

A STUDY OF POST PARTITION LAHORE NESTLING ETHNIC MULTIPLICITY IN SORAYYA
KHAN'S NOVEL *FIVE QUEEN'S ROAD*

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Abstract

A Study of Post Partition Lahore Nestling Ethnic Multiplicity in Sorayya Khan's Novel Five Queen's Road Man_ a social animal, tolerant or intolerant towards one another is sharply responsible for the construction of his individual as well as communal life to be liable and peaceful. Beyond the spatial segregation of land as Amritsar or Amsterdam, above the religious identities of Hinduism or Christianity and apart from the oscillation of time from pre Partition to post partition, the land of the pure offers an equal sense of possession to its inhabitants in Five Queen's Road. The ethnically heterogeneous population of Lahore "Can find something of [its] Lahore in the Lahore of this story" (Khan). The sense of common identity and shared history exhibit transcultural existence of the Lahore-ites of Khan's Five Queen's Road.

Keywords: Teaching learning process, Medium of instruction, English language, Novel

"Since the second world war, the world has witnessed a remarkable efflorescence of ethnic feelings and nationalist aspirations" (Smith). This tendency has given rise to the ethnic notions "demanding much greater autonomy or even independence...[The] sense of common identity and shared history"(Smith) watered Dina Lal's desire to keep planted in a city tagged as "One empire, two countries, three pieces and multiple time zones"(Khan). Dina Lal, "mostly an honest man" (11) was not leaving Lahore, his home, his love for make believe borders (89). "Lahore on flames or not was his" (14). Although Dina Lal was not a religious man yet he thought that "gods, whether it was one grand one or limitless smaller ones (18) made him experience knifing, robberies, murders, abductions, suicides and rapes. His wife Janoo "thought him mad"(18) when their two grown up sons Bapu and Charan Das departed for "the other side of the bloody Englishman's lines" (96) but Dina Lal neither granted Janoo the permission to leave Lahore nor himself moved across the borders "in the resurgence of ethnic nationalism"(Smith).

Post partitioned Lahore was devastated by ethnic conflict and secession. "Dina Lal traded religion for safety (88)". "...religion had never been important to him, and if becoming a Muslim would provide him and his wife –the remnants of his family- with protection in these crazy times it was responsible thing to do."(58).

"When the rumors became truth, when vague etchings of borders became borders. He had had enough. He would teach them all a lesson. On this side of the lines" (15).

According to the Desire module by Jacques Lacan, human desire pushes for recognition. It is less a question of what we desire as much as it is that we be recognized. Dina Lal reasoned himself to wear all socio cultural colors of Lahori-ites to outright the ethnic plurality of Lahore. His desire to be labelled as a Lahori motivated him "to add finality, Dina Lal planned to change his name" (53). He not only chiselled his name as D.L.Ahmed on a block of stone outside the house but also hired a Muslim tenant at the front part of his house. He sheltered himself at the back house to keep riots and social feuds away from his patriotic personality and consequently "he would always have Lahore" (58).

Amir Shah, the barrister at Lahore High court as a single parent of Javed and Rubina migrated from Amritsar to Lahore in order to follow his ancestors' religion quite far away from the followers of other religions. The Hindu convert landlord Dina Lal, deprived of every blood relation sought his family in the front house inhabitants. Despite "the bad blood between the two neighbours" (72) i.e. Amir Shah and Dina Lal, Javed and Rubina both owe a lot to their back house owner.

Dina Lal did not only snuggle the son of an Amritsari family in compensation of mal treating his own sons by refusing to move for India but also projected his extreme care and concern for Rubina when she tripped over a gas pipe line bearing her intensifying labor pains in the front house by herself. Rubina disillusioned Amir Shah about the positive efforts made by Dina Lal to bring Fatima into this world. Amir Shah was pacified by Rubina's statement,

“Abaji... He is not a murderer. He did not kill anyone. He helped us” (71). During the early post partition days, when ethnic secession was at its climax, Amir Shah registered his grudge against Dina Lal that he is “ a person who had made it his mission to rob him off his peace and property alike” (11).

But in the late post partition times, Amir Shah accepted him as an essential part of his family as well as house. The moment when Dina Lal was stabbed at the drive way of his yellow house and was timely rescued by Javed, Amir Shah heartily wants Javed to keep staying at Ganga Ram Hospital with the injured Dina Lal instead of receiving his Dutch wife Irene from the airport. Later, on meeting Javed, Amir Shah “needed to be convinced that Dina Lal would make a full recovery” (36).

Ethnic plurality gets larger on the canvas of Post partitioned Lahore with the arrival of a Christian convert Lady Irene- now Yasmin from Holland. Lahore after nestling Amritsar embraces Amsterdam to mitigate her war memories of her birthplace. This time, Irene was sheltered by both the Lahore born Hindu Dina Lal and a Hindustani born Muslim Amir Shah alike. Her endeavors for adaptations amidst the people of different races and religion were supported by her quest for forgetting war memories. Irene attempted to draw maximum corelations between her native town Amsterdam and newly reached territory of Lahore. She examined “ The ceiling hung in a way she expected museums or cathedrals at home in Amsterdam” (32). Furthermore Lacanian Lack of Irene has been showcased in her letter to her mother revealing the dichotomy of ethnic notions told by her grandfather.

Khan writes:

Irene wrote to her mother that Lahore, city of infinite smells, was unlike anything her grandfather had ever described about the beaches of Indonesia, spice market in Egypt or the mosques of Spain” (59).

Irene’s sharp sense of belonging to Lahore can be compared to that of John Smithson’s- the Chief of North West Railways and the primary owner of the Yellow house at Five Queen’s Road. Smithson was madly soaked with the love of Lahori soil that his long introductory tale at selling the house to Dina Lal exhibits that “Smithson feared returning to his faraway country” (21). His extreme emotional bond with the land of Lahore compelled him to order and request at the same time to its new owner for holding it and its contents with untiring efforts. Dina Lal asserts that “Strangely, Smithson reminded him of a new father introducing his baby” (22). Though Smithson received a non-negotiable (22) amount against his beloved house from Dina Lal but so periodically the white man was kept on dispatching letters to its new owner for directing what and how to do with the house and its accessories. One of the numerous letters Irene stealthily gets from the rooftop stake of *Pakistan Times* reflects that in 1954 Smithson after seven years of his departure from Hindustan “Outlined detailed gardening advice and specific suggestions regarding the replacement of ceiling fans... Five Queen’s Road represented something England was not to a railway man who still cared enough to write letters about it” (199). Irene thought of her country by comparing it to the European country of Smithson that Smithson “had returned to England, a country more devastated by war than Holland had been” (119).

Smithson “offered Dina Lal not just the house and most of its contents, but the domestic help including the man... Yunis and he was a smart man, Christian, very loyal” (22). Yunis served the three different masters belonging to the three distinct ethnic cultures, races and religions. Besides the no- native white master, his Hindu master was equally in need of him in many secret chores to be performed by him. “Dina Lal recited the first Kalma of the Quran while Yunis, a Christian, stood near the door of the living room as witness to his conversion” (58). Unlike Dina Lal, Yunis, a Christian was neither a target of post partition riots nor at himself was at logger heads with the other ethnic groups. Not on Dina Lal but Janoo a true Hindu reposed trust on her Christian servant.

“Janoo maintained her strict Hindu diet and never polluted it with chicken or meat (or Muslims) of any kind... Yunis, even he, a Christian was not allowed into the kitchen although he was trusted enough to buy Janoo’s vegetables and fruit at the city markets” (119).

Dina Lal suffering from the Lack of his biological family around himself mirrored Javed and Rubina as his alternate kids to consume his fatherly emotion by offering them all whatever he kept for himself. Dina Lal excelled in Billiard and despite the cold corners against Amir Shah, he revealed his sincere care towards both Rubina and Javed. Javed reflects about Dina Lal that “...we used to play together. He taught me all I know about cues and balls. I won my college championship because of him” (72). This generosity of Dina Lal always penetrated Javed that he as a little boy could have done something positive to save Janoo from abduction when Rubina “begged Javid, Do something” (85). The childhood comprehension of Javed replied “Stop! Javed ordered roughly Think of a moment. Please! We don’t want them to return and find you” (85). Years later when Javed told Dina Lal for being sorry for not confronting the men (95) “Dina Lal felt his sincerity. “Rubbish, Dina Lal snorted. You fancy yourself a hero? ... You would have got yourself killed. (95). This statement from the mouth of Dina Lal was a manifestation that he not only

embraced Lahore after partition but also heartily accepted its new ethnic population i.e. Muslims. To add into it, despite the recurrent directions of Smithson regarding the maintenance of gardens, out of love and concern for Rubina, a little child during early post partition days, Dina Lal never refrained her to pluck flowers from his garden. Dina Lal contributed his positive role for the construction of a liable society by allowing the car shop settlements to encroach at the front house. He did not cast a single penny as rent against Baba the head mechanic who established this workshop and still extending it by inviting his other relatives as car mechanics.

Lahore bracketed by Amsterdam and Amritsar nestled its natives as well as its migrated inhabitants alike. No matter the infinite world of Post partitioned Lahore encapsuled in *Five Queen's Road* with three Christians: Smithson from England, Irene from Holland and Yunis from *the land of the pure* Pakistan created their own versions of love, intimacy and adaptation with the soil of Lahore. The Hindu family of four reduced to only one Dina Lal never mitigated his sense of affiliation for Lahore. Though the early post partition times turned hazardous for him for survival but the late post partition Lahore manifested tolerance, care and circumspection for him. Lahore fostered its residents above their ethnic plurality and snuggled them with transcultural diversity. The characters display ethnic multiplicity which paves the way to bring Lahore to more colors of socio cultural integrity and more light to diminish the ethnic secession. Such unified ethnic existence offers mutual consciousness to construct a liable Lahori society.

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