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# fortell

## A Journal of Teaching English Language and Literature

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FORTELL offers a platform for the expression of the lived classroom experience of teachers of English language and literature, which is reflected in the current issue (32nd in the series) as well. However, the greater significance of English language and literature lies beyond the classroom in its utility as a tool of communication and exchange of ideas in the outside world. In a fast changing Indian and global scenario, the questions of *how* to teach, *what* to teach and *why* to teach have acquired relevance as never before. In his interview with the editors of this issue, Professor Harish Trivedi points out the “cultural paradox” in the Indian situation, that students who need to be taught language are taught high canonical English literature in the classroom! While literature is the highest form of expression in any language, the need of the hour is “scientific language teaching”, in his words.

Professor Rama Matthew in her article on the English Language Proficiency Course (ELPC) experiment at the Institute of Life Long Learning (ILLL), University of Delhi, leads the way, highlighting the need and the pedagogy for a proficiency course in English language, even at a premier centre of learning such as the University of Delhi. Professor Geetha Durairajan extends the discussion further by analyzing the use of L1 or the first language as an enabling tool in the English language and literature classroom. This pedagogy will not only help to improve all the four skills of reading, writing listening and speaking but also enhance an understanding of literary genres.

Nivedita Bedadur’s essay offers the view that reading and writing should not be viewed in isolation but as activities that together promote critical thinking in the learner. Only when reading is followed by writing, independent critical thinking is generated and ideas are formulated. Ruchi Kaushik’s paper focuses on a needs-based analysis for materials development for the advance level students in the college classroom. Gibreel Alaghbary formulates the criteria to select English poetry suitable for use in the EFL classroom and even suggests a number of such poems. Partha Sarthy Misra examines the theoretical considerations

behind designing a language textbook and also highlights the pedagogical principles that inform the choice of the materials. Living in an age governed by digital technology, Om Prakash attempts to explore the different ways in which new media tools can offer real life contexts to ESL learners, which, in turn, will enable them to negotiate meaning and communicate effectively.

If language is the foundation, literature is its edifice. Anindita Dutta and Monica Khanna offer approaches for the teaching of literature. Dutta’s article on the contemporariness of Shakespeare once again reiterates the timelessness of his plays and their thematic and geographic adaptability in the modern world, while Khanna in her paper examines aspects of Hindu mythology to analyze the role it plays in sustaining patriarchy.

Along with these stimulating articles, we have our usual fare of book reviews, report and language games for different levels of learners. Happy reading and a wonderful new year to all our readers. We would appreciate your feedback by email at: [fortell.journal@gmail.com](mailto:fortell.journal@gmail.com)

Tasneem and Mona



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## In Conversation with Professor Harish Trivedi

# Reflections on English in India

Professor Harish Trivedi, formerly Professor and Head of the Department of English, University of Delhi, is an eminent international scholar of post-colonialism and translation studies. He has authored *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India* (1993/1995), co-edited *The Nation across the World: Postcolonial Literary Representations* (2007, 2008), *Literature and Nation: Britain and India 1800-1990* (2000), *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (1999), and *Interrogating Post-colonialism: Theory, Text and Context* (1996; rpt. 2000, 2006), etc. He has also translated Premchand's biography by Amrit Rai (*Premchand: His Life and Times*, 1982, rpt. 1991) and has authored many essays and articles which have appeared in various books and journals.

Here, he is in conversation with Mona Sinha and Tasneem Shahnaaz.

**MS and TS:** Welcome to *Fortell*, Sir. We are honoured to have you sharing your thoughts with us for the journal. You have had a long association with the Department of English, University of Delhi as Professor and Head and you are known for your strong views on the teaching of English and native languages in India. It was during your tenure as Head that a revolutionary syllabus, incorporating large doses of Indian literatures in translation, was introduced for undergraduate students of English literature. To begin with, we would like our readers to know your views on the current status of English in India and how it is taught in our classrooms.

**HT:** I'm very pleased to be speaking to *Fortell*, of whose existence I've known for a very long time, although I've not been its regular reader. I'm very pleased that we are talking about these issues in a forum which is very well known in the field and which circulates as widely as it does.

About the status of English and as to how it is taught in the classroom, yes, you are right, I've thought about it for a very long time. I feel concerned about it and sometimes I'm even anguished about it. If I were asked to name half a dozen major problems in this country, or even maybe just two or three, I would say this is one of them. English is not just a language in India; it is a dream that we sell to any number of people in this country. If you learn English, you will get all this, if you don't you will not get any of this. The haves and have-nots will be divided strictly on the basis of whether they know English or not—or this is what we project so as to bluff the people.

**TS:** Why do you call it a dream or a bluff?

**HT:** After so many years of teaching English in India, how many people actually know the kind of English that will take them places? Very, very few. Everybody who goes to school begins to learn English in India.

but 80-90 per cent of the people fall by the wayside, unless they have advantages already of the social and economic kind.

There are two or three kinds of English that people acquire in India. One is this top class English that gets you places, that gets you jobs, that makes you succeed in interviews and so on. The second kind of English is fairly correct, competent English but without the accent, without the social bearing to go with it. And that doesn't get you to the top of the tree. And then there is another kind of English which you've learnt for 10-12 years in a Hindi-medium school but you are still perhaps as incompetent in it as when you started. You might have even got degrees in it. And as I said, this proportion is 80-90 per cent of English learners. There are differing statistics about how many people in India know English. Of course, the first thing to do is to define what "know" is. I would say that figure is not above 5 per cent in any meaningful sense.

But what I'm anguished about is the fact that so many poor people all over India, who can barely earn subsistence level wages, make great sacrifices to send their children to English-medium schools chasing this impossible dream!

There are two kinds of successes even now possible in India. There are lots of people who did not know much English but have acquired a little along the way as they succeeded. This is the kind represented, for example, by Dhirubhai

Ambani. He hardly knew any English when he started, and then his children went to top management schools in the US. The other kind of success is not only Modi; remember also Kamraj, Deve Gowda, Chandra Shekhar, who became top political leaders. The best thing I have heard on this is: *Paanch saal raaj karte hain angrezi mein, aur phir aake vote maangte hain Hindi mein!* (They rule over us for five years in



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## Separation and Longing in *Viraha Barahmasa*

PREM KUMARI SRIVASTAVA<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

It is true that migration, geographic dislocation and in some cases spiritual-separation experience, differently impact the lives of women and men. In this paper my propositions furrow through the general landscape of the genre of *Barahmasa* (song of twelve months), a tradition of poetry writing that intersects the socio-cultural and religious traditions of North India, ancient and modern. The paper uses the ethos of longing of the *Barahmasa* alongside John Hawley's concept of '*Viyoga*' as a frame to posit the changing patterns of this evolutionary genre. (1981) In a way the paper attempts to present a kaleidoscope, rather a mosaic of recast registers, transformed texts and translated ideas with only one family foci: yearning. The paper concludes with the breakdown and deconstruction of conventional gender stereotypes in its description of the devotional *Barahmasa* of the *sants* (saints) specially the Radhasoami tradition.

Keywords: Barahmasa, Viraha, Virahini, Viyoga, Radhasoami, Sants

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It is true that *Barahmasa* literature has always been a noteworthy resident in Indo-Aryan literatures. *Viraha Barahmasa*, (poems/song of twelve months of longing) which, revolves around the theme of painful separation of the beloved from her lover is at the centre of the ever-growing repertoire of *Barahmasa* literature. With the critical positioning of 'feminine longing' at the center, the poetic form has been primarily written by male poets capturing the agonies and pangs of separation of women. On the same register, 'Religious' *Barahmasas*, popular from the medieval Indian times, have symbolised the acute pangs of the human soul for divine spiritual love, and have been extensively used by the Indian Sufis and *Sants*. The persistent motif is the separation and the longing of the human soul for God. In all, taking into account the multiple and changing manifestations of religion in diverse social and cultural contexts, the

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## A Debut Novel

Gitanjali Chawla

### THE FACELESS SALDIRGAN

By Sahil Loomba  
Alchemy Publishers, New Delhi, 2015, pp. 199,  
₹175.00

Sahil Loomba's debut novel *The Faceless Saldirgan* is the perfect screen play for a masala potboiler. A thriller with the right blend of intrigue and suspense, it keeps the reader on edge as suspicion darts from one suspect to the other. For a seasoned discerning reader of crime fiction, none are above suspicion but Loomba factors in the right elements, 'a multi-billionaire victim, gruesome body art, tantalizing allegations, media frenzy, destroyed reputations and what not!' along with a gripping pace and provocative clues. The author teases and tantalizes his readers as he leads them by the nose towards an alley, only to be met by a blind end again and yet again. Frustration and excitement toggle an interest that is sustained till the very end.

Ralph Findlay, rich and famous, commits suicide leaving behind a devastated son, Jack Findlay, whose disbelief in the suicide is further splintered by secret cryptic notes sent by an even more secretive and faceless Saldirgan. The secrets that the latter intends to use against Jack as his trump card lead to



a labyrinth of murders, furtive leads, frenzied investigations and what not. The reader is led through a frantic search to put a face and name to the faceless murderer, whose identity is at the core of this novel.

A sexy intelligent girlfriend and a faithful friend at pains to prove his loyalty make for a suspicious ménage à trois, with a dash of Chinese deceit, suspicious land deals and an outrageously upright investigator thrown in, blended with metaphoric connotations

of Roman stalwarts accentuating betrayal and deception, all of this add to a heady cocktail of crime and mystery. The final denouement will come as a surprise for many but for those who could connect the dots, will appear a trifle forced.

Loomba's eclectic interests in science ('high school biology'), criminology, literature, history and popular fiction are evident as he coalesces a dash of all in this beautiful mélange. Though the language flows with ease from this debutant novelist, an awkward sentence here and there jars an otherwise smooth flow. Some tangents thrown in to throw the reader off scent are too earnest an attempt and only serve as irritants as they are obvious smoke screens, likewise, attempts to explain forensic processes and other details appear a trifle laboured. The masterstroke though lies in the penultimate death and the ensuing revelations wherein tables are turned and the protagonist meets his nemesis, ripping the veils of normalcy forever. A fast paced read, crisp writing with short chapters, and a sustained interest in the narrative leave the reader desiring for more. Sahil Loomba, erstwhile closet writer, is now in the public domain and promises to take the legacy of the Dan Browns and the James Pattersons of Pop fiction further.

Gitanjali Chawla is Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi, Delhi.

## Makers Of A Canon

Prem Kumari Srivastava

### PENCIL AND OTHER POEMS (PENCIL AUR DOOSRI NAZMEIN)

By Jayant Parmar. Translated from the Urdu by Nishat Zaidi  
Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 2014, pp. 160, ₹150.00

### AGHA SHAHID ALI

By Nishat Zaidi  
Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 2014, pp. 135, ₹50.00

As a curious reader scans the titles of the poems listed on the contents page of the poetry collection of Jayant Parmar's *Pencil aur Doosri Nazmein* translated by Nishat Zaidi as *Pencil and Other Poems*, an unsurprising summation ensues: poems related to nature with images from the flora and fauna; ghazals and nazms, predictably expected from an Urdu poet; then poems that are dedications to persons; poems about persons and poems related to places and travel. The reader is reassured of the obvious terrain to traverse. Comforted, the process of reading the poems begins. By and by, as the poems unravel, conventions regarding poetry

explode and familiar pathways disappear. By the time the reader gets to the 7th poem, he/she is sufficiently shaken and alert to the poetic muse of Jayant Parmar.

A collection of 98 poems, led by two (rather unusual) forewords by Gopi Chand Narang and Balraj Komal respectively, and a well pronounced introduction by the translator, Nishat Zaidi, *Pencil and Other Poems* has reached a wider readership. It does not matter if in the process of translation some gentle nuances of the source language, Urdu, are muted or meanings get a little convoluted and expressions change. It is true that several translators often express their inability

to translate the ethos of the source language, for example, in the context of the translation of the Satsai of the famed poet Bihari, the nineteenth century Irish Indologist Sir George Grierson had some sage advice, 'don't even try' (quoted in Vanita, 2015, 59). He wrote, 'Twenty years ago I began to translate him into English... I have only been convinced of the impossibility of the adequate performance of the task at my hands... (a)s any attempt of mine would spoil the original by weakening its conciseness' (p. 59). Today, the reader of a translated text is aware of the limitations of translation.

Curiously another 'Foreword', this time a poem, opens the anthology. One seems to wonder, is it really a foreword to the poems to come? Will it unravel the various shades and moods of the poems and uncover the mysteries of life experiences? 'Foreword' begins with the concept of sharing, encompassing the notion of partnership, collective aspirations and commune responsibility. The poet calls upon his readers to travel, dream, aspire, and speak with him through words and speech. As we read further, we find that



the entire collection becomes a journey of togetherness. The second poem 'Ghalib' is a fine example of expansiveness: 'Whenever I read you, / in each and every word as though, / I see the sky blossoming, / in each and every line I glimpse / the shadow of the universe, / expanding' (p. 38).

Though the ghazal has been put up for minute scrutiny by several commentators and scholars in Hindi, Urdu and English, few translations have been attempted. In all with 19 ghazals in the collection what catches the eye are the two dark ghazals. 'Dark Ghazal I' is for Ahmedabad. Topical in nature, it unravels the deadness and darkness of the soul of a vibrant and colourful city. Participating in the funeral procession of the city, bereft of religiosity and godliness, the city has been painted as a waste land full of graves and rot. Accentuating the sentiments of human sorrow and human failure of the previous ghazal, 'Dark Ghazal II' is also addressed to Ahmedabad. It questions the beast that resides in all of us, who stood like a devil burning, 'my own city' (p. 102), cries out Parmar.

Abundantly dense with poems of places, movement and travel such as 'On way to Gangtok,' 'Mani Karan', 'Toy Train', and many more, it is poems such as 'A Morning in Darjeeling' that endearingly lures the reader with abundant imagery from nature, and flora and fauna. The poem, 'I Am Born Again and Again in Poems' dedicated to Nida Fazli, reminds one of the poetry of the noted Bengali poet Jibananda Das which resounds with nostalgic journeys back to Bengal as a Mynah or a Kite. Though painting lives bereft of colour, 'The Will of a Dalit Poet' is one such poem, colours abound in his poetry as Balraj Komal in the second foreword to the book also tells us, 'a few colors run in the poetry of Parmar such as red, golden, black and also the colors of earth' (p. 30). 'I Have Seen Him Many A Times On the Easel', 'Ram Kumar's Paintings', 'Pencil I, Pencil II, Pencil III', 'I Have Seen Paz', 'Miraji's picture', 'Mother's Way', 'The Will of a Dalit Poet', 'The Tomb of Faiyaz Khan', 'For Kumar Pashi'—the list is endless—are poems dedicated to persons he loved and revered.

My favourite remains a short pithy poem called 'Your Name'. In seven straight lines, the poet packs a whole ocean of wisdom of humanity. Each line seems to encompass the relational opposition of density and expansiveness of thought. The impermanence of life is well brought out by the imagery of the withering flower, but the eternal presence of its fragrance redeems it to the hall of eternal bliss. Also, the dramatically dynamic binary opposite of life and death, as well as

the duo of eternity versus transience has been brought out well in these lines, 'The flower withers away, / but your name, / becomes fragrance, / spreads around' (p. 124).

A fine summing up is presented by Komal that Parmar's journey as a poet is 'local, national, trans-national and universal at the same time' (p. 31.) In lines such as these, 'We also build / barbed wire fences around us. / We also live in the prison of walls, / die, / every passing moment' ('Painting', p. 64) Parmar reaches out of the confines of the local and moves beyond the national. Yet, the leitmotif of his poems remains the myriad dimensions of 'Dalitism' within the Indian Experience. 'Fire Within Me Will Extinguish Not' ('O Morning Breeze', p. 94) is the soulful cry of Parmar that resounds in his poetry. His poems indeed are as he says, 'For the Dalit', for whom he will '...write / a grand epic / of your sorrow / on the burnished breast of the sun' (p. 80). 'Shoes' (p. 95) is another poignant comment on religio-casteist discrimination that exists in Hindu society.

Use of adjectival descriptions for Parmar by the translator in the introduction such as 'highbrow poet of Urdu' (p. 9) or 'high-calibre Urdu poet' (p. 11) when juxtaposed with his status as a Dalit poet whose muse boldly reinforces 'Dalitism', are best avoided. But this collection is a fine comment on the Urdu-Hindi-English relationship. It will not be wrong to view Jayant Parmar as not just a poet of this age but of all ages whose poems resound with an immediacy of feeling which often belies their antique patina.

By bringing out the monograph on Agha Shahid Ali, Nishat Zaidi has helped re-popularize a poet of immense standing though not so oft quoted and anthologized. The monograph is a miscellany of observations in which Zaidi displays her prowess as a disciplined reviewer summing up the multifarious talents of Agha Shahid Ali. Without any neat quarantining, the monograph can be loosely divided into four sections that sum up the life, times, writings and legacy of Ali. Section one places him in the context of the milieu in which he was born, traces the tendencies of the decades that governed and influenced his art and picked up the major events that impinged upon his mind and craft. They nudge the personal and the impersonal (his illness and the deaths in the family) as also the local and the global (movement from home to America). Born to the 'great teacher, educationist, Gandhian, noted historian and a broad minded intellectual, critic and philosopher Agha Ashraf and his wife Sufia Nomani (she belonged to a prominent family of Hyderabad and taught at Jamia

school at Delhi), 'm(M)y mother is my poem', claims Shahid.

Section 2 titled 'A Dealer of Words: The Poetic World of Agha Shahid Ali' is an overview of his poetic oeuvre; concerns related to the socio-political landscape and the 'transcultural intertextuality' present in his poetry. What is of utmost significance are six little notes provided on his experiments with art forms such as the Ghazal, Sestina, Villanelle, Canzone, Prose Poem and others. The third important thrust provided by Zaidi in Section 3 is on Ali's role as a translator, editor and prose writer. A special focus on his editorial interventions on T.S. Eliot adds verve to the text as a whole. Then, the process of translating is highlighted in his paper 'The Rebel's Silhouette: Translating Faiz Ahmed Faiz'. Finally in this section his other prose writings have been presented.

The final section rightfully evaluates the legacy of Ali. Zaidi brings to the fore the poet who in all ways is a blend of 'South Asian Diaspora sensibility' and 'modern education' (p. 121). His poetry is often compared to, 'Mughal palace ceilings, whose countless mirrored convexities at once reduce, multiply, scatter and enchant' (James Merrill quoted on p. 121). Apart from being a great poet whose contributions to the ghazal form in English is impeccable, his unique contribution is also to Kashmir, writes Zaidi by providing, 'a sense of identity and assertion' (p. 120) to its writers.

Towards the end, apt and pointed endnotes enhance the textual analysis and a well-accounted bibliography is extremely helpful for future scholars of Indian-Asian studies. In all, this monograph is indeed a little book of many questions, interesting observations, multiple comments and detailed biographical sketches of Agha Shahid Ali.

The pastel colours splashed on the cover pages of both the books are much in tune with the fervour of the writer-translator. It calls to mind the fact that both the selections under review will be important additions to the library shelves of poetry, translation and South Asian Literature. Often, in the context of literature and scholarly institutions, there have been several outcries among educators against the selection of texts solely on the basis of their place in the canon. One is glad that Sahitya Akademi and Zaidi have chosen to highlight poets and artists such as Jayant Parmar and Agha Shahid Ali, not because they are less known, but because they form their own canon.

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**Anita Desai's *In Custody*: Delhi's Tryst with Turmoil**

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**Abstract**

Anita Desai is a well-known denizen of Delhi, or rather "Old Delhi", whose novels *In Custody* and *Clear Light of Day* based in the cultural and spatial turmoil of a nation split in the wake of Independence in 1947 and a space lost in the dislocation of communities, cultures and languages, almost always find mention in the tradition of "partition literature". While the debate goes on regarding the status of these novels as "partition literature", this paper posits that there is unequivocal merit in including both *In Custody* and *Clear Light of Day* in the list of Delhi Novels as both attempt to preserve lost spaces, worlds and pasts. The paper examines *In Custody* in particular for its political quality and sociological worth which lies not just in taking the probe beyond the self, but also in taking it beyond the impact of cultural change on people to the very issue of nature and composition of this web called "culture". The Delhi enthusiasts' exploration of the Delhi Novel is therefore incomplete without the "Old Delhi" tradition, and within that *In Custody* stands out as an abiding and enriching text of Delhi's encounter with cataclysmic change. The paper examines the novel in the light of this upheaval that lies buried in what we simply today know as "Old Delhi", in the memory of diaspora and in the lives of trapped individuals like Nur- the protagonist of the novel.

**Keywords:** Delhi, Delhi culture, Delhi Novel, Anita Desai, Old Delhi, Shahjahanabad

Anita Desai is a well-known denizen of Delhi, or rather "Old Delhi", whose novels *In Custody* and *Clear Light of Day* based in the cultural and spatial turmoil of a nation split in the wake of Independence in 1947 and a space lost in the dislocation of communities, cultures and languages, almost always find mention in the tradition of "partition literature". While school believes that it is an upper-class, elite, bird's eye view of an extremely violent an

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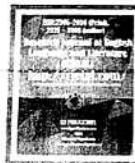
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**DELHI AND DEMOCRACY IN NAYANTARA SAHGAL'S *THIS TIME OF MORNING***

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**ABSTRACT**



There are umpteen "novels" which figure in the "must read" lists of books on the city of Delhi- among which Nayantara Sahgal's *This Time of Morning* occupies a pre-eminent position. It belongs to the period of the birth of the nation India and yet another re-birth of the city of Delhi as its capital. Marked by violence and dislocation of the partition on the one hand, and establishment of government machinery and national culture on the other, study of this period is indispensable to any exploration of Delhi's foundations and culture. Government Delhi of Sahgal's novel is characterized by the nexus of political expedience, British Raj converting to Minister Raj, power culture of self validation and self preservation performed by state machinery, buildings, ceremonies, employees and cults and clubs. Many conflicts come to be embedded in this new culture: idealism vs. pragmatism, Indian culture vs. global culture, gemeinschaft vs. gesellschaft. While Twilight reCurs as metaphor for city as "work in progress", morning signifies the synchronous birth of the nation and the capital. Thus, the paper through the study of *This Time of Morning*, traces the emergence of the democratic experiment as the most spectacular monument that comes to dominate the cultural arena of the city during this period.

Keywords: Delhi, Delhi Culture, Government Delhi, Delhi Novel, Nayantara Sahgal

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There are Delhi novels that occupy prime space on the bookshelves not only of bookstores around the world today, but also of avid readers and city enthusiasts interested in journeys to cities as well as journeys of cities. Nayantara Sahgal's *This Time of Morning* occupies a pre-eminent position among Delhi novels. It belongs to the period of the birth of the nation India and yet another re-birth of the city of Delhi as its capital. Marked by violence and dislocation of the partition on the one hand, and establishment of government machinery and national culture on the other, study of this period is indispensable to any exploration of Delhi's foundations and culture. While some of the people and practices of the culturescape of this novel survive to date in Delhi's iconography, some have

been overwritten by the later date tidal waves of liberalization, globalization and postmodernity. It is a rewarding experience to trace in this novel the continuities and new beginnings from the imperial capital to the Nehruvian capital.

George V announced shifting of the capital to Delhi in 1911 darbar (Raman and Agrawal, 2012) for a mixture of political and imperial reasons (Frykenberg, 1986/ 2002). New showcase capital New Delhi, remained under construction from 1911 when Raisina Hill was identified as the building site till 1931 when it was formally inaugurated. Guided by the symbolism of power, built from scratch, and integrated with rest of settlement, it emulated grand design of absolutist capitals with hierarchical plan of concentric circles. Built for 65000 people

NAZIR AHMAD DEHLVI'S *MIRAT-UL UROOS*: THROUGH THE LENS OF THE COLONIZED

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**Abstract:** There are umpteen "novels" which figure in the "must read" lists of books on the city of Delhi. While most of them include *Twilight in Delhi* by Ahmed Ali (1940), very few would include a predecessor by the name of *Mirat-ul Uroos* (1869, translated in 1903 as *The Bride's Mirror*) by Maulvi or Diptee Nazir Ahmad. In the context of Delhi, its study is extremely rewarding as the earliest example of ethos in Shahjahanabad affording a rare glimpse into the interiors of the homes and minds of both the male and female native population. This is a Shahjahanabad which is well incorporated into the colonization project, without quite realizing it. The city space, the domestic space, the educational space, the linguistic space and the literary space are all swept by the invisible hegemonic intervention. Ahmad is unaware of the invisible and insidious impacts of colonization and how the British contact has already stamped him and his ilk in an indelible manner- the imprints of which are manifest in *The Bride's Mirror* in various ways. The paper focuses on this picture of Shahjahanabad from the point of view of the incipient cultural subjectivity in the early dawn of colonization.

**Keywords:** Delhi, Shahjahanabad, Urdu novel, culture, colonization

There are lists and lists of books or "novels" which are a "must read" on the city of Delhi. While most of them include *Twilight in Delhi* by Ahmed Ali (1940), very few would include a predecessor by the name of *Mirat-ul Uroos* by Maulvi Nazir Ahmad Dehlvi or Diptee Nazir Ahmad, as he was variously called. *Mirat*, however, is a widely discussed book in the context of Urdu literature and also the early Indian novels. In the context of Delhi, it is the earliest example of ethos in Shahjahanabad as well as a glimpse into the interiors of the homes and minds of both the male and female native population. This is a Shahjahanabad which is well incorporated into the colonization project, without quite realizing it. The city space, the domestic space, the educational space, the linguistic space and the literary space are all challenged by the invisible hegemonic intervention- visible retrospectively in the ambiguity of 'progress' and 'preservation' in the native response to all the sweeping changes around it. Ahmad's contemporary biographer, Sir Abdul Qadir, in his *The New School of Urdu Literature*, underscores the chief contribution of *Mirat* as:

Maulvi Nazir Ahmad's great service to Urdu knowing India is his supplying it with books specially adapted for female education and it may safely be said that its chief feature of his subsequent writings is that each one of them may be placed in the hands of a girl of tender years by the most scrupulous and conscientious of fathers. (Qadir, 1898, p.55)

Celebrating the new lease of life to Indian writing with the arrival of British patronage and professionalism, he sees *Mirat* as one of the many texts that owe their origin to this spurt. Once again the colonial confusion is visible in the fact that while Qadir applauds the British support and technology, he declares the "tone of independence" of *Mirat* as its best quality:

One reason for this sale, in addition to its intrinsic qualities of the books ... was that Maulvi Nazir Ahmad did not depend on literature when he began to write. His

services under the British and the Nizam's Governments had earned him a respectable pension and otherwise placed him beyond want. This privilege, enjoyed by so few of the writers in India, has given to his writings a tone of independence possessed by so few of the productions of these days and placed him in a position to guide the public taste and form it, rather than pander to it in its vitiated condition. (Qadir, 1898, p.48-49)

Qadir as well as Ahmad are unaware of the invisible and insidious impacts of colonization and how the British contact has already stamped the creator and the creation in an indelible manner- the imprints of which are manifest in the text in various ways. The paper focuses on this picture of Shahjahanabad from the point of view of the incipient cultural subjectivity of the space and its residents in the early dawn of colonization.

Nazir Ahmad Dehlvi (1830-1912) also known as "Diptee" (Deputy) Nazir Ahmad, was an Urdu scholar and writer, and a social and religious reformer. Ahmad hailed from a family of maulavis and muftis of Bijnor (Uttar Pradesh) and Delhi. His father was a teacher in a small town near Bijnore who trained him in Persian and Arabic. In 1842, Ahmad was enrolled to study at the Aurangabadi Mosque under the tutelage of Abd ul-Khaliq in Delhi. In 1846, Ahmad joined the Delhi College. He was a disciple in its Urdu section because of his father's injunction that "he would rather see me die than learn English" (Pritchett, 1903, p. 205). He was engaged in studies till 1853. During this period he also got married to Abd ul-Khaliq's granddaughter. After a brief stint as a teacher of Arabic, he joined the British colonial administration in 1854. He was appointed deputy inspector of schools in the Department of Public Instruction in Kanpur in 1856 and Allahabad in 1857. He took the valuable advice of a friend to learn English which he did in 1859-60. He translated the Income Tax Law and the Indian Penal Code into Urdu in 1860-61. For these contributions, he was posted as deputy collector in the

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## PERCIVAL SPEAR: FOREIGNER AND HISTORIAN GAZING DELHI

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### ABSTRACT

From times immemorial, the ancient city of Delhi has attracted travelers, itinerant raiders, fortune hunters, empire seekers and settlers who have left their imprints either on the physical landscape or recorded chronicles of Delhi. These 'outsiders' bring a unique gaze and perspective which is the product of their dynamic interface with the alien city where they are objectified by the staring city. The "otherness" generated by the city compels the outsider to revisit the identity of the city as well as her/his own identity. An early example is Percival Spear who engages with Delhi as "an Indian Englishman", "Dilliwallah" and "Historian". The present study examines how the career of Percival Spear for the first time brings home to Delhi the need for reading and writing itself with studied depth and latitude. Spear's perception of the complex processes afoot in Indian society, Delhi was a miniature of which not only made him demonstrate how to document urban processes scientifically but also polysemically negotiating the inter-textuality of disciplines, theories and genres. Thus the outsider's gaze added a significant trope to reading and writing Delhi- an understanding of which is seminal and critical to Delhi enthusiasts as well as its later thinkers and writers.

**Keywords:** Delhi, Delhi Culture, Delhi History, Foreigners in Delhi, Percival Spear

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The city of Delhi has an existence that spans across mythology, proto-history, travel writing, history and narratives. From times immemorial, travelers, itinerant raiders, fortune hunters, empire seekers and settlers have been attracted by the lure of Delhi to leave their imprints either on the physical landscape or recorded chronicles of Delhi. As much as the 'native', their gaze and account has also

shaped posterity's impressions of this ancient city. In fact, the so-called "outsider" brings a unique gaze and perspective which is the product of her/his dynamic interface with an alien city. Gazing at life, especially urban life, has been a favorite vocation of journalists, writers, researchers and academicians touring cities. Bernard Sharrat (1989) describes four frequently deployed ways of looking at the urban