overall discontinuity of life.

Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) is about the decline of individual's hopes and emotions along with the decline of Muslim culture. The story explores Muslims' everyday life. This novel is not only the picture of the decline of Muslims in fact it is a vivid and visualized description of discontinuity of man's life in general hence unique to Muslims. According to Askari, "this novel does not remain the story of Delhi alone, but is simultaneously the story of the life of mankind.

When we finish the book, the center of our tragic sense is not only Delhi, but life itself” (37).

Textual critical discourse analysis at sentence level provides a vivid description of characters’ discontinued life in the selected novel. This is the story of an allegory of human life specified to Mir Nihal’s family. The story is described by the chain of events. Apparently, all events supposed to continue but gradually readers notice a pressure on all events that were slowly breaking life’s chain. As Ali states, “This novel is not an imitation but representation of life and its changing shadows, reflecting their movements and directing the changing scene of human activity in all ages and societies...” (qtd in Raizada 3).

After independence, Ahmed Ali became a member of All India Progressive Writers’ Association. In his an article A Progressive View of Art, he writes that art has art that derives material from life. “Art leads to mental and emotional activity, stimulation of a progressive type, which leads us along the lines of the highest consciousness” (3). Based on this statement, CDA of certain sentences regarding the feelings, events, and actions of the characters gives a multidimensional picture of the discontinuity of the lives of the characters.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Mir Nihal, in his early sixties was living a happy and carefree life with his family, his mistress Babban Jaan and pigeons. His mistress was a source of delight to him on the contrary his love for pigeons showed that to him love, feelings and emotions for human and animals have equality of emotions. However, he was ignorant of his son Asghar’s emotions for his beloved. One can feel the reverse of fate that as he always showed his dislikes towards Asghar’s beloved surprisingly he himself was gradually victimized by fate with the loss of his love and emotions for his mistress and pigeons.

Similarly, his son Asghar was in his own fantasies with the feeling of losing his beloved. As we read that at the time of asking to his elder sister about his marriage with his beloved Zohra, he gestured, “Why, has something happened? Asghar asked in a voice filled both with fear and expectancy” (Ali 79).

Above line shows Asghar’s fear that indicates his whole life what it is and ought to be. We also notice that this fear is the culture of every Muslim family regarding acceptance and rejection of desired proposals. It is noticed that the discontinuity of life directly focuses on the decline of characters. The gradual decline occurs due to each character’s personal attachment with his/her personal belongings i.e. human or birds.

Textual critical discourse analysis helps the readers in understanding the social and cultural aspects of life as well. This novel not only depicts the decline of man’s continuity in fact it is the discontinuity of Delhi city as well. The novel starts with the dark image of city in the following manners, “Night envelops the city, covering it like a blanket. In the dim straight roofs and houses and by-lanes lie asleep, wrapped in a restless slumber, breathing heavily as the heat becomes oppressive or shoots through her body like pain” (1).

The above mentioned text not only indicates the visible picture of city. In fact, it clearly indicates the fall of city under colonial rule. With the description of darkest picture of the city, we see similar darkest picture of Asghar. He lives in his own fantasies regardless of city’s gradual decline. Ali depicts his feelings in the following sentence, “He had his own sorrow to think of his own life to set it right. He was unconcerned with whether the country lived or died” (249).

The above mentioned text indicates the discontinuity of whole human life including the city occurred gradually with the decline of relationships and life itself. Likewise, the devastation of pigeons and the death of Babban Jan was an indication of discontinuity of Mir Nihal’s social life that affected his domestic life, “Now she was dead; and he did not care. What mattered it if he was dependent on his sons or anybody else? And he decided to give up his work...” (113).

Through these lines, we come to know that the death of Babban Jan appeared the first step of discontinuity in Nihal’s life. These lines apparently indicate the detachment of Nihal with his family but implicitly shows the hidden impact of British rule on social values and culture. Notably, Mir Nihal’s interest in life was finished exactly after the death of Babban Jan as he did not take pain for his family and quit his work.

Sharing the devastation of pigeons, Nihal stated, “the cat devoured them last night” (114). This line indicates the misery of Nihal’s emotional relief as he said, “in a tearful voice as self-pity surged in his breast once again” (114). Nihal further said, “what is done cannot be undone” (114). This statement reveals that Nihal cannot regain the pleasures of his life again. This incident proves his second step to discontinue his life on his own or by external forces.

After two incidents (death of Babban Jan and devastation of pigeons), a sudden stroke of paralyze set Mir Nihal permanently to bed, “He lay on bed in a state of comma, too feeling-less to sit up or think” (275). Notably, this line does not only reveal the instability of Mir Nihal’s overall life. In fact, again, it realizes the readers the effect of colonial rules that affected life. The

inability not to do anything further describes the decline of Muslims' culture.

Similarly, Habibuddin's death inserted the last nail into the coffin (for Mir Nihal) while Asghar could not marry Zohra and his dreams, emotions and fantasies shattered. Thus, the whole family was now a shambles. After Asghar's marriage with Bilqeece, the upcoming gradual discontinuity of Nihal's family members is described in the following lines, "The guest.... Then one by one departed, leaving the house more lonely and quiet... (178). Generally, this line takes readers towards the pre-decided discontinuity of Nihal's family.

This novel is the story of a family with the decline of Muslim culture along with the description and decline of the city. It says, "In the by-lanes, in the streets, the gutters stank, beggars whined, vendors shouted, and life went on....(42). This line shows the whole essence of city's decline. The whole decay of the family is described in the story in the following manners,

- i. Life goes on with a heartless continuity.... (150).
- ii. There was no joy left now, no pleasure in anything. The day dawned, the evening came and life went on.... (217).

We notice that in the above lines the gradual decline of family left all the victims purposeless and dejected despite the fact that life went on however without any continuous change. The word twilight in broader perspectives conveys the discontinuity of moral, social, domestic and personal life of an individual as it is presented in the decay of Mir Nihal's emotional attachment with Babban Jan and pigeons, Asghar's failed love, Begum Nihal's near blindness and death of Habibudin. The loss of love, emotions, children, energy and strength explicitly reveals that the characters suffered from the environmental and personal imposed changes.

The act of Asghar's giving a permanent shape to the grave of Bilquees, "the grave could be made permanent" (237) indicates the permanent miseries of Asghar. The regret of Nihal's shows the regret of Muslims' fall under the hands of colonial rule. Nihal's feelings are described in the following sentence "...He remained where he was, living in a constant twilight of regret, watching young die one by one and again their liberty from the sorrows of the world" (239). This regret has two meanings. One is twilight of continuity which gradually became fixed and second is the continuity of liberty after the death that has nothing to do with worldly affairs. Ali juxtaposed individual's regret and whole nation's regret with the fall of Muslim at social and domestic level. The above lines reveal that how with the decline of individual's feeling the writer depicted the regret of whole nation.

Ali focuses on the change of human life which describes what is going on, what has done and what is left. The writer intentionally chooses the universal theme to highlight allegorical aspects of characters through story. The examples are seen in the love affair episode of Asghar's with Zohra. It is completely raptured, dejected and frustrated as they failed to achieve their love. Similarly, Ail presents three natural phenomena in terms of death of Habibuddin, Babban Jan and Mustari Bai along with the sickness of Mir Nihal and Habibuddin with family quarrels. No one can deny the fact that the above mentioned incidents are part of every human's life. These are not unique to only Mir Nihal's family. Thus, Ali's purpose is to depict the discontinuity of human life in general.

The discontinuity of relationships is parallel to the decline of Delhi city. In the beginning of the story, the discontinuity of life and relationships is indicated with the description of Delhi city, "But the city of Delhi, built hundreds of years ago, fought for, dies for, coveted and desired, built, destroyed, and rebuilt, for five and six and seven times, mourned and sung, raped and conquered, yet whole and alive, lies indifferent in the terms of sleep" (4).

The writer ironically conveys the presence of powerful authorities, their ways, life, birth, decline and death of a city that further explicitly indicate life, birth, decline and death of characters. Later, this discontinuity is further described by Forster, "It is beautifully written and very moving...At the end one has poignant that poetry and daily life have got parted, and will never come together again" (qtd in Askari 28). It is evident in the novel that Ali juxtaposed continuity of life and discontinuity of life with real incidents.

Particularly, no one deny that *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) is the story of whole nation from abstract to concrete elements that affected and stopped the continuity of life. By all means, the discontinuity of life does not mean that all the victims faced death in fact discontinuity indicates, "yet life went on, without any break or consciousness of change" (Ali 242).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The conclusion drawn from the textual analysis is that CDA is a powerful technique to uncover and dissect the issues and ideologies which are not on surface level. It is also concluded that CDA provides a wider picture of life that is presented in the text. However, textual analysis opens new ways to see life as it is and as it is not and ought to be. CDA techniques are also beneficial in terms of analyzing unsaid and figurative aspects of text. Particularly, Fairclough's three CDA techniques are applied in this paper and achieved the objective of CDA with the description of the text, its interpretation and explanation in social and domestic context in order to shed light on the society

and its effect on the characters' gradual discontinued life.

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