

Received: 22 July 2023, Accepted: 27 August 2023

A Psychological Study of Fear, Frustration, and the Sense of Deprivation in Hijab Imtiaz Ali's Novel "Andhera Khawab"

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Abstract:

The characters in Hijab Imtiaz Ali's novel "Andhera Khawab" suffer from a range of psychological problems rooted in a disturbed family environment. Issues such as constant conflict between parents, unstable marital relationships, domestic violence, and the father's addiction create a traumatic atmosphere that deeply affects the mental development of the characters. As a result, the life of the central character, Soofi, becomes extremely painful and burdensome. These circumstances lead to fear, frustration, and a persistent sense of deprivation in her personality. Similarly, the character of Anjum is also shaped by almost the same conditions. He appears as an individual deprived of the fulfillment of his natural emotional and psychological needs. Through these characters, the novel highlights how dysfunctional

family structures and emotional neglect give rise to psychological distress and inner conflicts.

Key Words: Psychological issues, family conflict, domestic violence, parental discord, addiction, emotional deprivation, fear, frustration, Andhera Khawab, Hijab Imtiaz Ali.

Psychological criticism has remained an important mode of literary analysis, particularly in the study of modern and twentieth-century fiction, where writers increasingly shifted their focus from external events to the inner workings of the human mind. In Urdu literature, this trend is clearly visible in the works of writers who explored human consciousness, emotional conflicts and psychological trauma. Among them, Hijab Imtiaz Ali occupies a significant place due to her sensitive portrayal of inner life, especially the psychological dimensions of fear, memory, and deprivation. Her novel "Andhera Khawab" has been frequently discussed as an example of psychological realism in Urdu fiction.

Several critics of Urdu literature have pointed out that Hijab Imtiaz Ali's fiction reflects a deep engagement with the psychological condition of individuals living under emotional, social, and existential pressures. According to literary scholars, her narrative technique emphasizes introspection, silence, and internal monologue, which allows readers to access the characters' unconscious fears and suppressed desires. Studies focusing on psychological realism in Urdu novels argue that Andhera Khawab presents the mind not as a stable entity but as a conflicted and fragmented space shaped by fear and past experiences.

Fear, as a psychological force, has been examined by various critics in relation to modern Urdu fiction. Scholars suggest that fear in "Andhera Khawab" is not merely situational but deeply internalized. It manifests

as fear of loneliness, fear of emotional loss, and fear of an uncertain future. Literary analyses influenced by Freudian and post-Freudian psychology highlight that such fear often originates in unresolved past experiences, which continue to haunt the present. Researchers note that Hijab Imtiaz Ali portrays fear as a persistent mental state that governs the characters' choices and inhibits their emotional growth.

The theme of past orientation or fixation on the past has also attracted critical attention. Critics argue that memory in "Andhera Khawab" functions as a psychological burden rather than a source of comfort. Studies on memory and trauma in Urdu novels emphasize that characters remain mentally trapped in their past, unable to detach themselves from earlier losses and disappointments. This preoccupation with the past intensifies psychological suffering and creates a sense of stagnation. Literary scholars often relate this narrative strategy to trauma theory, suggesting that unresolved memories repeatedly surface in the form of dreams, silence, and emotional withdrawal.

Another important area of scholarly discussion is the sense of deprivation experienced by the characters. Critics analyzing gender and psychology in Hijab Imtiaz Ali's works point out that deprivation is not limited to material loss but extends to emotional and psychological needs. Feelings of neglect, lack of affection, and unfulfilled desires contribute to a deep sense of inner emptiness. Feminist literary critics, in particular, argue that female characters in "Andhera Khawab" embody psychological deprivation caused by social constraints, emotional suppression, and denial of self-expression.

In conclusion, the existing body of literature establishes "Andhera Khawab" as a significant psychological novel in Urdu literature. While critics have discussed fear, memory, and deprivation individually, there

remains scope for a comprehensive study that examines these elements collectively and explores their combined psychological impact on the characters. This research, therefore, seeks to build upon previous scholarship by offering an integrated psychological analysis of fear, past fixation, and deprivation in Hijab Imtiaz Ali's "Andhera Khawab".

The characters in Hijab Imtiaz Ali's novel suffer from various psychological problems. Constant conflicts between parents, unstable marital relationships, domestic violence, and the father's addiction are among the issues that make the life of the central character, Soofi, extremely distressing. Anjum is another character who grows up in almost similar circumstances and appears to be deprived of the fulfillment of natural desires. In order to guide these characters towards the right path and to resolve their psychological problems, the novelist introduces another character named Rohi, who plays a significant role in their emotional and psychological healing. Syed Waqar Azeem, while discussing the psychological dimensions of the novel, writes:

"During this period, several novels were written whose foundations were laid on psychology or psychoanalysis. Although many novels of the time fall into this category, the most serious and significant effort of this kind is Hijab Imtiaz Ali's novel Andhera Khawab. Andhera Khawab, on the surface, appears to be a carefully conceived, well-organized, and engaging story rooted in our own social environment. However, the greatest source of its appeal and impact lies in its psychological exploration, where beneath every human action and reaction, some psychological state is actively at work. The novelist, by keeping a close watch on the inner

motivations that always exist behind the apparent realities of life, has constructed a narrative that is not only engaging but also rich in intellectual and artistic values." (1)

The psychological problems of the central characters, Soofi and Anjum, in *Andhera Khawab* are resolved through psychoanalysis. Roohi, acting like a skilled psychologist, identifies the causes of Sophie's and Anjum's psychological conflicts as the rigidity of the superego shaped during childhood upbringing, emotional deprivation, unfulfilled instinctual desires, and parental neglect. In view of the psychological fluctuations experienced by both characters, clear traces of the Oedipus complex and the Electra complex can be observed. Dr. Waqar Azeem writes:

"The characters presented in *Andhera Khawab* encompass clear manifestations of the Ego, the Superego, and the Oedipus complex." (2)

The father of the novel's central character, Sophie, Nawab Haroon, is addicted to alcohol and does not hesitate to physically abuse his wife while intoxicated. Sophie witnesses all these incidents during her childhood. When Nawab Haroon returns home after drinking, he picks up his daughter, shows her affection, and kisses her. For Soofi, the smell of alcohol becomes so distinctive that the moment her father enters the house, a wave of happiness arises in her innocent mind. In this way, the emotional satisfaction of a young child becomes associated with the smell coming from her father's mouth. Soofi's intense emotional inclination toward her father reflects the influence of the Electra complex. Becoming familiar with the smell of alcohol, Soofi grows even closer to her father.

On the other hand, upon seeing her father's red eyes, fear causes her feelings of love to turn into hatred. Thus, at the tender age of only four, Soofi becomes a victim of dual psychological conflict. She experiences love and hatred for her father simultaneously. At the psychological level, such a state is referred to as ambivalence.

"Along with the smell of alcohol ... she reached the age of two while experiencing a variety of emotions, and she began to perceive the truth about her father not as reality but as a dream. However, as time passed, she gradually forgot that dream." (3)

During the psychoanalytic exploration of Soofi psychological conflicts, several incidents from her childhood come to light through which the roots of her problems are identified. On the occasion of Sophie's fourth birthday, many people were present, yet her anxious eyes were constantly searching for her father. In her quest to find him, she went to everyone but returned disappointed each time. For a while, she tried to distract herself with toys, but her restlessness did not subside.

After a considerable delay, her father entered the house in an intoxicated state and immediately lifted his daughter, showering her with affection. However, Soofi mother started an argument, and in anger, he decided to leave the birthday celebration. The four-year-old Soofi, crying bitterly, tried to stop her father, but her mother became an obstacle. The negative impact of this incident on Sophie's personality was such that she had to endure the agony of separation from her father for six months.

After the death of her parents, a traumatic change occurs in Soofi life when, at a young age, she is forced to go to her aunt (her grandmother,

Zubaida) as an orphan. Grandmother Zubaida takes care of Soofi in every possible way; however, Soofi remains distressed by the strict and rigid environment of the household. Until the age of ten, Sophie leads a relatively normal life, but thereafter, she suddenly begins experiencing hysterical episodes. During these episodes, her mind turns back to the bitter incidents of her past. In this state, she screams and gathers all the family members together.

According to Roohi, when Sophie experienced her first episode, she shouted the word “rabbit” and began to strangle her own throat. However, according to the doctors, Sophie did not have any physical illness. It was only when, during treatment, Sophie attempted to strangle the doctor that her condition was diagnosed as psychological. Roohi tried to determine the background of this episode and explained the real reason for Sophie’s fear of the rabbit:

“Rehani had bought two rabbits for herself from somewhere ... On one occasion, during heavy rain, Sophie began to strangle the red-colored rabbit. After the rabbit died, Soofi was in such a state that she was crying while trying to strangle her own throat.” (4)

After killing the rabbit, Soofi experienced feelings of shame and fear. At that time, these fears were repressed into her unconscious mind. However, years later, the same fear and sense of guilt resurfaced in the form of dreams. According to Roohi, behind Sophie’s hysterical episodes and recurring fear lay not only the death of the rabbit but also its red eyes, which reminded her of her father’s eyes.

Since childhood, Soofi had exhibited delusional and conflicted behavior. Rehani, who was both her fiancé and beloved, evoked contradictory feelings in her. On one hand, she considered him a loyal man, yet in the next moment, she perceived him as unfaithful. Because of Rehani, she began to see everyone in the world as unfaithful. Sophie expresses her thoughts in these words:

"I am worthy of hatred; there is no love for me in anyone's heart ..."

This delusion that existed so deeply and persistently in Sophie's mind was so strong that it pushed her toward the world of Andhera Khawab." (5)

At one moment, Soofi is compelled by the charm in Rehani's eyes to express love, yet in the very next moment, upon noticing the red veins in his eyes, she utters words filled with hatred. In this way, Sophie's life becomes painful and conflicted, as she herself struggles with indecision and ambivalence regarding liking and disliking, love and hatred, loyalty and betrayal. These emotional and psychological conflicts can be traced back to the experiences of her childhood in Andhera Khawab.

Soofi love for Rehani is so intense that even a brief separation feels unbearable. Yet, during his absence, she fears that he might leave her for another woman or that some other woman might take him away. On one occasion, when Rehani is hospitalized due to a minor injury, he writes Soofi a letter to reassure her that he is under constant care by a nurse and that there is no cause for worry. Despite this, Sophie interprets the situation as evidence of Rehani's infidelity. For her, every other woman becomes a source of psychological tension, and these obsessive suspicions further intensify her inner turmoil.

According to Freud, individuals exhibiting such behavior cannot achieve complete psychological health unless they identify the root of their inner conflict and actively participate in resolving it. In Sophie's case, her fear of being separated from Rehani is deeply rooted in traumatic childhood experiences. The unresolved conflicts from her early years—witnessing her father's abusive behavior, experiencing fear and ambivalence, and forming associations between love and danger—manifest in adulthood as jealousy, suspicion, and emotional instability.

Soofi expresses these conflicting emotions in her own words:

"I am afraid that he will leave me for someone else...
that another woman will take him away from me. Every
moment apart feels like a lifetime, and yet I cannot trust
that he truly belongs to me."(5)

Freud would interpret these thoughts as a projection of childhood fears onto adult relationships, where early experiences of emotional deprivation and ambivalence create a pattern of obsessive attachment and anxiety. Sophie's psychological struggle exemplifies how unresolved childhood trauma can shape adult perceptions of love, fidelity, and trust, pushing her toward continual internal conflict reminiscent of the early disturbances depicted in *Andhera Khawab*.

"Soofi felt that whenever Rehani was away from her, feelings of love for another woman would arise in his heart. Occasionally, she felt ashamed of these thoughts, yet her jealousy regarding Rehani was so intense that she assumed every woman posed a threat of taking him away from her." (6)

Here, Roohi's perspective highlights the complexity of Soofi's personality from a psychological standpoint. According to the text, the effects of Displacement and Sublimation in Soofi's character are quite evident. Roohi observes:

"Soofi's altruistic service is not solely for the welfare of others; it is also a psychological means to satisfy her own emotions. When she cares for Anjum, she is also attempting to fill the void left by Rehani's absence. The intensity of her impulses—whether of love or concern—finds a socially and morally acceptable outlet, and this is what is called sublimation."(7)

This explanation reflects Sofi's conflicting emotions:

Displacement: The emotions arising from Rehani are redirected toward Anjum. Sublimation: Her natural impulses and feelings of love are transformed into acts of altruism, caretaking, and service, which are socially positive and acceptable.

Moreover, Sofi's conflicting emotional state—her concern for Anjum's health versus her fear of Roohi's criticism—illustrates the complexity of human psychology. Her actions show that a person cannot always satisfy their innate desires directly but channels them into socially and ethically acceptable forms to achieve emotional fulfillment.

During this period, it also comes to light that Anjum has a habit of stealing valuable items—he steals Dr. Gar's gold cigarette case and Sofi's precious necklace. Surprisingly, Anjum does not steal for financial gain; his actions have psychological roots. From childhood, Anjum has suffered from emotional deprivation. He did not receive

attention or love from his parents. Due to this lack of affection, Anjum's acts of stealing valuable items serve as a way to vent his repressed feelings of revenge.

Roohi explains the psychological reason behind Anjum's habit of stealing as follows

"Human hunger is connected to many different factors... Hunger is not only the desire for food, but the desire for love itself is also a form of hunger. Since Anjum had suffered from a lack of love since childhood, at a psychological level, he was taking revenge on his deprivation of affection by stealing valuable possessions from others."(8)

Anjum also exhibits conflicting behaviors. Influenced by Soofi's care, he begins to develop feelings of love for her. Yet at the same time, he views her sympathy with suspicion. He speaks harshly to her and even expresses hatred. Anjum's attitude reflects a deep mistrust toward women.

At the end of the novel, when feelings of love for Sofi awaken in Anjum's heart, Rehani suddenly returns to Soofi's life. After this psychological shock, Anjum reverts to his old state and turns again to alcohol, even knowing that it poses a serious threat to his life, yet he cannot give it up. Anjum's decision to drink reflects his habitual sadistic tendencies.

Overall, the novel presents psychoanalysis as a means of treatment. It explores the psychological struggles and emotional unrest of the two central characters. Additionally, through the complex personalities of

Soofi and Anjum, the novel critiques the shortcomings of parental upbringing and the societal restrictions imposed on individuals. The novel highlights the importance of psychoanalysis. According to Roohi, human instincts cannot be eliminated through harsh punishment, and if experts attempt to address the problems of such conflicted characters through psychoanalysis, these individuals can become productive members of society.

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