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**RESEARCH PAPER**

**The Politics of Representation of the Colony: A Critical Study  
of A Passage to India and Twilight in Delhi**

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**ABSTRACT**

The current study aims to investigate the colony and its representation by the colonizer and the colonized. By applying the theoretical insights of postcolonialism, this paper will focus on the politics of representation. In regard to this, *A Passage to India* is a record of the British colony by the colonizer E. M. Forster, whereas, *Twilight in Delhi* by Ahmed Ali too deals with the same but from the perspective of the colonized. Arguably, the authors present the same colony in two different ways which exhibit their cultural and political positions. The representation of the same colony by the two authors one from the colonizing civilization and the other from the colonized is always reflective of their individual voices. For Edward W. Said, the West represents the East in a way that helps in presenting a dominating a position of the West and it represents the East as inferior, superstitious, uncivilized and evil. Moreover, the current study has probed the issue of cultural representation by employing textual analyses and applied Homi K. Bhabha and Edward Said's theoretical works on representation in postcolonial theoretic paradigm. The analyses have shown that both the texts represent colonial India quite differently because of the cultural positions of the writers as the colonizer and the colonized.

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**KEYWORDS** Colony, Postcolonialism, Representation, The Colonizer, The Colonized

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**Introduction**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the politics of representation by the colonizer and the colonized. In regard to this, two primary texts have been taken: E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) and Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* (1940). The study probes how both the texts negotiate with and contradict each other in terms of the representation of the same colony.

The etymology of the word 'colony' is derived from *colōnia* which means settled land or a farm. It comes from *colōnus* which means a farmer or a settler in a new land, and *colōnus* in turn originates from *colere* which means to cultivate or to inhabit (Simpson & Weiner 2018). In connection to this, a colony is a group or a body of people who travel from their motherland to inhabit and to cultivate in a new land while remaining subject to their motherland (Onions 2018). Moreover, Harper Collins (2006) defines colony as a country which is controlled by a powerful country. However, Said's definition of colonialism and imperialism is pertinent in this regard, since "imperialism" "means the practice", "the theory", and "the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory". Hence, "Colonialism is a" practice of getting full or partial political control over the foreign land and its people. Likewise, Colonialism, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on a distant territory (8). Accordingly, Imperialism is a policy of conquering foreign lands

and its people for the purpose of looting and plundering natural resources and its raw material. Similarly, for Ashcroft et al., colonialism is the practical form of imperialism. Hence, colonialism is the occupation and control of foreign land and goods (Loomba 2015). However, Postcolonialism deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and colonies (Ashcroft et al. 2013). Originally, the term is used after the Second World War by literary critics and historians like Gayatri C. Spivak (1942- ), Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975) and Cyril Lionel Robert James (1901-1989) in the late 1970s to converse with various cultural effects of colonization (Gruesser 2007). The postcolonial discourse deals with certain concerns such as rejecting the claims to universalism made in the Western literature, cultural difference, diversity, hybridity, identity, marginality of the weaker, plurality, mimicry, otherness and the representation of other cultures in literature (Barry 2002; Tyson 1950).

Besides, Postcolonial critics have added a diverse range of experiences to postcolonial literature such as migration, slavery, race, gender, space, difference, repression, resistance, and responses to dominant ruler discourses of the imperial Europe like history, philosophy and language. In addition to all these, "the theoretical practices in speaking and writing by which all these come into being are also the part of postcolonial literature" (Griffiths & Tiffin 2003). Among all these, "representation can be defined as the system or process by which meanings are produced and exchanged among the members of a culture through the use of language, signs and images which stands for things" (Hall 2014).

### Literature Review

The two primary texts "*A Passage to India* (1924) and *Twilight in Delhi*" (1940) used in this research. They discuss the politics of representation as foregrounded by "E. M. Forster and Ahmed Ali" in each case. In these novels, the meaning of a colony is understood and presented in terms of the politics of representation. The novel, "*A Passage to India*", presents India from the western perspective of India as a colony whereas the novel, "*Twilight in Delhi*", presents India but through the lens of the colonized. Therefore, this research explores the politics of representation to show authorial voice which reflects the cultural position of the authors in the text. For instance, the same colony, India, is thus depicted by the two authors in two ways which reflect their cultural positions in their respective works. The conflict between the English ruler and the Indian subject, the clash of two cultures, and the portrayal of India appear as major themes in *A Passage to India*. In this novel, the characters Mrs. Moore, Adela Quest, Cyril Fielding and Ronny Heaslop are the envoys of the colonial culture, whereas "Dr. Aziz and Hamidullah" are the representatives of the colonized and the Muslim culture. So, representation in these perspectives may differ from each other. Forster depicts India as a colourless place because he is influenced by the religious, racial, and cultural differences of the West with the Muslims. For instance, Forster says that the Indians worship gods and the English men like to behave as gods (74). This proves that Forster is greatly influenced by his culture and shows his sense of superiority to the Indians. By the same token, *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) also deals with same tension between the ruler and the ruled, the cultural differences and portraiture of India as a colony. The characters Mir Nihal, Begam Nihal, Asghar and Shams are representatives of the ruled class and the Muslim culture, while King George and English soldiers represent the ruling class and the colonial culture. India, in Ali's novel, is a colourful place to live in. There is more beauty and more poetry in the city of Delhi- the place of the colonized. The problem of representation is, therefore, a common theme in the two novels but the representation in "*A Passage to India*" is divided between the colonizer and the colonized. However, it is absent in "*Twilight in Delhi*" as Ali does not include the voice of the colonizer in his novel.

## A Passage to India

“The novel *A Passage to India*” (1924) presents colonial discourse, so critics such as Banita Parry (1931-), Sara Suleri (1953-), Brenda Silver (1951-) and “Paul B. Armstrong (1949-) have not applauded the novel’s humanist political perceptions and have scorned its equivocation and limitations” (Parry 1985). Thus, “Global perspectives have refused the established representation of the relationship between the metropolitan culture and the marginalized in *A Passage to India*” (30). In her essay, “The Politics of Representation in *A Passage to India*”, Banita Parry (1931-) maintains that representation is primary to the “followers of mimetic theory in literature”. The pursuit of empiricism, for the followers of mimetic theory of literature, is connected with didacticism which is attained “when they find the narrative content a true portrayal of India” (27). She argues that ideology is constructed through representation, which is not an authentic and honest account of reality but discourses of the metropolitan against its peripheries. Therefore, “*A Passage to India*” is a representative book of the colonial discourse which presents the culture of the metropolis and its domination over the marginalized (27-28). She also demonstrates that Western texts portray India as the *other* which is the strategy of discrimination and exclusion of Indians from the ‘self’. The policy of discrimination and ostracism can be inferred in a series of meanings produced by “Forster in *A Passage to India*” for Indians through words as such ‘exotic’, ‘outcaste’, ‘barbarous’, ‘unrelated’, ‘dissimilar’, ‘anomalous’, ‘deviant’, ‘eccentric’, ‘alien’, ‘mysterious’, ‘foreign’, ‘bizarre’, ‘abnormal’ and ‘strange’. She describes that Indian cosmologies are objectified in Forster’s world that inform the aliens that human beings’ place is within the circle of monkeys, wasps, vultures, flies, stone, and mud (37). Hence, portraying the world as ‘*other*’ offers the politics of representation behind the appearance of British Raj in India (Benita Parry 1931).

## Twilight in Delhi

The Anglo-Indian writers such as E. M. Forster (1879) present the colonized as uncivilized, superstitious, Others and sycophant whereas the native writer such as Ahmed Ali disapproves “this version of representation and endeavours to exert actual state of affairs” (35). Both the novelists have shown that the native women are without entity and role, sex and superstitions are common traits among natives. Moreover, Forster illustrates the natives who develop anti-British feelings because of the inhumane and oppressive treatment they receive from the colonizers, whereas, “Ahmed Ali shows the older generation as anti-British while the young seem attracted towards the English culture” (35).

The novel, “*Twilight in Delhi*” explicates the demise of Mughal Empire, moral decay of characters, male chauvinism, Cultural Revolution and the women as powerless” (Neeta 2016). She argues that Ali illustrates loss of values such as identity, socio-cultural values, moral and religious values because of British colonial regime (Neeta 2016). The character Mir Nihal sheds tear on the loss of the past glory of his ancestors. The final verdict about Asghar’s marriage and his imitation of the English culture show the loss of cultural values. Moreover, she explains loss of moral and religious values when grave diggers charge higher rates from the family member of deceased. Asghar behaves rudely towards his elders which also show loss of moral and ethical values (Neeta 2016).

## Material and Methods

Since the study is non-empirical and qualitative in nature, the researcher proposes to use deductive approach. Moreover, the researcher aims at drawing the textual analysis for the study of the selected novels E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* and

Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi*. For this purpose, both primary and secondary sources will be utilized. Online websites of reputed papers, research articles, academic journals and magazines in question using the keywords "representation", "colony", "otherness or identity", "postcolonial India", "depiction by the colonizer and the colonized" will be consulted for conducting the research.

## Results and Discussion

"E. M Forster's *A Passage to India* deals with the relationship between English and the natives of India during the colonial period in which Great Britain ruled over India. The novel's setting is an imaginary city of Chandrapore, a city located along the Ganges River near the Marabar caves. The novel's protagonist, "Dr. Aziz, is a Muslim doctor in the city and a widower". He is accused by Adela of attempting sexual assault in the Marabar Caves. During Aziz's trial in the court, Adela confesses that she is mistaken in her accusation and that he is innocent. Her confession results in a racial tussle between the colonizer and the colonized. The English community demands severe punishment for Dr. Aziz whereas the native struggles to save himself. Aziz is presented as wanton and lascivious who considers women as sex objects (26). Moreover, "*Twilight in Delhi*, by Ahmed Ali", focuses on "India's changing social, political and cultural image" and gives a descriptive image of Indian Muslims in colonial era. The story revolves around an upper class Muslim merchant "Mir Nihal and his family as changes do occur in their personal lives and in Indian culture". Mir Nihal's son, Asghar, battles with issues in his marriage and the Indian experience of new colonized identity. Unlike Dr. Aziz, Mir Nihal is a strong man who hates the British as they were ruling India against the will of the Indians. The politics of representation in both the novels is influenced by authors in each case. Forster and Ali's approach towards India is essentialist as both the writers capture synecdochical essence of India.

### A Passage to India

The novel is a representative text of colonial epoch which sheds light on the various events in British India. Edward Morgan Forster represents the colony by depicting its residents, the buildings, the places, and the river. The representation of the colony is quite axiomatic in his division of the novel into three parts i.e. "Mosque, Caves and Temple".

"To begin with the part-I of the novel, Mosque, he opens the novel with the description of an imaginary city of Chandrapore". Forster describes the city as. "Except for the Marabar Caves- and they are twenty miles off- the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary. Edged rather than washed by the river Ganges, it trails for a couple of miles along the bank, scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely" (31). It is an unexciting city situated on the verge of the Ganges. The residents do not consider the river as holy so there are no bathing steps in the river. The river only deposits the rubbish. The city is not large and beautiful. Its lanes, bazaars and temples are unattractive. The natives of India are portrayed as mud moving. There is nothing in the city that presents something extraordinary except the Marabar Caves which were situated twenty miles away from the city of Chandrapore.

By the same token, Forster constructs the image of his race as superior to the natives by representing the mindsets of the colonizers about the colonized. For instance, Adela Quested is very curious to see the natives as she thinks of them as other. Her eagerness to meet the Indians shocks the other ladies in the club. Miss Derek declares that she has had enough experience of meeting Indian people because she has served in

an Indian state and the natives should be avoided at any cost. This attitude of Miss Derek shows Forster's representation of the colonizers as superior to the colonized.

The representation of the Mosque is also noteworthy. Forster represents the mosque as a deserted place. It has a ruined gate that opens in the courtyard. It has a tank of clear water for ablution. Since the pipe of the tank was connected to the main pipe of the city which provided water so its tap keeps running always. The slabs of the courtyard are broken. The interior of the mosque is deeper than the exterior part. It has only a lamp that provides the light to the mosque and the most part of the mosque remains in the dark. Moreover, "the ninety nine names of God" are visible in black on the front part of the mosque. Aziz visits the mosque to seek comfort and peace. So, depiction of the mosque shows that the colonizer has no respect for the sacred places of the colonized as former is not attached to it emotionally.

Forster depicts India as a place of snakes and leopards. Walking alone at night can be harmful as a snake can bite or leopard can attack. When Mrs. Moore sojourns in the mosque then Aziz advises the old lady that she should not come out at night as it can be dangerous. Even the insects are so harmful that if they bite one can die. Aziz asserts, "For Example, a six-spot beetle, he continued. You pick it up, it bites, you die" (Forster 45). Hence, the description shows that India is place of wild jungle that portrays savagery of the place.

In another place, Forster draws the picture of Aziz's house when Fielding comes to inquire of Aziz's health. The latter feels embarrassed at the filthy look of his room. Forster describes the room as, "What a room! What a meeting! Squalor and ugly talk, the floor strewn with fragments of cane and nuts, and spotted with ink, the pictures crooked upon dirty walls, no *punkah!* He hadn't meant to live like this or among these third-rate people" (135). This excerpt shows Forster's representation of the colony as extremely unpleasant, dirty and inferior. Forster seems to support Eurocentric view of being superior to the colonized. He appears as the typical Western who sees the people of the third world as the other. His representation of the Orient as Other is an ideological strategy to rule over the colony.

For the representation of the colony, Forster describes an unknown place as colourless and unpleasant. He constructs an image of the Indian land through the description of the place as poorer. Adela and Ronny are picked up by Nawab Bahadur in his car. Unexpectedly, the car bumps into a tree and is damaged. The Eurasian chauffeur gets busy with the repair of the car. At that moment, Forster describes the surrounding as, "The car made a burring noise and rushed along a chaussee that ran upon an embankment above melancholy fields. Trees of a poor quality bordered the road, indeed the whole scene was inferior, and suggested that the countryside was too vast to admit [*sic*] of excellence" (112). Forster represents fields as melancholic, trees as of poor quality and the whole scene as inferior. This kind of representation is not unbiased. Forster seems functioning as a typical English character in the novel.

The second part of the book describes the Marabar Caves. Forster represents them as mysterious. They are approached by a tunnel eight feet long, five feet high and three feet wide. It leads to a circular space of about twenty feet in diameter. All caves are identical. Forster has depicted them as mysterious and evil. Symbolically, he seems to portray them synonymous to the heart of the Indians which is so dark that cannot be discovered, however, Sara Sulri (1953-) calls them as "the anus of the [*sic*] imperialism" (Sulri 2013). Metaphorically, it means that the failure of the English to take full control over India as the tour to the Marabar Caves fails.

On reaching the Marabar Caves, the place is presented as barren field of a desert. There was nothing in the Marabar Caves worth seeing. The trees look like snakes. Adela also misunderstands the tree for a snake as tree is depicted as black cobra. She wants to know about the Moghal emperor, Akbar. Aziz calls Akbar as a half Hindu because he introduces a new religion in Islam. On entering in the first cave, they feel tolerably comfortable. Furthermore, they hear an echo in the cave which is like *bou-oum*. Whatever one utters in the cave the, seemingly, the same sinister sound replies and the cave quivers until it absorbs into the roof. The minutest things such as blowing of nose, striking a match, and even the squeak of a boot in the cave produce an echo i.e. *bou-oum*. Mrs. Moore finds the echo as utterly dull and comes out of the cave at once. Forster's representation of the colony is partial and it is quite axiomatic in his description of trees and the Marabar Caves.

Notably, the trip to the Marabar Caves is over and Aziz along with his friend, Mr. Fielding, returns to Chandrapore. When the train reaches Chandrapore, they are surprised to find the police officer, Haq, waiting for them. Mr. Haq declares that it is his painful duty to arrest Aziz under the instruction of Mr. McBryde for the charge of Adela's attempted rape. They are taken aback. In this state of confusion, "Aziz tries to escape but Fielding stops him" and tells him that he should have guts to face the trouble. He is arrested and taken to the prison. Later, Mr. McBryde, the superintendent of the police, is a cynic and believes that every Indian is unreliable and criminal at heart. He tells Fielding that Aziz assaults Adela Quested in one of the caves but she resists and runs away successfully by hitting him hard with her field glasses. Fielding does not believe a word of whatever McBryde tells him. He believes that Aziz is not guilty. He tries to meet Adela but cannot do so because she is not feeling well. Finally, he decides to write a letter to Adela.

Interestingly, Forster's representation of London is noteworthy during the conversation of Dr. Aziz and Fielding in the last part of the book i.e. Caves. Aziz asks him, "I suppose you will visit Miss Quested. 'If I have time. It will be strange seeing her in Hampstead. 'What is Hampstead?' 'An artistic and thoughtful little suburb of London- 'And there she lives in comfort; you will enjoy seeing her..." (Forster 309). Forster represents the real city, Hampstead, in juxtaposition of an imaginary city, Chandrapore. He presents the city of London as an artistic suburb. This politics of representation proves his cultural background.

### Twilight in Delhi

To begin with *Twilight in Delhi*, the novel is the representative text of the colonial era which illustrates the different events from the daily life. Ahmed Ali opens his novel with the representation of the British colony and the capital of India i.e. *Delhi*. He portrays the city as animated that is breathing and lying asleep wrapped in a blanket. The natives are enjoying slumber on the roofs, on the roads, in the courtyards and in the streets after the painful day's labour.

The graphical description sets the mood of representation. The piece of excerpt shows the condition of the British colony, India. Ali strives to provide us with the picture of Delhi in a multifaceted way. He tries to depict almost all dimensions of its sights and sounds. It seems that the writer is taking the reader on a journey and one can feel as if one literally walking in the streets of Delhi because he created the image invigorating all senses.

Ali himself testifies the demise of Delhi and the Moghal Empire in the first part of the book. He asserts that: "Like a beaten dog it has curled its tail between its legs, and

lies lifeless in the night as an acknowledgement of defeat" (Ali 1940). He delineates the defeated and the degraded visual representation of Delhi's fall at the hands of its colonial master. Presently, King George V is about to arrive and coronation is about to take place. Due to this, new roads are being built which reduce the splendor of Delhi into mere pomp and show. Princes and princesses have been reduced to the rank of servants. Bahadur Shah Zafar's granddaughter Gul Bano begs from street to street. At one place in the text she affirms, "We are beggars and the *farangis* are kings" (139). This shows the sunset of the Moghal Empire. The cause of the demise is the heavy loot and plunder of the *farangis*, a derogatory term for the colonizer.

Ali captures the true domestic setting of an Indian Muslim family with the partition of *zenana*, the part of a house reserved for only the ladies, and *mardana*, the part of a house reserved only for men. In the *zenana* things remain same and static. There is no hustle and bustle on the ladies' side except on the festival days or at the arrival of some guests that come only few and far between. He does not miss the minutest detail in representation of the colony such as the description of the fountain in the middle of the courtyard, the Jasmines that grew around it, the henna tree, the nest in the tree etc. He also depicts the actual places as Chandni Chowk, Jamia Masjid and Chawori Chowk which were the spots of major activities in the novel. These places remained deserted for a long time after the mutiny of 1857. The British colony was looted, ransacked, and destroyed. The worst massacre of history took place in Delhi when most of its population was assassinated. The possessions of the prominent Muslim leaders were confiscated that resulted in the fall of Delhi.

Ali constructs the image of 'other' or 'otherness' in the novel. The colonizers are depicted as the other when they are called *farangis* by the natives. It is a derogatory term for the white people because they are ruling over India against the will of the Indians. Begum Jamal says that, "What would these beaten-with-the-broom *farangis* do" (Ali 1940). In response to this Begum Nihal remarks, "When the Moghal Kings used to go out, rupees and gold *mohurs* were showered by the handfuls. What will these good-as-dead *farangis* give? Dust and stones..." (Ali 1940). By the same token, Begum Nihal laments at the report of Shams when he said that the pavilion was burnt down two days before the coronation. She replies, "It's God's vengeance falling on these good-as-dead *farangis*, she said. 'May they be destroyed for what they have done to Hindustan. May God's scourge fall on them'" (137). The image of the other is quite axiomatic in this quoted piece of excerpt. By writing in English, Ali proves to the colonizer that this is his way of 'writing back to the Empire'.

Ali's art of characterization makes him a realist. He is a great painter in presenting his characters with the micro detail. The representation of Asghar's character is remarkable. He is a young man of twenty two. He is a tall and handsome gallant. He follows new trends in fashion. His appearance reflects eastern and western culture. He wears a red Turkish hat, Sherwani, English shirt, Jasmine flowers wrap around his waist and wears English shoes. Besides, he is an imaginary person who finds his beloved in the stars and starts dancing with his beloved Bilqeece in his imagination. He threatens his family of committing suicide in case he is not allowed to marry Bilqeece. Though his love is un-reflected yet he loves Bilqeece passionately. Bilqeece's character is revealed to us during his visit to his friend, Bari's home. The latter finds Asghar in distress and inquires his concern wherein Asghar says that he is in love with Bilqeece and it is a matter of life and death for him. Asghar says,

"She is beautiful, Bari, very beautiful," Asghar said. 'She is graceful as cypress. Her hair is blacker than the night of separation, and her face is brighter than the hours of

love. Her eyes are like narcissi, big and beautiful. There is nectar in their whites and poison in their blacks. Her eyebrows are like two arched bows ready to wound the hearts of men with the arrows of their lashes. Her lips are redder than the blood of lovers, and her teeth look like pearls studded in a row... I tell you she is beautiful".

This representation of Bilquees's character is incredible. In reply to this, Bari says to Asghar, "Is she a living being or a poem?" (32). The portrayal of Bilquees is a result of Ali's keen sense of observation and his profound intellect. He depicts his characters in both ways, direct and indirect. Therefore, Ali constructs an ideal and perfect image of the natives of Delhi and Delhi itself.

Hence, Ali's representation of the colony is remarkable. By representation, he constructs an image of the colonizers who subjugate and marginalize the basic rights of the colonized. He also constructs another image of the colonized who are the victims of the Imperial forces. Being part of the colonized nation, he presents the culture of the natives according to the perception of the colonized. While representing the colony, Ali's approach is essentialist because he captures synecdochical essence of India. Therefore, it may be discussed that both authors Forster and Ali portray their perspective of the colonized India. There is an eminent of these authors in their creative work, thereby, opening a debate as to the autonomous of the author in representation.

## Conclusion

The study has shown the effects of colonization on the culture of the colony. This research explores India as a colony of the British. The researcher has probed the cultural representation of the British colony in two different ways- one by the colonizer, "E. M. Forster, and the other by the colonized, Ahmed Ali". Both the authors present the same colony in two ways in their novels, "*A Passage to India* (1924) and *Twilight in Delhi*" (1940) respectively. Their ways of representations are different and their works are reflective of their authorial voices which are influenced by the cultural and political positions. Usually, the colonizers depict the colonized territory as inferior to the other. This research proffers that E. M. Forster presents India as a place full of ignominy and bizarre features full of monotonous whereas the native writers- like Ahmed Ali- write back to the Empire and present the culture of the same as an abode of comfort and growth.

Moreover, the study has shown that E. M. Forster and Ahmed Ali's approach towards India is essentialist as both the writers capture synecdochical essence of India and they present the same culture in two ways which manifest their cultural and political positions. The colonizer, E. M. Forster, takes one part of India i.e. Chanderapore and presents it as the whole of India. Likewise, the colonized, Ahmed Ali, takes the capital of India, Delhi and present it as the whole of India. Therefore, both are essentialist in terms of representation of the colonial India as they try to capture synecdochical essence of India. In regard to this, the study has revealed the role of the author in constructing an image of reality in each case as Alternate Reality. The author works in the text as an active agent who is not dead but he participates in constructing the meaning.



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