



Tabish Khair's *The Thing About Thugs*: Approaching a Postcolonial Study from the Perspective of Oriental Phobia

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Abstract— *The ideas of civilized versus uncivilized or west versus non-west, created with the aid of using the European Enlightenment, had been recognized, elevated and remodeled with the enlargement of European colonialism. Stereotypes of outsiders had been generated with the aid of using the colonial establishments of European nations and a few traits inclusive of laziness, aggression, violence, greed, sexual promiscuity, bestiality, primitivism, innocence and irrationality had been thrown at those businesses termed as 'others.' Postcolonialism, with the aid of using the tough colonial manner of wondering and writing literary works, attempts to head past the binaries of the colonizer or the colonized. It tries to reconstruct, reshape and redefine the colonized 'self.' Some of the postcolonial theorists bear in mind the colonized because of the colonial differences. Tabish Khair, one of the most important new writers in the Indian subcontinent, specializes in the topics associated with otherness, identification and discontent in colonized cultures. This paper, with the assistance of postcolonial and mental research of the colonized immigrants and their discontent, tries to investigate the ideas of oriental phobia in Tabish Khair's novel, The Thing About Thugs (2010). It additionally attempts to discover the theoretical and narrative reflections of postcolonialism inside the novel.*

Keywords— *Aggression, Colonialism, Identity, Oriental phobia, Postcolonialism, Psychology.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The records of mankind suggest the ever-presence of colonialism around the sector in exceptional dimensions. With the usage of their progress to their colonized topics, each colonial power advanced new strategies to talk and dominate the colonized country. However, the colonized human beings normally felt that the colonizers had been taking benefit of them materially, financially and culturally. Colonialism, we understand, has ambitions to conquest and dominate different civilizations. Starting with the fifteenth century and accomplishing its height within the overdue nineteenth century, colonialism became to be taken into consideration as a day and herbal procedure in their guidelines with the aid of using the western nations. The majority of civilizations throughout

the globe, in the nineteenth century, had been dominated by the aid of using European nations. The colonizers, to grow the wealth of the west, using the assets and power of the colonized lands, and colonized human beings, even running for their masters, oppressed, assimilated with the aid of using the hegemonic subculture or even enslaved them. The colonizers legalized their deeds with the aid of placing ahead of the argument that the colonized human beings lived savage life and will simply be rescued with the aid of a civilizing challenge of colonialism. They took into consideration different cultures as inferior and second to colonialism because of its simplest manner to make certain the highbrow improvement of those barbaric human beings with the aid of changing their tradition, subculture, lifestyle, or even faith with the western ones.

Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, reputedly suggests the dynamics of colonialism: "Colonialism hardly ever exploits the whole of a country. It contents itself with bringing to light the natural resources, that it extracts, and exports to meet the needs of the mother country's industries, thereby allowing certain sectors of the colony to become relatively rich. But the rest of the colony follows its path of under-development and poverty, or at all events sinks into it more deeply" (Fanon 159).

The colonizers, to maintain their colonial guidelines, used assimilation, among their numerous progressive strategies, as one of the maximum vital types of equipment to make the colonized human beings undertake and appreciate their subculture. They persisted in their efforts with the aid of making the colonized human beings give up their local cultures. However, for a maximum of the colonizers, the scene began converting at the start of the twentieth century. Most of the colonies began to rebel and combat for their independence and India, under the management of the Great Mahatma Gandhi, provided an unparalleled instance of becoming independent in 1947.

But maximum academics of the social sciences do still no longer bear in mind that colonialism is absolutely over. Some former colonies inclusive of India, Canada, and a few African nations are politically unfastened however, we can sense those nations' social, cultural and mental exploitation even today. This is usually known as neocolonialism. Some of the previous colonies, specifically Canada and New Zealand, tried to face up to imperial dominance and compete with their financially robust neighbours. They, nevertheless, sense their colonizers' stress and do now no longer locate themselves in a role to disclaim their robust ties with them. However, "they could additionally be visible concurrently as neocolonial of their guidelines and attitudes in the direction of their respective indigenous human beings, or of their trials to conceal white rule with a display of putting up with ethnic distinction" (Huggan 22).

Postcolonialism, in the feeling of colonial difference, places a couple of demanding situations to the colonial manner of wondering and generating literary works to oppose such perspectives. The foundation of the postcolonial examination is fashioned with the aid of using the psychology of the colonized, their integration into the society, feel of otherness and discontent. To attend to the mental harm to the colonized, a few pre-eminent works had been produced with the aid of using postcolonial theorists. One of the maximum vital works of this type was *Black Skin, White Masks* by Frantz Fanon wherein he asserts, "On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad to the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own

presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? But I did not want this revision, this thematization. All I wanted was to be a man among other men, I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and to help to build it together" (Fanon 1112-113).

Fanon, here, appears to be suggesting that the colonized did now no longer bear in mind themselves as a human subject, but instead as an item being recognized as inferior with the aid of using a positive group. He reveals colonialism referring now no longer simplest to a political and financial change but additionally to a mental one. Postcolonialism, from the start of the twentieth century to its 2nd half, became used to represent a scenario after independence. However, it, in the overdue 1970s, commenced for use in the shape of a political and ideological term. The binaries of the colonizer and colonized, imperial and neighborhood, have grown to become out to be the primary attention of postcolonial research. Bill Ashcroft, in his *The Empire Writes Back*,• rightly shows the premise for postcolonialism, "Term postcolonial might provide a different way of understanding colonial relations: no longer a simple binary opposition, black colonized vs. white colonizer; Third world vs. the west, but an engagement with all the varied manifestations of colonial power, including those in settler colonies. The attempt to define the postcolonial colonies by putting barriers between those who may be called 'postcolonial' and the rest, contradicts the capacity of postcolonial theories to demonstrate the complexity of the operation of imperial discourse" (Ashcroft et. al 200).

This operation of imperial discourse creates a floor for the emergence of a counter-discourse, postcolonial discourse. This new discourse, with the help of focusing on the studies of the colonized, tells the tale of colonial deeds. Native subculture, in the societies of former independent colonies, begins gaining importance. Postcolonial researches concentrate on this subculture fighting to redefine the neighborhood subculture. Thus, postcolonial research shapes new views in social sciences, particularly in literature. Before the emergence of postcolonialism, Europe became the primary conventional centre for writing. But, postcolonialism has modified the scene and made the entire globe the centre for writing. Hans Bertens says that "in recognition of this new situation, in which writing in English from the former colonies- including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and other Asian colonies – has proved itself as a vital and as important as the literature written in England itself; we now usually speak of 'literature in English' rather than of

English Literature if we want to refer to English language writing" (Bertens 195).

Indian writing, with the departure of British imperial forces in 1947, began out uniquely reshaping its method to global literature. A quantity of historical and spiritual texts of India inclusive of the *Ramayana* became discovered, translated and reinterpreted. These findings reshaped Indian literature and fashioned a supply for innovative writing. However, it needs now no longer be flawed that India absolutely recovered itself from the defects of colonialism. Cultural and ideological independence, we understand, approaches something greater than political independence and postcolonial awakening. Society should, nevertheless, be feeling the imperial outcomes.

Tabish Khair, an Indian literary creator who settled in Denmark, employs a postcolonial discourse in his works. Blending his local subculture with the followed western one, Khair is thought for developing multicultural and anti-colonial fiction. He, as a creator, with the use of the cultural clashes and discontents the characters face even as residing in the West as immigrants or interacting with the colonial subculture, attempts to mirror the unique voice of postcolonial characters, and his novels, in particular, withstand the hegemonic voice of the Western subculture. Khair, each in his poetry and prose, in the main, concentrates on a number of the extensively debated troubles associated with Postcolonial Literary Theory, particularly otherness, identification and discontent. He, specifically in his fiction, affords sharp and clean characters tormented by disorientation in Western subculture and the trouble of otherness as colonized topics. His novels, on this feel, gift an appropriate foundation for reading and knowledge of the psychology of the colonized immigrants and their discontent.

Published in 2001, Khair's *Babu Fiction: Alienation in the Contemporary Indian English Novels*, almost like a few distinguished Indian English authors like Salman Rushdie and V.S. Naipaul, employs an in-depth complaint about the idea of alienation in Indian English novels. The term 'Babu' in the name of his book refers back to the local human beings of India belonging to the center and higher class talking English fluently. He additionally offers the term 'Coolie,' the opposite of the term 'Babu,' regarding the local human beings of India belonging to decrease training and residing in rural areas. In the postcolonial atmosphere, each of those phrases mirrors an exceptional sort of alienation in Indian English Fiction.

Khair, in his different book *The Gothic, Postcolonialism and Otherness: Ghosts from Elsewhere*, affords an in-depth evaluation of the idea of 'otherness' beginning from the 18th Century

gothic works to postcolonial Indian English writings. He, in this book, suggests his choice for, with a colonial perspective, revisiting the 18th Century of gothic fiction and reading the idea of 'otherness' in a moral manner. He places a query mark earlier than the change of perspectives in the knowledge of the idea and visits numerous sorts of 'others' like racial, social and political. This 'racial or colonial different,' each in gothic and postcolonial literature, seems to be the primary supply of horror and fear. Khair, too, is of the view that the idea, nevertheless, with the use of marginalizing the exceptional, generates fear. He factors out that "this study suggests not only points of departure and revaluation in the fields of postcolonialism and the study of gothic fiction but also our political engagement with present-day global realities" (Khair, 2009: 18).

Literature Review:

The literary idea of postcolonialism, not like a number of the literary theoretical movements, does now no longer talk to a monologic one. It carries a couple of techniques in itself particularly the ideas of Gayatri C. Spivak, giving delivery to ethnic feminist research; Homi K. Bhabha's cultural complaint and theories concerning the postcolonial environment; and Edward W. Said's method to postcolonialism focusing on the relation among East and West. Postcolonial principle, with the publication of Said's *Orientalism* in 1978, has discovered a systematic foundation. Said in the main, together with the hegemony of the West, specializes in the inequality among East and West. Leela Gandhi, even as introducing Said's *Orientalism*, considers it as "the first book in a trilogy devoted to an exploration of the historically imbalanced relationship between the world of Islam, the Middle East and the 'Orient' on the one hand, and that of European and American imperialism, on the other" (Gandhi 09).

There has, for the duration of records, continually been an imbalanced dating among East and West. Said, consequently, particularly specializes in the introduction of an Orientalist principle that accepts the Eastern subculture and literature without marginalizing them. He shows that "Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient – and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, socialist, historian, or philologist – either in its specific or general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism" (Said 10). An Orientalist, thus, needs to, in preference to emphasizing the variations, focus on the universality and not unusual place factors among East and West. Said describes 'Orientalism' as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (Said 10-11).

II. ORIENTAL PHOBIA IN THE THING ABOUT THUGS

Set in overdue Victorian London and posted in 2010, *The Thing About Thugs* takes its beginning in a Bihari village in colonial India. To broaden his phrenological studies of lower back domestic in England, Captain T. Meadows searches for neighborhood guys with cranium deficiencies and, in the procedure, comes across Amir Ali, an uncovered member of a Thug cult. Amir Ali, to get away from his own circle of relatives and enemies, modifies his identification and pretends to be a Thug.

Thugee, in the sizeable lands of India, is meant to be a conventional manner of robbing remote rich vacationers by winning their trust and providing them shelter. Its custom travels through generations. The colonial forces use it as a possibility with the intention to legalize their declaration of the colonized as being not as good as them. They, to show their superiority, use the so-known strategies of phrenology and its outcomes on human behavioural attitudes. Hence, Captain Meadows brings Amir Ali to England to peer the outcomes of phrenological studies on his Thugee lifestyle. Here, Amir Ali reveals himself as being stuck on the internet complete with racism and prejudgement. For his survival in this white-ruled globe, he has no alternative left however to play the function of the inferior and manages to do that until the higher-magnificence human beings, due to a chain of murders taking place in the centre of London, target him for the assassin due to his Thugee heritage and coloured skin. To show his innocence, Amir Ali has to remedy the thriller of the crimes himself.

Every member of society, naturally, in a few manners or different, suggests ethnic/racial, gender and sophistication identities. This happens not only because of structural locations but also due to some other factors such as “the heritage of slavery, the presence of colonized minorities and the composition of past and current immigration flows” (Gimenez, 2001: 27). This very truth is liable for making all normal social members of the family necessarily raced, classed and gendered.

Clearly representing the stereotypical discourse of colonialism, *The Thing About Thugs* additionally presents an anti-colonial perspective. Race, in this book, has been provided in the main as a gadget of oppression. The colonizer-colonized relationships, due to the insufficiency of the nineteenth Century medical trends for creating a difference between biology and subculture, are constructed upon racial variations. Someone, thinking about the scenario of the protagonist of the novel, Amir

Ali, can freely count on that the colonizers used racial and organic variations to legalize their deeds and show Western subculture's superiority over the colonized ones. Cristina M. Gamez-Fernandez and Om Prakash Dwivedi say “[...] Khair suggests that imperialism historically constructed Thugee as well as pseudo-scientific dogmas which could intellectually justify racism, and therefore oppression” (Gamez-Fernandez and Dwivedi, 2014: xix-xx).

The novel, *The Thing About Thugs*, in the beginning, refers to this very truth. Being now no longer inquisitive about the manner, criminal or illegal, John May's amassing of the skulls, Lord Batterstone, a member of the Society and the villain of the novel, buys skulls with deficiency. He actually will pay for the skulls and desires their guidance in this sort of manner that he can gift them to his Society. His foremost hobby lies in especially fashioned skulls and he, for that, is prepared to pay excessive amounts: “But I need them, the top of the Thing before the next meeting of my Society, ready to be exhibited. Do you understand? Ready to be exhibited and demonstrated, and as exceptional as you have made me believe” (Khair, 2012: 18). It becomes simple through the subsequent chapters of the novel that we come to understand John May, himself digging the graves and later on, himself killing human beings for the sake of their ill-fashioned skulls, gathering those skulls from freshly useless human beings.

It is clear, from the above-cited lines from the novel, that the skulls are stated as ‘the Thing’ and additionally constitute the left out identification of the owner. There are numerous examples, for the duration of the novel, that mirror the colonizer's attitudes toward the colonized. People belonging to the decreased magnificence, in particular from so many countries and in most cases from the colonies, are handled as gadgets in preference to individuals. These human beings are used, analyzed, or thrown away while taken into consideration useless. Thus, the connection among those aspects receives complex because the feelings and thoughts of the colonized require the delight and reputation of the colonizer. However, in most cases, it is now no longer feasible to satisfy the colonizer. We can locate one of the maximum putting examples of it once more at the start of the book. Lord Batterstone reaches an opium den of an antique Indian immigrant lady whose “hair is matted and clumpy as if under it the bend was uneven and indented” (Khair, 2012: 14). Her bodily description itself exhibits the motive for Lord Batterstone's presence over there. He, now no longer for the sake of care but for the research of her cranium, holds her arm and probes her hair. Khair factors out, “Perhaps she takes it for a caress.

She certainly tries to make the appropriate noises, smiling seductively. But the man is not caressing her. He probes her skull with knowing fingers and if she had been able to look up, she would have been struck by the oppression on his face. Then suddenly, the gentleman pushes her away” (Khair, 2012: 15).

Amir Ali, the protagonist of the novel, additionally stocks the equal fate. Because of his inferiority owing to his improperly fashioned cranium, Amir Ali, as a phrenological studies subject, is introduced to London with the help of Captain Meadows. While speaking to Captain Meadows, the protagonist appears to be comfortable getting destined to be a criminal: “[...] I serve you now and hasten to tell you all you wish to hear. But unlike many other approvers, I came to you on my own, and in my face and in my voice, and wonderfully from my skull, as you still lay recovering in Patna, you read, with the acuity that all sahibs are blessed with, the truth of my narrative” (Khair, 2012: 22). However, race discrimination and colonial knowledge, in the novel, are contemplated now no longer simplest with the aid of using phrenology, however, Khair additionally factors out race and class distinctions. The reputation of racial attitudes, each with the help of using the colonizer and the colonized of the time, has been asserted using exceptional dialogues and monologues in the novel. It became a famous notion at that point that human beings and races couldn't be modified or tamed. Major Greyper, in his communication with Captain Meadows, states the hopelessness of the interest in civilizing the colonized. Captain Meadows takes Amir Ali as an ex-Thug who regrets his beyond cruelties and attempts to be a civilized guy. But Major Greyper, criticizing Captain Meadows' agreement with Amir Ali, stresses the hazard of preserving him in his residence. Major Greyper, on the, cease of the communication, regarding Amir Ali, says, “Leopards and spots, you know, leopards and spots” (Khair, 2012: 69).

Lord Batterstone, too, does, now, not have exceptional attitudes toward different races. He, for the sake of using bringing up so-known medical and spiritual examples, attempts to persuade his Society approximately the inferiority and cruelty of Asian human beings. He asserts himself to be a ‘man of science’ (Khair, 2012: 63) and does now no longer need to have a look at troubles, just like the Mosaic estimate of introduction or the amphibian ancestors of man. However, he strongly opposes the concept of having a little distinction between men and animals, and additionally races of men. He continually justifies his view of the principle of evolution for animal species and approves no evidence for human evolution in science. He reveals those thoughts irreligiously and ‘unscientifically placed men at the end of a chain

of animals’ (Khair, 2012: 63). He reveals God's mild workmanship in the introduction of human beings and denies the concept of a Caucasian sharing the ancestor with a decreased-class Negro. He reveals the mind and its natural features a piece exceptional in each race. Races do now no longer share the same quality and a number of them are fated to be inferior. The civilizing procedure of those races, due to an organic barrier, is nearly impossible. He says, “But just as God did not give the same soul to all men (more murmurs of dissent here, which made Captain Meadows hopeful) ...some are saved and some are not and some, it is argued, do not have souls...just as God did not create all beings equally, it stands to reason that the marks on the skull are as permanent as souls and not liable to be erased by education, or wealth” (Khair, 2012: 65).

Not to speak of only the higher-magnificence, race discrimination, in *The Thing About Thugs*, may be discovered at all levels of society. Even the decreased-magnificence running human beings, too, discriminate in opposition to different colonized races. For instance, Nelly Clennam, the cook in the residence of Captain Meadows, presents her obvious hate for Amir Ali because of his race and Thug heritage. She takes Amir Ali as a risk to all servants in the residence. She claims to preserve cheating and merciless human beings like Amir Ali far from the environment of harmless and sincere human beings. Since those human beings are the supply of corruption, she regards their reputation as irreligious and says that ‘it would be said by many that to harbour a nigger, a lordey, a cannibal in the kitchen was not only a danger but an act of verging on the unchristian...’ (Khair, 2012: 33).

The novel, numerous times, emphasizes this sort of rating in the decrease-magnificence of human beings in society. The novel affords strict discrimination even amongst servants and their deep emotions of racial oppression. Race and heritage of the decreased-magnificence running human beings were handled as determinants in their slumbering area in the residence. Amir Ali, in his letter to Jenny, the other servant in the residence, points out the issue, “And it is the bare scullery, on its hard, damp floor, that there is space for the likes of us: the thug from nowhere, the charwoman from somewhere. The better servants sleep in the kitchen or pantry, don't they?” (Khair, 2012: 48).

III. DISCUSSION

We can, with the aid of using that specialize in the connection among the colonizer and the colonized and reading the racial and sophistication discrimination, spread the colonial stereotypes and identities. We have come to

understand the colonial discourse reshaping the identification of the colonized as barbaric, ignorant and strange, and thinking about this identification as being outdoor the western subculture and global. This attention to the colonized creates each otherness and additionally a risk to western hegemony.

The novel affords a pretty complicated relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Khair continuously points out this relationship and that, in most cases, in the dialogues between Captain Meadows and Amir Ali. The tone of Captain's sentences virtually shows his deep feeling of superiority and he, at the outset of the novel, definitely represents the colonial prejudices.

Amir Ali meets Captain Meadows at a 'Firangi hospital' in his homeland, Patna, and claims himself to be a Thug due to the Captain's liking to 'hear the account of a real Thug and take him to Firangeestan' (Khair, 2012: 21) for his book underwriting procedure. Amir attempts to persuade Captain of him being an actual Thug and states, "I still wonder at the wisdom of Soloman that sahibs possess, made you listen and recognize that what I said was nothing but the truth" (Khair, 2012: 22). Thus, from his first actual assembly, Amir accepts his race's inferiority. Let's see Captain's solutions together along with his very best feeling of superiority: "It is indeed true, Amir Ali, said I, but it was not the wisdom of Soloman that I exercised; it was the guidance of Reason, which is a God unknown to your race, for then the others came and spoke their lying stories to my face, all I did was listen, and Reason told me not to believe them" (Khair, 2012: 22). However, the novel does now no longer present Captain Meadows because the simplest individual owns colonial prejudices. Daniel Gates, too, displays robust prejudices toward the Orient. He shows that "the Orientals are a sensitive and excitable race, and mental exaltation is not only very common, it usually borders on insanity" (Khair, 2012: 126). Western Orientalists bear in mind the Orient subculture as ignorant, weak, barbaric, and in want of being dominated by the advanced subculture of the Occident. The Occident, taking the assistance of the worldwide monologic atmosphere, attempts to outline the Orient with a slender factor of view, and thus, bends the reality.

Knowledge, no doubt, gets affected and created by cultures. The power of subculture, wherein a bit of information is created, comes to a decision on the acceptability of that information. Global information, thus, is primarily based totally on the Occidental subculture. Hence, it appears very difficult, in a colonial atmosphere, to outline the reality. It is likewise pretty difficult to hint at the borders between reality and false, credible and non-

credible. This truth additionally receives validity even as defining identification. Two matters need to be taken into consideration even when comparing information associated with the Orient; its credibility and carrier to colonial deeds. Amir, for this very motive, says that "truth and credibility are two different things most of the time" (Khair, 2012: 24).

Edward Said and different critics of Oriental research, in colonial and postcolonial discourse, in most cases, bear in mind a mystified photograph of the Orient. The West continually suggests its hobby of conceptualizing Eastern cultures with distinguished and romantic themes. Their foremost goal at the back of this tendency appears to photograph the Orient as something associated with the beyond and records. The Westerners get glad to peer the Orient cultures getting caught in the beyond and having no enterprise with modernity and the civilized West. The Occident, on this feel, corroborates its superiority over the Orient due to the fact the current and civilized West is the past evaluation of the underdeveloped and uncivilized Orient (Said 35).

IV. CONCLUSION

This quick examination shows that Tabish Khair, as an academician and creator, correctly gives a couple of views associated with migration troubles and correctly displays postcolonial discontent in *The Thing About Thugs*. It is really well worth noting his splendid portrayal of the complicated dating between the Occident and the Orient. He, with the aid of using developing immigrant characters starting from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first Century, has traced the roots of the cutting-edge disconnected and divided global order and additionally displayed, although symbolically, his very own studies of being an immigrant withinside the West. Thus, his novel turns into a vital supply of knowledge about the immigrants' concerns, their loss of integration into society, and discontent. Khair, withinside the gift novel, has portrayed the colonial deeds of Victorian England and unmasked the racial and spiritual prejudices of the time. He has, at an equal time, shed light on the postcolonial discontent with a colourful narrative fashion and the introduction of various characters.

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