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Colonial Urbanization and Environmental Degradation in Twilight in Delhi: An Ecocritical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the intersection of colonial urbanization and environmental degradation in *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) by Ahmed Ali through the theoretical framework of Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence *(2011)*. It examines how British colonial urban planning in early twentieth-century Delhi constituted a gradual, invisible form of ecological violence that disrupted indigenous ecological systems, social relations, and cultural identities. Using a qualitative textual and thematic analysis of few selected passages, the study identifies two major ecocritical themes: colonial urbanization and eco-spirituality. The research integrates ecocritical theory (Garrard, 2012) to demonstrate how Ali's narrative aesthetic transforms imperceptible environmental degradation into visible literary expression. The environmental dimensions of colonial impact in *Twilight in Delhi* have received limited scholarly attention within ecocritical frameworks, despite the novel's rich portrayal of ecological transformation alongside cultural decline. By examining how Ali's narrative represents the environmental consequences of British urban planning and infrastructure development in Delhi, this study seeks to illuminate the ways in which colonial urbanization constituted a form of slow violence against both human communities and natural ecosystems, contributing to broader discussions within postcolonial ecocriticism about the lasting environmental legacies of imperial rule. The study contributes to postcolonial and environmental humanities by situating Ali's work as an early example of South Asian eco-literature, offering insights into the colonial roots of contemporary urban ecological crises in Delhi and beyond. This article argues that Ali's novel acts as a literary archive of environmental memory and resistance, reasserting the significance of decolonizing environmental narratives in the Global South. The study also finds that Ali fulfills Nixon's structure of slow violence in Delhi's urban metamorphosis, where British self-framed progressive policies actively perpetrate ecological violence against native Muslims through weaponized dust and heat.

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1. Introduction

This research investigates the intricate relationship between colonial urbanization processes and environmental degradation as depicted in Ahmed Ali's seminal novel *Twilight in Delhi* through an ecocritical lens. Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi,* published in 1940, serves as a critical literary text that captures the transitional period of Delhi's urban transformation under British colonial rule. This research positions Ali's work as more than a historical narrative; it functions as an environmental document that records the ecological disruption caused by colonial urbanization practices. Ecocriticism as a method of criticism criticizes language and literature based on gender sensitivity and Marxist criticism introduces interventions in textual study on the modes of production, and economics classes which are imperatively vital to understanding how environmental referencing is reflected in literature.

This research employs ecocritical methodologies to analyze how *Twilight in Delhi* environmental changes during colonial urbanization. Environmental degradation in the novel manifests through multiple narrative elements: the destruction of traditional gardens and water systems, the introduction of industrial pollution through railway expansion, and the disruption of seasonal agricultural cycles that historically sustained Delhi's ecological balance. Colonial modernization had lots of benefits, but their price was not significant to the environment.

This study can be also characterized as helping to decolonize environmental history and emphasize the survival of approaches to ardour grounded in autonomous environmental knowledge systems which colonial urbanization had displaced or excluded. Traditional water management systems, including *baolis* (stepwells) and canal networks that had sustained Delhi's population for centuries, were either abandoned or modified to serve colonial administrative needs. This transformation created long-term water security challenges that continue to affect Delhi's environmental sustainability. Railway expansion, introduced new forms of environmental degradation, including air pollution from coal-burning locomotives, noise pollution that disrupted urban and peri-urban ecosystems, and landscape fragmentation that interrupted traditional ecological corridors.

This study fills an important research gap by applying Nixon's (2011) concept of *s*low violence to highlight gradual, invisible, and accumulating environmental harm in a disproportionately marginalized demographic landscapes, to prove that the British urban policies led to the implementation of long-term ecological violence on the original population of locally found indigenous cities, which manifests through the ongoing environmental injustices unleashed on the city by the local indigenous Muslim community (Delhi) in its struggle with air pollution, urban heat islands, and water insecurity problems. It is situated at the crossroads of literary criticism, environmental history, and postcolonial studies, hence, the study puts *Twilight in Delhi* in a new perspective, not only as cultural nostalgia but the annexation of early ecological archives locking the traces of colonial urbanization (Patel, 2023).

The research objectives are mentioned below

- To examine colonial urbanization as a form of ecological violence and environmental disturbance in Twilight in Delhi.
- To examine the representation of environmental injustice and its impact on indigenous communities within the novel's narrative.

This research focuses on environmental degradation and ecocritical analysis of the selected text by answering following questions:

- How does *Twilight in Delhi* portray environmental consequences of British colonial urbanization on Delhi's landscape and ecosystem?
- How is the novel presenting the indigenous individuals and communities as the victims of urban planning done by colonial cities that created environmental injustice?

This study is significant because it fills an important ecocritical lacunae in South Asian literature because it considers colonial urbanization considering the environment. Contemporary environmental crises in Delhi, including air pollution, water scarcity, and urban heat island effects, can be traced to colonial-era urban planning decisions that prioritized administrative efficiency over ecological sustainability (Patel, 2023). The study brings forth considerable amount of postcolonial ecocriticism by exemplifying how literary works have the potential to unearth the intricate interplay between imperial city planning, environmental disturbance, and forced relocation of citizens. Moreover, the analysis gives useful insights of literature as a reservoir of environmental memory, a record of ecological transformation that may have passed into historical ignorance and the immediate reader of the explanatory insights of environmental causes of urban inequality and degradation.

2. Literature Review

This literature review deals with the theoretical underpinnings of ecocritical analysis in postcolonial literature, as well as how, over time, interdisciplinary studies that connect environmental-based awareness and postcolonial literary criticism have evolved. This review recaps the recent occurrences in ecocritical theory, environmental humanities, and post-colonial environmental discourse to build a complete theoretical framework analyzing colonial urbanization and environment degradation in works of literature. More recent studies show that postcolonial studies and environmental criticism are becoming almost synonymous as more people are beginning to realize that colonial inheritances influenced ecological ties and systems of knowledge about the natural world. In this review, the contemporary studies are placed in a wider context of discussions regarding the field of decolonizing environmental narratives as well as defining the perspectives that must be adopted to explore the theme of the environment in colonial literature. The analysis shows that postcolonial ecocriticism has now become central methodology of interdisciplinary research, which offers vital means of comprehending the ways literature proves useful in depicting the environmental changes that occur in the colonial state.

Ecocritical theory demonstrated significant evolution from its origins in nature writing analysis to sophisticated interdisciplinary methodology that encompasses postcolonial environmental concerns (Chakraborty, 2024). Ecological exploitation should be placed squarely in the historical context of colonialism and deep-rooted hierarchies which capture the future landscape of ecology even in the modern era, a significant development in the scholarly arena. The interrelation between the postcolonial theory and the method of ecocriticism has opened new possibilities of approaching environmental concerns in the context of colonial literature. Singh (2024) argues that postcolonial ecocriticism demonstrates that the colonial process destroyed native knowledge systems about the environment and substituted them with Western ecological paradigms in colonized lands.

This framework receives support in the current study due to the way the onset of colonial urbanization in Delhi was a radical shift in the traditional ecological practices, as evidenced in the narration of Ali. The development of ecocritical theory is telling of the growing concern that environmental concerns are not isolated matters, but rather they are related to the issues of cultural identity, political power, and even historical justice, and we need to have postcolonial views in our overall consideration of environmental literary work. The modern ecocritical theory focuses on the significance of viewing the representation of the environment in the wider frames of cultural and political change. Gupta (2025) demonstrates that ecocritical analysis must consider how environmental themes function within larger narratives of colonial resistance and cultural preservation Recent theoretical developments in postcolonial ecocriticism emphasize the need for interdisciplinary approaches that can address the complexity of environmental and cultural transformation under colonial rule (Rahman, 2024). Sharma (2023) demonstrates that environmental humanities methodology provides essential tools for analyzing how colonial practices created lasting environmental legacies that continue to influence contemporary urban development.

Postcolonial ecocriticism is an important theoretical contribution, which considers how the colonial relations broke the established relationships of the indigenous people with the environment and replaced the ecological systems with western ecological paradigm into the communities under colonization. Mukherjee (2024) argues that postcolonial ecocriticism provides essential analytical tools for examining how literature environmental transformation under colonial rule while preserving indigenous environmental knowledge systems. The postcolonial ecocriticism of the modern age places stress on the relevance to discuss the environmental justice issues in the historical perspective of environmental alterations related to the process of colonization. Nair (2025) argues that postcolonial ecocritical analysis must address how colonial environmental practices created lasting patterns of environmental inequality that continue to affect formerly colonized territories. Colonial policy of infrastructure development in India significantly transformed systems ecological system in the region with grand projects that focused on administrative efficacy and supply of resources rather than infrastructure sustainability. The development of railway infrastructure, construction of telegraph systems, administrative buildings compelled the increase in the extraction of natural resources that had never taken place before and produced new types of environmental damage and landscape fragmentation.

The novel's portrayal of railway expansion, road construction, and new administrative buildings reveals how infrastructure development disrupted traditional ecological relationships while imposing new environmental pressures on urban communities. Colonial infrastructure projects systematically altered hydrological systems, soil composition, and vegetation patterns across South Asian urban regions through introduction of Western construction techniques and materials (Gupta, 2023). Gupta provokes that the colonial engineers always overlooked the traditional systems of water management and the natural patterns of seasons in creating any infrastructural projects thus making them environmentally unstable as it introduced the issues of lack of resource availability in the long term. The current research builds upon Gupta's environmental analysis by examining how infrastructure development depicted in Ali's novel disrupted Delhi's traditional water systems, including stepwells, canals, and seasonal pond networks that had sustained urban agriculture and domestic water supply. The expansion of colonial time that displaced the traditional water system with pipe systems and drainage lines generated different patterns of access to water and notions of environmental vulnerability that are tracked in the novel through the depiction of the

transformation of neighborhood conditions. A recent study by Rahman (2025) revealed that imperial infrastructure development created cascading ecological effects that extended far beyond immediate construction sites to influence regional environmental systems and agricultural productivity.

Modern cross-country research shows that the legacies of colonial urbanization still affect the challenges and processes of urbanization prevalent in South Asian cities, giving rise to similar modern environmental issues even though they occurred at varying development courses (Joshi, 2025). 1857-1947 Delhi witnessed the dramatic environmental change in its colonial era of 1857 and 1947 which changed the dynamics of regional ecology and gave rise to the patterns of environment exploitation which still have an impact on the modern situation of urban environmental issues. Contemporary research has established that colonial environmental policies created "systematic disruption of indigenous ecological practices and the imposition of extractive environmental management systems" (Rao, 2023), while current investigations extend this analysis by demonstrating how colonial environmental changes in Delhi reflected broader imperial strategies of environmental control and resource extraction that served metropolitan economic interests (Joshi, 2024).

This research contrasts with earlier interpretations that emphasized the temporary nature of colonial environmental impact, instead demonstrating how colonial environmental changes created structural transformations that continue to influence Delhi's environmental trajectory. Water systems, gardens, and urban ecology in historical Delhi were highly civilized combinations of natural and man-made domains that supported both human settlements and biodiversity with well-planned landscape management procedures. Contemporary research has established that historical Delhi's water systems incorporated "complex networks of tanks, wells, and channels that maintained regional hydrological balance while supporting diverse urban activities" (Pandey, 2023), while current investigations extend this analysis by demonstrating how water systems, gardens, and urban ecology in historical Delhi functioned as integrated socio-ecological systems that supported both human communities and natural ecosystems through sophisticated environmental design and management practices (Sinha, 2024). Colonial cities established hierarchical orders of class and caste, which established new systematic patterns of environmental vulnerability, which further enhanced stratification of society and exposed the poor and marginalized communities to excessive environmental challenges and restricted their access to environmental resources and facilities. Recent research has demonstrated that colonial urban governance systematically created "caste-based segregation" that concentrated environmental hazards in areas inhabited by lower-caste communities while providing environmental amenities to privileged groups (Chakraborty, 2023; Mishra, 2024). Recent analyses have demonstrated that colonial environmental governance established "enduring patterns of environmental exclusion" that continue to disadvantage marginalized communities in postcolonial urban contexts (Iyer, 2023)

Postcolonial environmental criticism is experiencing significant theoretical development through the integration of decolonial theory, critical race studies, and climate justice frameworks that challenge traditional boundaries between environmental and postcolonial studies (Williams & Patel, 2024). Contemporary postcolonial environmental criticism increasingly emphasizes what Lee (2023) terms "environmental decolonization" – the systematic critique of colonial environmental knowledge systems and the recovery of indigenous environmental epistemologies that offer alternatives to extractive environmental relationships. This theoretical expansion is in opposition to earlier postcolonial criticism which only looked at epistemology that involved cultural and literary decolonization, going further to look at how colonial environmental policies still affect current social ties with the environment and the precarious exposure to climate.

Recent theoretical innovations in postcolonial environmental criticism include the development of “multispecies post-colonialism” as analytical frameworks that examine how colonial relationships affected not only human communities but entire ecosystems and non-human species (Kumar & Davis, 2024). This strategy throws light on the anthropocentric postcolonial theory by illustrating how the colonial exploitation had upset the relationship between the species and ecological networks and structures that formed part of indigenous cultural practices and spirituality. Contemporary postcolonial environmental critics increasingly employ intersectional analytical frameworks that examine how environmental colonialism intersects with racial, gender, and class oppression to create multiple forms of environmental injustice (Rodriguez & Singh, 2023).

Contemporary readers have approached the novel through several theories, in particular the lamentation of nature and the historical meaning of the novel. It has been described as “an elegy on the death and decay of a family” (Ghafoor, 2021. P1) The critical response has moved on beyond the earlier judgments which tended to deal with the novel almost entirely in terms of its depiction of Muslim cultural decay, to a more appreciative approach which has begun to recognize its environmental and ecological context. Modern studies have stressed the naturalistic aspects of the novel, as the theme of human deeds being governed and predetermined by hereditary and fate, the natural environment and other social phenomena is explored (Saeed, 2022). The environmental sensibility of the novel is expressed by the way Ali explains the changing landscape of Delhi in detail which the new critic today reads as expressive of environmental issues widely.

The ecocritical approach has shown how the storytelling strategy provides Ali with the unique possibility to frame the theme of environmental degradation into the core narrative fundament, whereby the "these concerning effects of the economic growth like the depletion of the ozone layer, air pollution, the deforestation and biodiversity loss can be discussed as the contextual background to the cultural decay presented in the novel" (Hussain, 2023).Modern evaluations have already dealt with the explanation of how Ali is related to specify the image of the old Delhi and fair representation of Muslim population during that period (Akhtar, 2023), whereas recent studies build on this point and engage with the connection between urban landscape representation and environmental commentaries (Qureshi, 2024). The above discussion highlights the scope of the present study.

3. Research Methodology

The study is qualitative research where the nature of the relationship between colonial urbanization and environmental degradation in early twentieth-century Delhi through the influential work of *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) by Ahmed Ali is explored. The main analytical framework is the ground-breaking theory of slow violence by Nixon, which is very instrumental in interpreting the slow but progressive changes that have affected the environment and the social lives of people as portrayed in Ali novel (Nixon, 2011). This approach acknowledges that colonial environmental degradation was not merely a side effect of political domination but rather a selected variant of violence which developed over time and place according to a pattern interfered with the lives of the colonized communities in the most significative way.

The methodology study lies in the thematic and textual study, where close reading of few selected passages of the Twilight in Delhi is used as a linkage of environmental motifs and a marker of colonial slow violence, and rigorous coherence achieved by systematically applying the existing ecocritical theories.

“Slow violence that occurs gradually and out of sight dispersed across time and space and typically not viewed as violence at all” (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). The theory proposed by Nixon opposes the ideas of traditional definitions of violence because it lays emphasis on the notion of spectacular, immediate violence rather than slowly rolling processes that bring irreparable damage to both humans and non-humans. However, in the case of colonial Delhi, slow violence occurred in several ways such as the systematic thorough eradication of the forms of the traditional urban areas, the breaking of the ecological cycles, and the introduction of the Western modes of city sanitation and planning that were inherently incapable of supporting the indigenous lifestyles (Nixon, 2011). These changes were so gradual that they were very likely to pass without any serious scrutiny, but the overall effects of all such changes were disastrous.

Urban change in colonial Delhi thus did not equally affect everyone but was particularly experienced by Muslim dominated neighborhoods and other disadvantaged populations whose traditional areas and lifestyles were actively destroyed. The slow violence theory offers an avenue through which these differences' impacts can be explained and treated as acts of structural violence, and not an inevitable symbol of progress through modernization.

3.1. Analysis

The analysis provides an ecocritical re-reading of *Twilight in Delhi* by Ahmed Ali as a systematic process using the main concept of slow violence developed by *Nixon* (2011) with the support of ecocritical categories created by *Garrard* (2012) Instead of thinking of environmental description as atmospheric context to the well-recorded cultural elegy of the novel being studied, this paper pre-empts the premeditated, institutionalized violence of the colonial urban policy towards the domestic ecological systems of Delhi. The chapter follows the processes by which ostensibly modernizing interventions-clearing of trees, expansion of roads, laying of tramlines, discriminatory sanitation and selective water provisioning result in the effects of cumulative climatic decline, whose impacts were disproportionately experienced by the Muslim residents of the city as they were. There is a logical ecological criticism running through the text of the novel. Dust storms that turn the sky to bronze with sand and pigeons dropping dead with sunburn on sunless roofs and fevered children clamoring at the water and the moaning loo now commencing at seven in the morning are not accidental details, but exact pointers of microclimatic re-engineering. Such analysis thereby overlooks traditional sense of cultural decadence to discover a pathetic account of ecological displacement where the gradual drying up of gardens, courtyards and collective tanks are seen as rather coordinating in fact, necessitating the decline of Muslim social and spiritual identity in the late-colonial period.

Combining the focus on the temporal dispersion of Nixon The pollution paradigms developed by Garrard, the chapter provides a multidimensional insight into the environmental humanities, postcolonial studies, and urban history The successive passages selected are developed in a chronological order, The study utilizes a thematic analysis by locating and analyzing key themes that develop on the interaction between the slow violence theory and environmental and urbanization issues as seen in *Twilight in Delhi*. Such a thematic framework helps in systematic organization of analysis of this complex web of environmental and social issues presented in that text keeping an eye on major research questions about colonial urbanization and degrading environment.

The first thematic category focuses on what the British colonial policies in relation to sanitation and infrastructure development as well as urban planning presented to the indigenous population and environments as ways of gradually harming the communities and landscapes. This discussion revolves around discerning textual manifestations of how the urbanization processes pertaining to the colonial contexts shattered the conventional spatial orders along with social affiliations looking at selected excerpts that interpret the reshaping of the urban spaces within the city of Delhi, during the British occupation (Prakash, 2010).

In the analysis, specific emphasis was given to the way in which Ali signifies the progressive erosure of the native ecological surroundings such as gardens, mosques, courtyards that formerly used to be the hubs of communal existence and cultural identity. The second thematic category deals with *Twilight in Delhi* as a symbol of the decay of the native flora and fauna and the disintegration of natural cycles in colonial rule and how this ecological degradation came into contact with spiritual and cultural customs. The current way of thinking rests on some theoretical ideas of the religious ecology and postcolonial ecocriticism to analyze the environmental degradation as one of the ways of violence with the cultures that disturbed the traditional relations between human communities and the more-than human world (Barad, 2007). The text explores how the loss of gardens, animals, and natural space as examples of larger cultural, and spiritual decay is presented by Ali.

In Twilight in Delhi, Ahmed Ali presents environmental decay as a central marker of cultural and social collapse during colonial rule. Rather than treating nature as a separate backdrop, Ali intertwines the changing landscape with the emotional and spiritual state of the city's inhabitants. The natural world becomes a mirror for the slow erosion of traditional Delhi life, where heat, dust, and silence replace the vibrancy of pre-colonial spaces. This connection between environment and culture is evident when Ali describes,

"As the heat became intense and a hot wind began to blow…… A heart-rending monotony and a blinding glare crept over the earth (Ali. p. 37).

Here, the oppressive climate functions more than the weather. It symbolizes the exhaustion, stagnation, and loss that colonial urbanization brought to both people and nature. The above passage gives a vivid understanding of the slow violence theory and presents environmental degradation as a slow, cumulative process woven in with the colonial invasion of tramcars, the grating noise of which disturbs the customary sound-system of Delhi. This mechanical noise, which is characterized as a sound that is drearier than the fewer cries of kites and the extinction of pigeons, symbolizes the presence of local wildlife pushed off and the ecological schedule of pre-colonial zones broken (theme 2: Environmental Degradation and Eco-Spirituality). The ecocritical criticism of dust, dryness, and auditory pollution (as a metaphor against environmental and cultural degradation) provides insight into the ecocriticism of Garrard (2012) which shows the disproportionality of the decline on the marginalized native population, whose spiritual-natural relations have been atomized by the slow violence of the British infrastructural modernity (theme 1: Colonial Urbanization as Slow Violence)

The British infrastructural changes do not cause sudden destruction, but instead create a persistent atmosphere of dust, noise, and disorder that erodes traditional ways of living. This environmental and social decay is reflected in small, everyday details where nature and human life seem out of balance. Ali captures this through vivid imagery, writing,

"As he came into the by-lane a strong gust of hot wind blew dust into his eyes. A strong cyclone formed itself, and particles of dust, stray bits of paper and feathers rose in the air…… Somewhere nearby two women were quarrelling inside a dilapidated house: 'O God, give me death.' In a grey mood Asghar went to his friend Bari who lived nearby." (Ali. p. 42)

The hot wind, dust, and swirling debris symbolize a city that has lost its earlier order and harmony. At the same time, the quarrel nearby shows how environmental discomfort spills into social tension. Through such scenes, Ali suggests that colonial modernity does not only change buildings and roads but also fragments the spiritual-natural relationship of the people, leaving behind an atmosphere of instability and unease. The excerpt quoted says that concept of slow violence can be depicted by Nixon (2011) in the context of turning a rather ordinary event, an urban urbanization (dust storm in hot season), into a symbol of the overall, cumulative, ecological and existential senescence brought about by colonial urbanization. The wind of big black dust that blinds Asghar, the cyclone taking away feathers and bits of paper, the limply falling debris reminds of disturbed natural order in which even seasonal weather became enmity and estrangement (theme 2: Environmental Degradation and Eco-Spirituality).

In the ecocriticism approach by Garrard (2012) the dust could bring back the theme of ecosystem, how with dryness and death the untamed ecological landscapes had been erased as a result of British policies in developing infrastructure, which places emphasis on sanitation, and the idea of progress on indigenous spatial identity (theme 1: Colonial Urbanization a Slow Violence). The green postcolonialism further brings into light how this environmental racism is selectively marginalizing the workings of the Muslim people of Delhi who are traditionally inhabiting the traditional by-lanes of Delhi and how this traditional by-lanes previously served as intimate spaces of life, but now, has turned into areas of physical discomfort and mental oppression.

Ahmed Ali shows how the traditional by-lanes of Delhi, once intimate and communal spaces, have been transformed into sites of isolation and discomfort under colonial influence. These spaces that were meant to shelter community life now feel restrictive and cut off from the wider world. The physical environment mirrors this change, as protection turns into confinement. Ali illustrates this shift through domestic imagery. for example,

*"The four walls stood high, shutting them all in from the world, protecting them from noise and life. ...and at night the cats quarreled over bones under the wooden couches or miaowed and caterwauled on the roofs (*Ali. p. 53*)."*

The high walls suggest both safety and entrapment. While they block external noise, they also seal the inhabitants away from social and cultural life. The quarreling cats at night further emphasize a sense of disorder and unease that now fills these once peaceful homes. The passage introduces the collective haveli courtyard, as a paradise of the pre-colonial eco-spiritual harmony, which is being slowly engulfed with colonial urbanization. The tall four walls that were once used to cushion the residents against noise and life have been turned into ironic meanings of trapping a dwindling natural habitat where the sparrows, crows, kites, henna trees and date palms still exist, but are already being abducted by encroachment and rust (theme 2: Environmental Degradation and Eco-Spirituality). The continual state of dust floating in the air" and the sounds of cats tussling with bones in the darkness, demonstrate the way sterility and death are percolating into what used to be a green, life-affirming room (theme 1: Colonial Urbanization as Slow Violence). By using Garrard (2012) categories of ecocriticism, Garrard (2012) depicts the courtyard as a synecdoche to the general erasure of the native ecological thing.

Also Ahmed Ali uses extreme weather to represent the gradual ecological damage caused by colonial urbanization, aligning with Rob Nixon's theory of "slow violence." The natural environment is no longer presented as neutral or seasonal, but as increasingly hostile and unlivable due to human intervention. Heat, dust, and a discolored sky become recurring signs of a city in environmental decline. Ali captures this intensifying atmosphere in the passage,

"The heat was oppressive with a temperature of 113 in the shade. The sky was bronzed and covered with dust. It was late afternoon, and the kites, who had gathered from nowhere, circled high up above the earth, circling and moving a little forward, wheel within wheel and circle above circle in a big swarm. They came slowly and gradually from the west, and the sky became reddish yellow with sand (Ali. p. 70)*."*

The oppressive heat and dust-covered sky do not function only as background descriptions. They signal a process of desertification linked to British infrastructural changes in Delhi. The circling kites and the reddish-yellow sky suggest disorder in the natural world, where even birds and weather patterns reflect the strain of a changing urban landscape. The excerpt of a book, is an example of how Nixon (2011) theory of slow violence is applicable, since it transforms a hot summer heatwave to be not just a natural occurrence, but an increased ecological attack facilitated by the urban change under colonization. The threatening weather, as well as the sky being bronzed and dust-covered and turned reddish-yellow with sand, are indicative of the increasing desertification by the season of the metropolis of Delhi, through the gradual but unseeable impacts of British infrastructure: the railway, the deforested vegetation, the broadened roads, that increase dust storms and air-cloudiness (theme 1: Colonial Urbanization as Slow Violence). The kites which since ancient times have been associated with the idea of freedom and natural harmony are now flocking in non-natural, sinister swarms, with their circuity motion reflecting the ecological disturbance as well as the predatory patrolling of the colonial power (theme 2: Environmental Degradation and Eco-Spirituality). With the ecocritical categories of Garrard (2012), the sky with bronzed dusty clouds is a metabolite of dryness and the death of cultures.

Natural phenomena like dust storms are not explained only through science, but also through cultural stories passed down by elders. This shows how the people of Delhi once lived in close relations with nature and interpreted it spiritually. Ali presents this through dialogue, writing,

"'What happens when a dust storm comes?' came a child's voice from the semi-darkness. 'You know, our elders say, when a dust-storm blows it means the jinns are going to celebrate a marriage.' 'But we do not see the jinns, do we? Who are they? 'No. The jinns are invisible. They are also creatures of God like us (Ali. p. 72)*."*

Here, the dust storm becomes both a physical and spiritual event. The conversation reflects a worldview where nature and the unseen world are linked, highlighting the loss of this eco-spiritual knowledge under colonial change. In Twilight *in Delhi*, by the thirteen-year-old boy and girl talking about dust-storms and jinns, is a masterpiece of concentration of Nixon (2011) on slow violence by contrasting the local Islamic eco-spiritual wisdom with the ecological damaging effects of colonial urbanization, which remain unobservable or invisible, though unstoppable. The pre-coloniality of perceiving natural phenomena, however violent, and including it in an invisible jinns celebration, is the traditional belief of the dust-storms (theme 2: Environmental Degradation and Eco-Spirituality). Colonial infrastructure is also a contributor to dust-storms, with wide roads, cut trees and the clearance of vegetation to sanitation and railways all increasing the risk and yet the marginalized Muslim populations bear

the brunt of the dust since their streets and lungs are filled with littering particulates (theme 1: Colonial Urbanization as Slow Violence).

In contrast to the scenes of decay, Ahmed Ali also presents moments of harmony between nature and human life in *Twilight in Delhi*. This nostalgic imagery serves to highlight what has been lost due to colonial urbanization. The natural world is described as peaceful, alive, and spiritually connected to the people. Ali writes,

"The birds flew with more ease, and the kites swam in the air. The trees waved their heads to and fro in an ecstasy; and the heart of the world was filled to the brim with kindness and love.... but a message of Birth and Life; and the hand of Nature seemed to be stretched out in blessing and peace (Ali. p.90)*."*

The ease of the birds, the ecstasy of the trees, and the blessing of nature create a picture of pre-colonial Delhi. This lyrical passage acts as a counterimage to the theme of environmental destruction, reminding the reader of the eco-spiritual balance that once existed. The above passage tells about the birds flying with less effort, trees swaying in ecstasy and Nature reaching out in blessing and peace is a purposeful nostalgic counterimage which reinforces the idea of slow violence by Nixon (2011) of an ecological destruction dominating in the novel. This pre-monsoon vitality vision, in which even thunder speaks of Birth and Life and not destruction, is reminiscent of the undamaged eco-spiritual harmony of Mughal Delhi, the land of shaded gardens, of wildlife-laden landscapes and spiritually charged seasonal rhythms, being swept away by colonial urbanism (theme2: Environmental Degradation and Eco-Spirituality).

This whole analysis highlights few findings of this research such as; *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) portrays British colonial urbanization as a form of slow violence, as defined by Nixon (2011), that gradually erodes Delhi's environment and the life of its indigenous Muslim community. Through recurring motifs of dust, heat, dryness, and dying fauna, Ali shows how infrastructure like widened roads, trams, and sanitation projects disrupt seasonal cycles and turn gardens and courtyards into inhospitable spaces. This creates environmental racism where natives endure pollution and heat while colonial elites retreat to safer climates. The novel also traces the breaking of eco-spiritual ties through dying pigeons, fever, and dehydration, while using nostalgia and memory as resistance to Mughal ecological harmony. Ultimately, Ali presents sanitation and urban policy as tools of spatial control, making *Twilight in Delhi* an early work of postcolonial ecocriticism that makes the invisible, attritional effects of empire visible through sensory detail and elegy.

4. Discussion

This work is a tragic eulogy to the Mughal culture of pre-British loss in 20th Century Delhi against the British colonial intrusion. Taking place in the context of 1911-1919, the story follows the decline of the Nihal family, which is compared to the ruin of the city environment and city culture under the imperial urbanization. Ali creates a vivid picture of dust-filled streets, dying gardens, and heat-enhanced diseases, which through the visual imagery of newly opened roads, tram lines and sewage systems that have disrupted the natural rhythms in the land, undermined ties to nature. This discussion makes use of a model of slow violence created by Nixon (2011), which views environmental damage as insidious, gradual, and compound, overly affecting lowered groups of people. The focus of Nixon on attritional processes and not on spectacles highlights how *Twilight in Delhi* presents colonial urbanization to be not the process of sudden conquest but the process of insidious ecological degradation and locates the novel in the frame of postcolonial ecocriticism in addition to the typology of pollution and toxicity introduced by Garrard (2012).

There are the themes of colonial urbanization as slow violence of (disruption of traditional spaces), environmental degradation and eco-spirituality Although, Ali forges a vision of ecocritical anxieties of our times, the focus of newer writing is placing more important emphasis on both continuities of the slow violence and transformations on the neoliberal urbanization, with a view to why certain discourses of neo-environmental justice are increasingly taking on different directions of the Global South literatures. The structure of slow violence is urgently fulfilled in the representation of the urban metamorphosis in *Twilight in Delhi*, in which British frame their policies as progressive change for themselves, but these policies actively perpetrate slow ecological violence against native Muslim population. Dust storms/heat recurrently appear to have been weaponized, the heat described as blowing dust and sand, causing the sky to turn dirty, not the wind, and the tram cars are heard with an irritating amount of noisiness. This does not just merely voice a seasonal lament; colonial authorities generate this effect when they clear forests to build roads, sanitation systems and enforce new policies, which Nixon (2011) refers to as invisible but profoundly harmful that do not pose a question on media consideration but accumulate over time. The motifs of dust and dryness symbolize cultural decline in the novel. (theme 2), which is a part of the category of pollution expressed by Garrard (2012) as airborne particulates, the symbols of environmental toxicity and fading of the Mughal spatial identity. The lyrical yet elegiac narrative strategy selected by Ali makes slow violence visible so as to counter the invisibility of violence. In contrast to the 1857 spectacular violence, colonial urbanization comes at a low cost: the peepal trees are cut to build trams (suggested in the extended Chandni Chowk); the canals are covered with the rubbish (p. 93). This is in accordance with Nixon (2011) inviting to dramatize attritional

harm the narrative strategies, and it makes *Twilight in Delhi* proto-ecocritical, which precedes the emergence of explicit postcolonial ecocriticism but presents the convergence of the two approaches to the environment and the empire. As a paradigm-shifting work in postcolonial ecocriticism, *Twilight in Delhi* lives on as a seminal example of slow violence and does everything it can to predict the Nixonian (2011) paradigm, but it actively laments ecological loss through a culturally unique, decolonized lens. The strengths of Ali motifs of dust and decay in his novel are more crucial in comprehending neoliberal echoes of colonialism compared to recent work, even though its lyrical symbolism relies mostly on the ancient, and contemporary emphases on activism and data. Ali reminds people to listen to the marginalized voices, which creates discourses in which memory does not bow to erasure. Future studies could put Ali together with tribal literature, maximizing eco-justice in the Global South.

5. Conclusion

The analysis above has revealed through continuous close reading and theoretical triangulation it is one of the earliest and most significant instances of a literary expression of the colonial ecological violence in the book. The novel highlights cultural disenchantment of the Mughal, turns out of this ecocritical re-reading as one of the earliest, and most refined, literary presentations of unspeaking ecocritical environmental violence in world literature. The analysis, based on careful reading of selected passages, proves that British sanitary and infrastructural policies in Delhi amounted to a decades-long systematic targeting of the indigenous microclimate, hydrology, plants, and animals of the city. The elimination of tree cover, expansion of bazaars, criminalization of customary waste regimes and selective water provisioning changed the former temperate, garden-filled city into a gag-filled, overheated necropolis, whose Muslim residents became excessively diseased and dispossessed. Dust, heat, dying pigeons, fevered children and moaning loo appear to be trivulu atmospheric detail, but exact pointers of attritional ecological damage made sensuously immediate by Ali and his lyric-elegiac prose. The analysis by mapping the gradual change of the microclimate, hydrology, vegetation, and fauna of Delhi through the British sanitary and infrastructural control of these regimes onto the deconstructing world of the Muslim household of Mir Nihal has shown the novel not only as a hindsight retrospect at the slow destruction of the environment when environmental ecocriticism emerged, decades later, in earnest form. But in reverse, into the colonial archive of empire with colonial urbanism being the first instance of planetary slow violence in the subcontinent.

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