

## **A DECONSTRUCTIONIST READING OF TARIQ ALI'S SHADOWS OF THE POMEGRANATE TREE (1992)**

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### **Abstract**

Tariq Ali in his post-colonial novel *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* (1992) attempts to provide a counter narrative against the West's Orientalist view of the Muslims culture and their history. However, the novel is replete with silences, gaps and contradictions which seem to counter the text's own agenda. Hence, it leads us to question the text's ability in presenting its agenda properly and convincingly. The objective of the present study is to analyze the novel against the theory of deconstruction. The novel has been analyzed on the following grounds. Firstly, the text is an entity which is characterized by ambiguities, indecisiveness, and gaps which hinder to convey a single stable message or meaning and ultimately harm its main ideological project. Secondly, the hierarchical oppositions on which the text's stability relies are arbitrary or illusionary; hence, it undermines the ideology that a text asserts. The study finds that the text, by not focusing on the intellectual aspect of the Muslims and by highlighting the erotic and sensual aspect of their personalities, harms its own ideological project which is to reject the West's Orientalist view about the Muslims. In addition to this, the binary oppositions, on which the text's main ideology stands that is the 'tolerant and civilized Muslims' and 'intolerant and uncivilized Christians' because of being unstable, undermine the text's main ideology. Ultimately, the intended or desired message of the text is not conveyed.

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**Keywords:** Tariq Ali, *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree*, Deconstructionist Analysis

## **THE THEORY OF DECONSTRUCTION: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION:**

Deconstruction is the most influential approach to textual analysis in the poststructuralist era. This approach, to a great extent, is applied to find out gaps, ambiguities, uncertainties, instabilities, and indecisiveness in journalism, political discourses, speeches, literary discourses and social signs, etc. This approach aims at manifesting that, texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs and practices of various kinds do not impart a single stable meaning or ideology as Structuralists assert, rather they always exceed the boundaries they seem to be confined within and impart various meanings.

To many theorists defining deconstruction briefly, to set forth its meaning or enclose it in a boundary is a tricky job as the very action of confinement is bootless according to deconstructive approach but still comprehensible explanations of this term have been offered as Jonathan Culler states, “to deconstruct a discourse is to show how it undermines the philosophy it asserts, or the hierarchical oppositions on which it relies” (Lynn, 1990, p. 263). Caputo in his commentary on the Deconstruction says that putting “A meaning” or a “mission” is a way to contain and compact things, like a nutshell, gathering them into a unity, whereas deconstruction bents all its efforts to stretch beyond these boundaries, to transgress these confines, to interpret and disjoin all such gatherings...cracking nutshells is what deconstruction is. In a nut shell” (Caputo, 1996, p. 31-32). Lynn explains that Structuralism and Deconstruction are two utterly different approaches, in that the former demonstrates how the accumulations or deep structures of a text work out the meaning whereas the latter demonstrates how they fail to work out the meaning (Lynn, 1990, p. 263). Derrida himself asserts: “It is an analysis which tries to find out how *writer’s* thinking works or does not work, to find the tensions, contradictions, the heterogeneity within their own corpus” (Derrida, 1996, p. 9).

The theory of Poststructuralism that begun in 1960s, of which deconstruction is a central idea was proposed in opposition to the theory of structuralism. Structuralism is associated with Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss Linguist of 20<sup>th</sup> century. He propounded that the language is an orderly system of signs and it is through language that the meaning is given to the world that otherwise is chaotic. He asserted that the language is a system that is comprised of small elements called ‘signs’ (words) and the sign itself is comprised of two elements, signifier means the sound image and the signified means the concept that signifier signifies. He claimed that the relation between signifier and signified is arbitrary but fixed. The signifiers lead to fixed signifieds and make it possible to establish reliable and stable meanings and truths. (Habib, 2008, p. 635)

He maintains that the signs do not inherit meanings rather they form meanings in relation to and difference from all the other signs involved in the system that is language. He further asserts that the language can be understood through the distinction between ‘Languge’ means underlying structures and ‘Parole’ means Surface phenomena or million of utterances produced on the basis of certain underlying structures. The object of the linguistic study should be these underlying structures on the basis of which millions of utterances can be understood (Habib, 2008, p. 653). The job of literary critics following the structuralist approach aims to find out how the structural elements of the text as plot, setting, character, proposition of sentences, arrangement of paragraphs etc. relate to each other and form a definite meaning (Tyson, 2006, p. 220). And what are the underlying structures that govern an individual work and that organize the system of literature as a whole (ibid, p. 230).

In opposition to Structuralism, deconstruction asserts that language is not orderly system but chaotic one. Deconstruction is associated with Derrida, a French Philosopher, who asserts that language, is not as reliable or stable source for communicating ideas or conveying messages as it is considered to be. It is rather an ambiguous and slippery medium that always hinders or postpones the meaning. Derrida argued that the distinction made by Saussure between signifier and signified is absurd because to him language as considered by Structuralists is not a union of signifier and signified rather it is a chain of signifiers that is to say, signifier does not lead to a signified or concept rather it leads to a never-ending chain of signifiers (Habib, 2008, p. 651). Language in his view is continuous free play of signifiers due to which the solid or stable meaning is unapproachable. Derrida also has objection regarding the structuralist’s concept of ‘Binary Oppositions’; to him, it creates a violent hierarchical system in which one term is always superior and desired and the other inferior and undesired and by doing so it maintains a divided image of human world which is absurd and unjust (ibid, p. 653). Hence, Deconstruction aims at unsettling this hierarchical arrangement and resisting the temptation to undermine the second term by demonstrating that the privileged term shares characteristics with unprivileged term and unprivileged term shares characteristics with the privileged one.

Every text has a fixed ideology and philosophy which it tries to assert; and a critic using deconstructionist approach aims at finding out how the text itself goes against its overt ideology and philosophy. How text itself dismantles its own construction. As Derrida asserts: “Deconstruction is not a method or some tool that you apply to something from outside. Deconstruction is something which happens and which happens inside there is a deconstruction at work within *the work*” (Derrida, 1997, p. 9). The

deconstructionists claim that the language by its very nature is such a system which is not inclined to obey one's intentions; words after being written or spoken are no longer under the command of its author or speaker, so, the texts which are constructed of language can never lead to a single center, meaning, truth or ideology, rather, it renders layers of meaning which even the author would not have thought of. The critic's job according to deconstructive approach is not to decipher the single meaning that the text is thought to be equipped with rather its job is to decipher the different layers of meanings the text leads to.

### **THE PRESENT STUDY:**

Ali in his post-colonial novel *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* (1992) attempts to provide a counter narrative against the West's Orientalist view of the Muslims culture and their history. However, the novel is replete with silences, gaps and contradictions which seem to counter the agenda of the text itself. Hence, the author seems to have failed in presenting his agenda clearly or convincingly.

The present study applies deconstructive approach to the novel to see that how far the text has been able to do justice with its agenda. The study attempts to identify and analyze the gaps, uncertainties, ambiguities in the novel which undermine text's own ideological project which is to portray Muslims in bright colors in order to reconstruct their image which is exploited by West. The study also aims at finding out the hierarchical oppositions, tolerant and civilized Muslims and intolerant and uncivilized Christians, on which the text's ideology stands and their failure to provide strong foundation to text's ideological project.

### **A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVEL:**

Tariq Ali's *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* (1992) is the first novel of a series of five historical novels collectively called the *Islam Quintet*. The *Islam Quintet* manifests the interactions and tensions between Islam and Christian West since crusades till today. It reconstructs the past history of the Muslims, their relationship with the West: the rivalry, the armed conflicts, the cultural exchanges, and the phases of cooperation and co-existence. The novels of the *Quintet* are set in different locales and times in history that exhibit the different aspects of the relationship and clash between Muslims and the Christian West. The *Islam Quintet* is not only an effort to trace the rich culture of the Arabs / Muslims in the past but also an attempt to find an answer to the important question why Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, has not been through the process of reformation. The *Islam Quintet* also highlights the Muslim contribution to the European Renaissance.

*Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* is a vivid account of the scenario of Moorish Spain after the fall of Granada to Christendom. The novel, set in *Banu Hudayl*, a village near Granada, narrates the tragic story of the destruction of the Muslims and their culture at the hands of Queen Isabella and her confessor Ximenes. Through the family history of a Muslim aristocrat, Umar bin Abdallah, the novel depicts the post-reconquest pathetic condition of Muslims, their struggle for their survival and finally, their annihilation. It is an attempt to manifest how brutally one of the most vibrant civilization and culture was demolished by the conservative and fundamentalist Christian forces.

### **HISTORICAL AND THEORITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE NOVEL (AND ISLAM QUINTET):**

During the period of colonization the colonizers constructed an identity of the colonized from their own perspective in their discourses and by doing so they created discrimination, portraying themselves as civilized “us” and the oppressed as exotic and barbarous “others”; they split the world into the East and the West or the Occident and the Orient. In these biased western discourses Muslims (Orientals) have always been delineated as “lamentably under-humanized, antidemocratic, backward, barbaric” (Said, 2001, p. 150). Furthermore, Said asserts that in western travelogues “the Orient seemed to have offended sexual propriety; everything about the Orient...exuded dangerous sex, threatened hygiene and domestic seemliness with an excessive ‘freedom of intercourse’ (ibid, p. 167). The marginalizing western discourses gave rise to the post colonial discourses which basically aimed to “reexamine the history of colonialism from the perspective of the colonized” (Habib, 2008, p. 739). The post-colonial writers attempt both to resurrect their culture and to combat preconceptions about their culture. Edward Said for example in his *Orientalism* (1978) describes the discourses about the East constructed in biased colours by the West.

Ali’s *Islam Quintet* series, especially, first three novels also portray the image of Muslims and their civilization in such a way that in the author’s words they “run counter to the standard views” (quoted in Barsimian). Tariq Ali is not a Muslim by faith rather he is an atheist and the reason behind writing *Islam Quintet* is not his sympathy towards Muslims rather being a historian who belongs to the East and Eastern culture, he only aims to rewrite the history in order to fill the gaps left by western historians and to remove the misconception of West about Muslims by reviving their glorious past. The factor leading to the production of the novel was the author’s impulsive response over the misconceptions and false notions in the West about the Muslims as in his interview to Talat Ahmed (2006) he mentions, "In 1991 during the first Gulf War, I heard some professor on TV say something that

is now so common that nobody talks about it. He said, 'The Arabs are a people without political culture.' This really angered me as I knew instinctively that this was not true". Ali's Islam Quintet is a postcolonial text that attempts to explain things from the "other's" perspective.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **MUSLIMS AS OTHERS: ORIENTAL DEPICTION OF MUSLIMS:**

According to the popular misconception held by west, Muslims are ignorant, intolerant and fundamentalists and their culture is sensual and erotic. In European descriptions "the private life of wealthy Arabs, Moors, and Turks was said to be one of hidden sin, and their houses and palaces were described as locations for unbridled sensuality, exotic eroticism, lust, and lechery (Vikas, 1999, p. 223). As a postcolonial novel, *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* attempts to deconstruct the myth by manifesting some remarkable features of Muslims' glorious culture. Despite its true intentions, the novel fails to justify its ideological project and somehow presents the Muslims and their culture in the same colors in which the West presented them in their paintings, literature and travelogues.

Muslim Bath system '*hamam*' which the Orientalists often viewed as an extension of the '*harem*', has been a prime focus of Orientalist art. "*From the earliest encounters between the Christians and Muslims till the present, the harem as the focus of an exotic and abnormal sexuality fascinated Westerners. It came to be regarded as a microcosmic Middle East, apotheosizing the two characteristics perceived as essentially Oriental*" (quoted in Latifa, 2002). *In western paintings such images were used to depict Muslim culture, all of which had a negative impression.* As Edward Said in his interview to Dr. Sut Jhally in 1998 remarks that there were certain images which frequently appeared in the paintings including "sensual woman who is there to be sort of used by the man" of east as a sort of "mysterious place full of secrets and monsters". The writers of 19<sup>th</sup> century also depicted East in the same light. Again in 20<sup>th</sup> century the writers delineated the East the same way the writers of 19<sup>th</sup> century did. All these forms of art like literature, travelogues, music and paintings, "develop a kind of image of the timeless Orient as if the Orient unlike the West does not develop; it remains the same...It creates an image outside of history, of something that is placid and still and eternal which is simply contradicted by the fact of history" (Palestine Diary, 2012). *The well-known painters of harem scenes were* Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827) Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867) and John Frederick Lewis (1804-1876). In their paintings lascivious and sensuous image of women is drawn, who are always sitting idle, looking forward to satisfying their sexual appetite and the man is depicted as a lustful creature getting pleasure from his wives and

concubines who surround him. As Thomas Rowlandson in his painting, *The Pasha* (1812) paints, “five necked women fawning over a happy man...ready and fervent to share the sexual attention of their master” while the man in the same painting is “being sexually pleased by the women around him” (Krechel, 2012, p. 2,5). The Muslim characters in the novel are no less than these creatures in Orientalist painting. It seems as if these creatures have jumped out of the painting and have started living in the novel.

The spacious and luxurious home of the aristocratic Umar, the Muslim protagonist in the novel, has been depicted as a palace of pleasure where no such sacred relations like father, mother, daughter, son, sister and brother exist. All are only men and women, who were a victim of their sexual appetite and who, like animals, do not know the sacredness of relations. In the novel, Muslims’ private and public baths are depicted as erotic and places similar to the one painted by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres in his painting *La Petite Baigneuse: Intérieur de harem* (1828). In the novel, the practices of *hamam* and ritual cleansing which are depicted as a significant feature of Muslim Culture give birth to their moral degradation. The public baths are depicted as the centers for “social and political gossip” where “usually the talk dwelled on sexual adventures and feasts” (Ali, 1992, p. 76) and where men can observe woman in her nudity which arouses sexual desire in him as is the case with Miguel (ibid, p. 103). The private baths at home are depicted as the spots where even men and women bound in sacred relations like mother and son get compelled by their uncontrollable sexual desire and indulge in incest.

The Muslim male characters depicted in the novel are extremely lascivious. The eldest member of *Banu Hudyl* family, Farid Hudyl, who was an exceptional soldier and a courageous knight, is inclined to lustfulness as he gets indulged in a sexual intercourse with a few village women. Ibn-e-hasd, the cobbler is his natural son which is the result of his sexual encounter with the most beautiful woman in village. One day, that woman was having bath in the river, ‘Ibn Farid espied her bathing...he waited for her to finish and then forced her. The result was Ibn Hasd’ (ibid, p. 33). He also has an illegal relation with another woman who came as a piece of dowry with his first wife Lady Najma. As a result, Wajid al-Zindiq, the cave man is born (ibid, p 41). Another such character from the novel, Umar bin Abdullah’s elder son Zuhayr al Fahl is also a lecherous youth. He is called ‘al Fahl’ by the villagers because he like a horse mounts ‘on their women whenever *he gets* the chance’ (ibid, p. 32). He also has a sexual relation with a serving girl at his home called Umayma. When all the members of his family along with the villagers sit together to discuss/negotiate what measure should they take to survive after the reconquest of Gharnata, at such crucial moment, Zuhayr prefers to be on a sexual adventure with Umayma (ibid, p. 146). Miguel, son

of al Farid, even has sexual relation with his own mother. While bathing with his mother, under an uncontrollable sexual appetite, cause her to conceive a child. Ibn Hanif, Zubaida's cousin from Ishbiliya, who is a religious scholar, is a result of his mother's sexual intercourse with her father.

Another common practice of Muslim society highlighted in the novel is Sodomy. The educational institutions are depicted as the centre of such ill practices. Ibn Daud, the great-grandson of Ibn khaldun had developed an affair with his fellow student and roommate, Mansoor, when he was studying at the great university of Al-Azhar in Al-Qahira (ibid, p. 189). Several evidences of such ill practices are also found in the Banu Hudyl family, as the younger brother of Ibn Farid, chose a male instead of a woman as his partner. They never tried to conceal their relation with each other from the society as they lived together boldly in Banu Hudyal palace (ibid, p. 202). Most of the male characters in the novel are found indulged in immoral acts instead of something noble or intellectually productive.

The female characters depicted in this novel are indeed powerful and assertive but morally degraded as Ibn Farid's daughter Zehra is though intelligent is unsound on moral grounds. She is in love with Al-Zindiq and has a sexual intercourse with him out of wedlock. When his father comes to know about their illicit act, he punishes Zehra and decides to kill Al Zindiq. Al Zindiq, on knowing this, disappears from the scene and does not return until Ibn Farid's demise. Zehra in reaction to Al-Zindiq's cowardice chooses a heinous punishment for herself that she welcomes every passing by knight who wants to mount her (ibid, p. 155). She becomes indifferent to her grace and dignity and commodifies herself and becomes worst than a whore in a brothel house. Such madness does not suit an educated and intellectual lady of a Muslim aristocratic family. Another female character Hind, the daughter of Umar bin Abdullah, is also a debauched woman who loves Ibn Daud. After her first meeting with him, she feels strong sexual urge for him. "She had taken so much vicarious pleasure from the unending descriptions supplied by maid, servants and giggling cousins in Gharnata and Ishbiliya, but now she wanted to know the real thing' so on their secret meeting after being excited by the touch of Ibn Daud she asks him to quench her thirst (ibid, p. 188). Ibn Daud's refusal annoys her and raises doubts about him in her mind that whether or not he can enjoy with a woman in a bed. In order to remove her doubts she, a night before their wedding, makes love with him. The women of Banu Hudayl village were also morally degraded; on the very first sight of their lovers they "begin to behave like a flock of hungry woodpeckers". The cousins of Hind in Qurtuba and Ishbiliya also stand in the same category, their "accounts of indiscriminate and casual lechery reminded" Hind "of descriptions of Brothels" (ibid, p. 193).

Though the motive of the novel is to depict Muslim women as highly educated, intellectual and powerful but the text itself deconstructs its motive by focusing more on the sexual, emotional and sentimental side of their personalities. The center of the conversation between the most powerful and intellectual ladies Hind and Zahra in the novel is their sensuality and immoral incidents of their family (ibid, p. 153-161). Moreover, when the villagers gather at Hudyal's to discuss the matter of their survival, the women of Hudyal family are present, but only physically, as they remain silent throughout the discussion. Only Hind, who is depicted as a lady possessing great capacity for thought and knowledge, utters few words but to humiliate her great uncle Miguel unnecessarily (ibid, p. 141).

Despite the fact that this novel is written to present the Other's perspective but the perspective that dominates in the text is of West. Instead of idealizing the Muslims, the novel criticizes them. The Muslim characters are civilized and intellectual only in name.

### **CIVILIZED AND TOLERANT MUSLIMS VERSUS BARBAROUS AND INTOLERANT CHRISTIANS: AN ILLUSIONARY HIERARCHY:**

Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree condemns the barbarism and intolerance of Christian powers which caused the destruction of the Muslims' civilization which was embodiment of tolerance and co-existence. The careful study of novel, however, reveals that the novel itself deconstructs its own ideological project. As the privileged group in this hierarchy shares the characteristics of unprivileged group hence the hierarchy on which the text's ideology stands is illusionary. The novel asserts that along with Jews and Christians, Muslims generated the most vibrant and flourishing civilization that was remarkable for its values of tolerance and coexistence. As Ibn Hasd, a character in the novel says "...in this village we have lived at peace for five hundred years. Jews have been tormented elsewhere, but never here. Christians have bathed in the same baths as Jews and Muslims" (ibid, p. 124). Not only in public baths but Jews and Christians were also allowed in the mosques "to attend the meeting after the Friday prayers were over" (ibid, p. 116). But the novel also gives evidences/ suggests that at a certain point this co-existence and tolerance of Muslims' society/civilization ceased to exist as in the same society where the gates of mosques were open for Jews and Christians, heretics were forced to stay out and were not even considered worthy of being spoken to. Ibn Hazm, a great biographer and historian who 'worshiped true knowledge', had to endure the intolerant behavior of Muslims. He did not comply with/ conform to the pervasive doctrines of orthodox Islam and made 'caustic attacks on the preachers' of those rigid doctrines therefore they ceased to be on speaking

terms with him in the meetings after Friday prayers (ibid, p. 22). Their intolerant behavior went beyond mere excommunication with him; once ‘when he took his son for Friday prayers’, those ‘turbulent illiterates threw them out’. Wajid al-Zindiq, a poet and an unorthodox believer who believes in the right of reason against the religious dogmatism, also faces such unendurable behavior in the tolerant Muslim society. His presence, like that of Ibn Hazm, displeases the Muslims in the mosque (ibid, p. 123).

The novel mourns over the destruction of the greatest asset of Muslims i.e. their books at the hands of Christian powers and criticizes Christians for being barbarous enough to annihilate in one day the record of eight centuries that was preserved in the form of books (ibid, p. 19). But the keen study of novel also suggests that not only Christians but Muslims too committed the same sin, though at a smaller scale. As Ximens sets on fire the books of the Muslims whom he considers infidels, the Muslims also destroy all the books of Ibn Hazm who, according to them was a heretic and whose beliefs did not concur with their orthodox beliefs. Hence, it becomes evident that there is no difference between the acts of the barbarous Christians and the highly civilized Muslims. However, the main ideology of the novel asserts the fundamentalism of the extremely conservative Christians and the unorthodox thinking of the Muslims but the evidences in the novel deconstruct this ideology because the free thinking of the Muslims is confined within certain boundaries. The teachings of the Muslim scholars, who are truly free thinkers like Ibn Hazm, Al-Mari, Ibn Rushd and their follower Wajid al-Zindiq, are rejected by the mainstream Muslim society because they come in conflict with its orthodox beliefs. It is such a free thinking society where the teachings of such scholars are preserved in the public and private libraries but they are hardly read or taught and if they are then it is in such a manner that the true meaning embodied in them is not conveyed properly as Zuhayr admits, “I was taught them, but in such a way that they made no sense to me” (ibid, p. 92). In this educated society, the teachings of those scholars are labeled as blasphemies; hence, if true meaning is conveyed and understood, it is not taken into account and incorporated in practical life as Wajid al-Zindiq complains, “For twenty years I have tried to tell you that it was necessary to take precautions. The blind faith would not get us anywhere”, but “you mocked me, denounced me as a heretic, an apostate, an unbeliever who had lost his mind” (ibid, p. 123).

Though the novel vehemently contrives to assert that the brutality of Christians is the sole cause of the devastation of the Muslims’ enlightened civilization, some evidences in the text/novel deconstruct this idea. The novel presents Christian leaders as cruel and arrogant bent on demolishing Muslim heritage; but the novel deconstructs its own ideology by suggesting that the Muslim rulers in their heyday appear no more different than the cruel

and arrogant Christians. When the sneer curls Ximenes' lips, after organizing "necessary bonfire" to destroy all the Muslims' books of knowledge, the novel poses a question "what else could be expected from the clergy whose abbots, only a few years ago were named as Muhammad, Usman and Umer?" (Ali, 1992, prologue). Which implies that there isn't any difference between the cruel Christian leaders and tolerant Muslim leaders? It was not only the Christians who conquered Muslims by force, Muslims also conquered Christian lands through the might of their swords "the Prophet, peace be upon him, sent Khalid bin Walid with a sword and he conquered... a great deal... *Muslims* destroyed two empires and everything fell into *their* laps" (Ali, 1992, p. 17). They subjugated Christians and Jews after conquering their lands. In the novel, two Muslim brothers after committing sacrilegious act in the Church hide at their home and refuse to surrender before authorities. These brothers are well protected by the angry Muslim mob that kills a Royal Ballif and takes other soldiers in hostage. On this rebellious act, the Captain General of *Garnata* puts the village under siege with harsh conditions before Muslims subjects. He declares that those who convert can keep their lands and properties, can speak their language and wear their dress. Those who don't would be punished. The taxes on the believers are doubled henceforth. Moreover, he would take hostages: One son each from the leading two-hundred families in *Gharnata* (ibid, p. 228). This practice of subjugation, according to him, is not exercised by the Christians only, Muslim conquerors when they captured the Christian cities had also done the same thing, in fact, Christians have learnt this custom from Muslims. To quote Caption General's words, "This is something we have learnt from the practice of your rulers...It is a law. Your own Sultans and Emirs dispensed justice as we do" (ibid, p. 228). It implies that Christians have done nothing else but what Muslims have done with their enemies: Christians have only followed the steps of Muslims.

The Christians are not the sole cause of the devastation of Muslims' remarkable civilization. It is Muslims who mediated the destruction of their political powers and their cultural heritage as well. Although, Muslim scholars like *Abu'l Ala al-Ma'ari* and *Ibn Khuldun* have warned Muslims that their division in different sects and calling each other heretic and nonbeliever is fatal for their survival but Muslims did not pay attention to their warnings. Their indolence and negligence gave Christians the courage to attack them as remarks *Al Zindiq*, "Our defeats are result of our failure to preserve the unity...which our great teacher *Ibn Khuldun* called solidarity...of al-Andlus. We let the Caliphate collapse and in its place we let poisonous weeds grow" (ibid, p. 143). Muslims set their bed on which they had to lie eventually as lady Ayesha Mother of Sultan Abu Abdullah rightly remarked when Sultan Abu Abdullah started to weep when for the last time

he looked at his lost empire “you may well weep like a woman, for what you have not defended like a man” (ibid, p. 34). Hence, the text instead of removing the accusation that Muslims are people without political culture verifies it by depicting Muslim’s incapability to establish political laws which could have protected their empire.

The novel condemns the cruelty of Christians towards Muslims; the cruelty actually is their zeal and vigor to recapture their lost holy lands. To Christians, Muslims are those who once captured their holy lands and kept them down under their hegemonic rule. Hence, when they saw Muslims in feeble position they took a clever decision to recapture their lost lands. At the time when Muslims were engaged in internal fights, all “the big lords pounced on al-Andalus and divided it amongst themselves” (ibid, p. 143). The Muslim *Emirs* did not unite against their common enemy at a time when the entire Christian world, leaving behind their internal conflicts, “built a great deal of social solidarity with their people” (ibid, p. 17) to fight against their common enemy, the Muslims. The cruelty of Christians is actually their activeness and ability to take right decision on right time.

#### **CLASH BETWEEN ISLAM AND CHRISTIAN WEST BASED ONLY ON ECONOMIC GROUNDS: AN UNSTABLE IDEOLOGY:**

Tariq Ali’s basic purpose of the novel is to highlight that the fight between the followers of both religions, Islam and Christianity, has been only for material gains/reasons but the fluctuation and the gaps in the text prove that it is also a battle between the followers of the two revealed religions who believe in the truth and superiority of their respective faith and want to assert it on each other.

If all the Muslims had only valued their lives, possessions and wealth they would not have delayed their conversion into Christianity, nor they would have endured the hardships of Inquisition and nor their possessions would have been confiscated by the Christian powers. It implies that there is something which restricts them from converting into Christianity and that is indeed their concern for their faith and religion. They consider their religion right and true therefore they resist converting into Christianity. Umer, the head of Banu Hudyal family, is not solely driven by material interests. His religion does matter for him. It is not any materialistic interests but his staunch believe that “there is no Allah but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet” (ibid, p. 85) which compels him to show resistance to Christian powers. He believes that even after converting into Christianity under pressure, he would always remain a Muslim at heart as he says to Zubaida, “I will communicate with the Maker just as I have always done” conversion “is simply a question of appearance” (ibid, p. 21). Therefore, such conversion for him has no meaning. He shows his great displeasure on Hisham’s deceit

in apparently converting into Christianity to save his life and possessions to quote Umer's words, "that is what saddens me deeply. If you had converted genuinely I would have argued and felt sad but there would have been no anger. No bitterness" (ibid, p. 87). Zuhayr is also not ready to abandon his religion in order to keep himself alive and to keep enjoying the material and physical luxuries. During the discussion at bath he asks his friends, "would you convert to Christianity... just in order to live?" (ibid, p. 79). Till the end he fights for his religion though after some time it appears to him that it's too late to recapture their lands but he does not surrender to Christian powers. In the meeting at the village mosque when Umer suggests villagers an option to convert into Christianity in order to survive, the villagers collectively reject the option by saying "there is no Allah but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet" (ibid, p. 121); this reaction moistens Umer's eyes. Umer makes it clear to them "that the cast of believing in what we believe will involve sacrifices" (ibid, p. 122); despite they do not chicken out and fight for the sake of their religion till the end. In the end, fearless show of valor in resisting the brutality of the Christian powers till the martyrdom of Umer, Yazid, women and all the villagers clearly shows their concern for their religion.

Ximenes who represents the Christian powers in the novel is a religious fanatic. He is a true follower of his religion. There is no disparity between his words and his actions. He is a "prelate who lives as he preaches" (Ali, 1992, prologue). He is not mercenary. Although he is a "prince of the Church", he "inhabits a quarter more suits to a fanatical monk" (Ali, 1992, prologue). The "austerity" of his living condition surprises the veterans under his command. He is critical of the shame practices of Church. During his University days in Salamanca, he witnesses his fellow students "mimicking the behavior of overheated animals" and describes the shameful scene to his confessor to which his confessor responds: "If the Church were to treat sodomy as an unforgivable sin, every priest in Spain would go to hell" (Ali, 1992, p. 135). After experiencing this horrified incident he takes a "vow of celibacy". He is equally critical of Christians' practice of worshipping "cluster of images" which they had incorporated in their religion by being inspired by pagans. He favours the idea of worshipping "Lord as a concept" which is the actual commandment of Christianity. He sincerely believes in the cause, message and doctrine of Christianity. Muslims according to Christianity are heathens, heretics and blasphemous and it is the first duty of the followers of Lord Jesus to bring them to the path of salvation. Ximenes is a "tough and disciplined" son of mother Church who believes that the "heathens, if they cannot be drawn towards *Christianity* voluntarily, should be driven in *the* direction" by any means (ibid, p. 66). He wants to eradicate Islam completely from Granada which after the

reconquest becomes the Christians' Holy Land. His attitude towards the Muslims is not biased one because he is equally harsh towards the Christian heretics who like Muslims do not confirm the teachings of Lord Jesus (ibid, p. 227). Howsoever wrong in his assertion, he sincerely believes that by converting Muslims into Christianity and eradicating everything related to Islam, he is doing great service to his religion.

Another character, Don Inigo, the Caption General of *Gharnata* who represents the Christian power, is also not a materialistic person. To him converting Muslims into Christianity is a sacred duty and there were no materialistic concerns behind it. He is very reasonable in his assertions and behavior towards Muslims. He adopts softer policies to convince Muslims to follow Christianity (ibid, p. 66). When Muslims, in rage kill a Royal Ballif and create panic he takes severe measures against them. He tries to serve his religion in a better and resolute manner.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The above deconstructive analysis of “*Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree*” demonstrates that the text which is made up of language does not impart any fixed or stable meaning or message rather it conveys various messages or meanings which the author might not have intended to convey. The main objective of the text is to resist and counter the occidental views of West regarding Muslims and to reconstruct the positive identity of Muslims; but the incapability of the text, instead of fulfilling the desired motive, at many places seems verifying or authenticating the occidental views about Muslims. The sensual and erotic element in Muslim characters is shown to such an extent that their intellectual side, which the text intends to highlight, has been brushed off. And rather than asserting Muslims' culture of learning and tolerance, the author's focus remains on their freedom in the physical and sexual relationships. Ultimately, Muslims are depicted in the same way as the western discourses prove them to be. However, the text attempts to depict Muslim women as powerful and determined but their determination and power is shown to be directed towards hunting their male partners and satisfying their sensual desires. The text aims at depicting Muslims as tolerant and highly civilized but the incapability of text proves them as uncivilized and intolerant as Christians. Although the main ideology of the text is to show that Christians are responsible for the destruction of the most vibrant civilization but the ambiguities of text manifest that Muslims themselves brought their destruction. The whole discussion suggests that the text is an entity with numerable gaps which is why it is incapable to convey a single fixed and stable meaning or to assert a single ideology.

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