A Durkheim's Reading of Indo-Islamic Wedding Rituals in *Twilight in Delhi* and Contemporary India

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ABSTRACT

This research compares and contrasts the Indian Muslim wedding ceremonies of Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan in Noor Mahal, Rampur, (a modern royal wedding), with Ahmed Ali's Twilight in Delhi, in order to emphasize their cultural and social importance. The study examines how rituals function as manifestations of social cohesiveness and collective identity in their contexts by utilizing Emile Durkheim's Ritual Theory. To emphasize the significance of wedding within the cultural fabric of the community, this study examines the complexities of upper-class Muslim families in Delhi in the early 20th century.It discusses modern Indian Muslim weddings, a fusion of tradition and modernity, where intricate rituals like the sangeet (music), haldi (tumeric ceremony), mehndi (henna ceremony), and baraat (wedding ceremony) still have cultural value. Thus, this study aims to investigate the changes in social dynamics, the importance of rituals in both contexts, and persisting cultural values by looking at how wedding customs have evolved from the early 20th century to the present day.

Keywords: Indo-Islamic Wedding Rituals, Collective Identity, Social Cohesion, Gendered Spaces, Family Dynamics, Cultural Hybridity

INTRODUCTION

This study explores the world of Indian Muslim Weddings known as Nikkah from the perspective of Emile Durkheim's Ritual Theory. Through a variety of lenses, including gender roles, class differences, religious influences, and modernity, the cultural and social significance of wedding rituals can be examined in Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* and the modern royal wedding of Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan at Noor Mahal in Rampur, India.

 The setting of the Ahmed Ali's well- known novel *Twilight in Delhi* is Delhi, India, in the early 1900s. It narrates the tale of a Muslim family living under British domination. The book provides a thorough account of the manner in which Muslim marriage customs were observed in that era of civilization. In contrast, marriages are highly celebrated in modern day in modern-day India, where social norms are constantly shifting.

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The significance of this research lies in its ability to clarify the social and cultural norms found in ancient text and its contemporary variation in contemporary India.

Twilight in Delhi offers a unique window into past Indian Muslim weddings, showcasing the traditions and rituals prevalent in the early 1900s. We contrast these historical accounts with the many styles of contemporary Muslim royal marriages in India, such as Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan's. These recent weddings demonstrate the impact of globalization, contemporary living, and shifting societal norms. We wish to ascertain what aspects of wedding customs have altered and what has remained constant. In Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi*, Muslim society and culture in colonial India are vividly shown.

Durkheim, in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, concentrated on religious ritual, claiming in the end that ritual is the essential component that keeps a community cohesive. He offered an influential hypothesis about the function of ritual in group life, even though the parts of his arguments are based on the questionable premise that aboriginal cultures represent the most ancient human behavior that are unfounded. He gave an example of how religious ritual increases social connection, particularly focused, passionate, and rhythmic social interaction (*The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* 1912).

The wedding rituals of Asghar and Bilqeece in *Twilight in Delhi* and of Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan and Ananya Dagar at Noor Mahal in Rampur, as seen through the lens of Durkheim's Ritual Theory, highlight the importance of rituals in fostering social cohesiveness, cultural cooperation, and the spread of shared values and beliefs. The marriage ceremonies of Asghar and Bilqeece in *Twilight in Delhi* are deeply rooted in traditional Muslim customs, reflecting the historical context of the time. Through elaborate decor, traditional attire, and cultural events, these cultural traditions are maintained and perpetuated. The importance of maintaining order in the society and cultural traditions is emphasizes by the extravagant displays and adherence to rituals. The community's views on marriage and how these practices uphold social stability and cultural identity are highlighted in the detailed explanation of wedding customs. However, Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan's contemporary royal wedding at Rampur blends elements of past and present. By serving as a visible representation of the family's social and economic status, these occasions support the family's position in the social hierarchy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives
Following are the objectives of this research:

1. To analyze and compare the wedding rituals of the fictional world in *Twilight in Delhi* to that of Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan's real life modern wedding at Noor Mahal in Rampur.

2. To investigate the cultural and social importance of wedding rituals and their evolution in early 20th-century Delhi as portrayed in *Twilight in Delhi* and that of modern royal weddings in Rampur, focusing on the recent wedding at Noor Mahal.

Research Questions

1. How do the wedding rituals in *Twilight in Delhi* and Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan's wedding reflect the cultural and social dynamics of early 20th century Delhi and contemporary Rampur?

2. How do the wedding rituals observed in *Twilight in Delhi* (fiction)reflect the socio-political transformations of early 20th century Indian society, and in what ways do they compare to the of real life wedding practices observed in Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan's wedding at Noor Mahal in Rampur?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emile Durkheim's ritual theory, which holds that rituals support social cohesiveness, cultural solidarity, and the dissemination of common values and beliefs within a society, has been used to this research (Widmann, 2024). The study of Indian subcontinental wedding rites through the lens of Durkheim's ritual theory has shed light on the social and cultural relevance of these events. Researchers have looked on how wedding customs are changing, especially with regard to the merging of customary and modern elements in contemporary celebrations, reflects the ongoing cultural adaptation and the impact of globalization on the preservation and evolution of cultural traditions.

Most communities across the world have married couples, and marriages are acknowledged as special ceremonial events (Rosenblatt and Anderson, 1981). It is a ceremony of entry that redefines one's social and personal identity and culturally signifies a person's shift from one phase of life to another (Bell, 1997). This crucial ritualistic occasion which has long been regulated by cultural norms, behaviors and practices, provides newlyweds a chance to publicly announce their newly acquired identities and to gather relatives and close companions through prescribed collection of rituals, duties, and artifacts (Rook, 1985). These ritual components were historically established by indigenous groups.

A Ritual, according to Collins, needs to occur when two or more participants are physically present to one another, when there is a mutual consciousness and a shared sense of attention among the individuals. However, it may be on the whole group itself, an action or a particular symbol- and when there is a shared emotional state among participants-though this state or mood may develop or alter during the ritual.

The wedding is a significant rite that symbolizes common societal connotations. In Vietnam, they were examined as an act of transition that signaled a change in social rank and was flexible enough to adjust to varying market circumstances (Nguyen and Belk, 2012). According to Ourahmoune and Ozcaglar-Toulouse (2012), additional recent

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research on weddings has highlighted the role that fashion and culturally derived trends serve in enabling brides to represent their ethnicity and to negotiate their identities within the story of wedding Rituals.

According to Lewis (1997), after the engagement ring the bridal attire is the most valuable element of wedding. Nevertheless, in contrast to the ring, the wedding dress is easily recognized, never worn multiple times, and is an essential element that sets the bride apart from other ladies. Wedding rings and gowns are considered carriers of worth and significance and are important wedding artifacts that are used in rituals. Apart from being a highly costly purchase, the wedding gown holds significant value due to its public nature as a rite of transition and its ability to reflect the overall wedding aesthetics that the bride chooses.

Although it has long been believed in both communities of Muslims and Hindus in India that forced marriages are wrong but arranged marriages are still prevalent among Indian Muslims and Hindus. These days, however, it is more difficult to distinguish between love and arranged marriages. By setting up a marriage, for instance, the parents might justify their children attraction towards each other from the same class (Puri, 1999: 139). Muslim women are generally seen as having even less freedom of choice than other women, and their numerous causes for this. The comprehensive research conducted by Hasan and Menon (2004) has demonstrated that many Indian women, irrespective of their cultural background have relatively little choice over any part of their individual lives, including when and with whom to tie the knot.

One essential mechanism for maintaining social groups on both social and nutritional level is the sharing of food among members of the group. Food sharing is a ritualistic custom that is fundamental to many faiths and describes the boundaries of membership in national, local, and religious organizations as well as in ethnic communities more broadly (Caplan, 1997; Douglas, 1984). Food plays a ritualistic role in both *Twilight in Delhi* and the modern royal wedding in Rampur, strengthening social connections, unity and the passing down of common beliefs and principles. However, the methods that food is included into the rituals illustrate how culture is changing and how traditional and modern aspects are merged to produce modern wedding ceremonies.

Distribution of food at wedding receptions is marked by "excessive giving", analogous to a "potlatch", indicating fortunes and a disdain for keeping it for oneself (Werbner, 1990:258). Involvement in these ritualistic meetings and transitions is considered active participation in the *baradari*. The wedding meal is the center point of a series of ritual exchanges that accompany the transformation of a daughter and a son into a married couple. Under the necessary examination and debate (Anwar, 1979:69) by the intermediaries of prestige and honor (Bailey, 1971), referred to as honor community, the ceremonies and rituals permit the manifestation of fine status discrimination (Werbner, 1990:231).

This research's unique combination of historical and contemporary settings is among its most important characteristics. Prior research has frequently concentrated on

either one of the two topics, either dissecting the elaborate, customary wedding rites of the past or evaluating contemporary festivities considering present geopolitical concerns. Through a dynamic comparison of a real-life incident in Rampur in today's world with a literary description of Delhi in the beginning of the twentieth century, this study demonstrates both the continuity as well as transformation in rituals.

In general, the creative comparative methodology, the way Durkheim's Ritual Theory is applied to previous and modern events and the comprehensive examination of both social and cultural relevance of wedding rites distinguishes this research against other academic publications. It encourages researchers to investigate the constantly changing and lasting aspect of rituals in various cultural contexts by opening up new study directions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Rituals, according to Durkheim, are essential to the formation and preservation of civilization. He interprets religious symbols as reflections of society at large. He asserts that a community is the source of an individual fundamental human characteristics, including speech, morality, and tradition, and claims that society is created and preserved by the cooperation of its participants. In addition, people's understanding and active participation are crucial for the community's continued survival. As explained by Durkheim (2007, p.509), ritualistic behaviors also serve as a means of mutual identification between society and its members.

Durkheim argues in his seminal work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912) that rituals are essential to the cohesiveness and vitality of society. He enumerates several crucial functions that rituals provide, such as: **Social Cohesion, Collective Consciousness**, **Symbolism, Group effervescence, and Social Control.**

These characteristics provide a trustworthy framework for analyzing the wedding rituals in *Twilight in Delhi*, a traditional book, and the contemporary royal nuptials at Noor Mahal.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The textual analysis explores deeply the complex wedding ceremonies shown in fictional world of *Twilight in Delhi* by Ahmed Ali and the real life modern royal wedding of Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan at Noor Mahal in Rampur in the light of Emile Durkheim's Ritual Concept.

Weddings play a key role in all cultures. They mark a big change in life that brings people together and connect families and groups. Ahmed Ali portrays a community that is entrenched in tradition but is also confronting the intrusion of colonial forces in *Twilight in Delhi,* capturing the very essence of Muslim wedding ceremonies in the early 1900s. The book shows how these ceremonies reveal cultural identity, social ranks, and family duties. Take the wedding of Asghar and Bilqeece, for example, it's more than just two people getting married. It is a complicated mix of family relationships, social standing, and

what the culture expects. The recent royal wedding of Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan at Noor Mahal, on the other hand, presents a distant but vibrant picture of cultural significance. This modern Indian Muslim wedding combines vintage customs with contemporary styles. It demonstrates how cultural customs evolve with the passage of time. The heritage of the royal dynasty and the magnificence of Noor Mahal infuse the wedding rituals with profound significance. This demonstrates how traditions survive despite societal norms changing (R K Verma Photography, 2021).

Family conflicts during the wedding preparations in *Twilight in Delhi* draw attention to problems with status and class. The struggle for dominance in the horse-mounting arena, as both families fight for supremacy, exemplifies the societal rivalry inherent in matrimonial partnerships. Beyond just being personal, this competition represents broader societal ideals such as honor, reputation, and family pride. Similarly, the royal wedding at Noor Mahal provides us with an insight into contemporary society. In addition to following tradition, the event receives media interest and public attention. Participation in wedding ranges from aristocrats to common people, demonstrating how the wedding both establishes and maintains social positions. Therefore, in addition to celebrating the union of two people, the customs of this wedding highlight the significance of royal families in contemporary culture.

According to Durkheim, rituals convey common values and ideas and build social ties. Rituals generate a sense of communal excitement that enhances participant's sense of unity and connection (Volbers, 65), whether in contemporary royal weddings or *Twilight in Delhi*. Wedding customs evoke nostalgia in *Twilight in Delhi*, illustrating a community's shared memories as they cope with the legacies of colonialism. The book depicts a culture in transition where the past and present coexist side by side through its in-depth examination of traditions (Meraj, "Socio-Cultural Transition"), from engagement to wedding feast. Participating in these rituals helps individuals strengthen their sense of cultural identity in the face of external challenges.

However, the royal wedding at Noor Mahal illustrates the modern implementation of Durkheim's concept of collective consciousness. The grandeur of the occasion combined with the participation of many social groups generates a sense of communal joy that transcends individual differences. The traditions surrounding wedding create an emotion of unity amongst many ethnicities while also confirming the cultural significance of royalty in contemporary India.

Twilight in Delhi reveals Delhi's past while focusing on a Muslim household. The protagonist, a middle-aged man named Mir Nihal, is a living example of ancient customs and traditions. Asghar, his son, is an example of a mixed-race person who adheres to English customs. *Twilight in Delhi* is one of Ahmed's greatest pieces. He portrays a realistic image of Delhi and demonstrates how its culture has evolved in it. He looks into the traditions and culture of Delhi's Muslim community. He sheds light on the lifestyles of the Muslims, Hindus, and other tiny groups that were present in India during that period. The narrative centers in Mir Nihal's family, which Ali employs to illustrate the rise and fall of Muslim culture.

Through the character of Mir Nihal, Ahmed Ali depicts the rituals and ancient culture of Indian civilization. He is proud of his traditions and believes his kids will uphold their ethnic heritage. Mir Nihal hails from an elder generation that recalls the splendor of Muslim culture in the past, and they struggle to embrace contemporary cultural standards. On the other hand, this new culture is welcomed by the younger generation. Mir Nihal, therefore, orders his son to stop acting in this way whenever he puts on English boots or dresses in contemporary attire. "You are again wearing those dirty English boots! I don't like them. I will have no aping of the Farangis in my house" (Ali, 13).

On the other hand, "Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan tied the knot with Ananya Dagar, Shaukat Zamani Begum, at Noor Mahal in Rampur, Uttar Pradesh. The father of the groom, Nawab Syed Kazim Ali Khan shares the couple's love story" (Verma, April 2021). With a rich history of culture, craftsmanship, and culinary legacy, Rampur is one of the most prosperous principalities in all of India. This great legacy is still being upheld and nurtured by the present Nawab generation. Once considered India's wealthiest principality, Rampur is today a peaceful town situated in the Terai region of Uttar Pradesh. Beyond tangible wealth, the Rampur State's riches included liberal support for art, craft, religion, and food.

The Nawabs have gained deep respect and praise that's lasted for centuries until now. For generations up to this point, the Nawabs have been regarded with great respect and admiration. At the most recent wedding, which took place at the family's Noor Mahal mansion and featured Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan and Ananya Dagar, better known as Shaukat Zamani Begum, this love and gratitude are evident. Despite being a small, private gathering for close family, the entire city was delighted by the occasion. Strong ties are shared between the people of Rampur and the groom's parents, Nawab Syed Kazim Ali Khan, Firdaus Zamani Begum, and Rajmata Mehtaab Zamani Begum, the family matriarch. They bring together the greatest elements of the still-existent royal culture to lead the city's artistic, intellectual, social, and political affairs.

A family friend from the neighboring town of Seohara, Princess Chandni Kumari, recalls, "Noor Mahal looked like a sight decked out in festive yellows and ochres. The Nawabs famous for their cooking skills, had their royal chefs and trusted cooks whip up a tempting array of dishes. These included nihari, the well-known Moradabadi daal, galawat ke kabobs sheer mal, and biryani" (Verma, 2021).

The initial encounters between Asghar and Bilqeece in *Twilight in Delhi* and Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan and his wife in the modern royal wedding offer an intriguing look at the interplay between custom, family expectations, and shifting social norms. These examples illustrate the differences in the conceptions of marriage throughout history, as well as the cultural conventions governing ceremonies and reactions from family members.

When Asghar initially goes to Bilqeece's house in Delhi, he only watches her from afar. He is enthralled and stirred to great emotions by her grace and beauty. This is a fitting moment for the traditional setting of *Twilight in Delhi,* where young men and women don't often meet before marriage. The limitations on the interactions between men and women in early 20th-century Muslim society are emphasized by Asghar's capacity to observe

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Bilqeece from a distance. They don't meet; instead, their environment serves as a window into the cultural expectations of propriety and modesty as depicted by Ali in his text the restrictions placed on women, "In the world of an Indian home, where the woman is relegated to a subordinate place, love enters very rarely. An unmarried girl is not allowed to chew paan or wear flowers in her ear-rings or her hair. She is not even allowed to wear fine and expensive clothes or to use attar. In this atmosphere the idea of love does not take root in the heart" (Ali, 188). It also highlights the idea of gender roles prescribed to men and women in early twentieth century.

Asghar's father, Mir Nihal, dislike his wish when Asghar tells his family that he intends to wed Bilqeece. He believes that their family is a higher social status than Bilqeece's. This illustrates the perception of marriage at the time. It went beyond just wanting what you desired. Regarding respect and social position, it was significant for the entire family. Yet, Asghar's mother is sorry for her son. She ultimately grants his dream. This illustrates how women were frequently the more sympathetic and understanding parties in these circumstances.

The manner in which families were involved in the marriage decision demonstrates the adherence to traditional wedding customs at that era. Marriages had to be arranged with the consent of the parents. The importance of social position, community connections, and family reputation is exemplified by the wedding customs in *Twilight, Delhi*. All of these variables will affect how Asghar's family feels about the person he wants to marry. On the other hand, Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan met his wife, Ananya Dagar, in a more modern and open social setting. She took on the name Shaukat Zamani Begum when they got married. Their meeting was facilitated by modern means, such as social gatherings with mutual friends or even online dating services that demonstrate how people connect and develop relationships nowadays. The official and remote introduction by Asghar and Bilqeece was not the same as this meeting. As is common in relationships today, Haider and Ananya conversed and engaged with one another.

In an interview, Nawab Syed Kazim Ali Khan, Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan's father revealed, "My younger son, Haider Ali Khan, first met his bride-to-be at her cousin's house—who also happens to be his childhood friend. Over time, they grew closer and dated each other for three years…and the rest is history" (the Royal wedding). He further demonstrates, "Haider and Ananya took a trip to Bali in 2019. And while it seemed to be just another vacation, little did Ananya know what he had in mind... Haider had pre-planned a proposal with the help of three of his friends—candles, flowers, the works. When Ananya got to the location, he went down on one knee, holding the most impressive ring" (Verma, 2021). This shows the contemporary approach towards modern Indian Muslim rituals.

The reaction of Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan's family blended traditional and modern concepts, given his royal status. The royal family wanted to embrace modern ideas of uniqueness and passionate love while also protecting their cultural traditions and line of descent. Their mixing of respect for history and acceptance of modern identity and uniqueness is demonstrated by Ananya Dagar's rise within the royal family and her new

title. The approval of the family is still significant, even though it might not have been as strongly correlated with social status and societal views as it was in Asghar's case. Royal weddings of today, like Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan's, frequently incorporate both modern and traditional elements. Even while the wedding ceremony is filled with customs, there may also be more intimate and personal moments. This suggests a shift from arranged marriages to ones in which individual preference plays a role.

When contrasting Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan's extravagant celebration with the more straightforward and intimate wedding of Asghar and Bilqeece in early 1900s Delhi, one can plainly see the contrast between the grandeur of modern royal weddings and the intimate, community-focused celebrations of the past.

The marriage of Asghar and Bilqeece takes place in Delhi in the early 1900s. It's a more intimate, smaller gathering. "There were at least a thousand guests" (Ali, 171), including distinguished members of the local Muslim community as well as close friends and relatives are on the guest list. This wedding is far more intimate and emphasizes community service over a large-scale public display. The intimate aspect of the wedding reflects the social mores prevalent in the period, when weddings were community-focused affairs as opposed to highly publicized occasions.

As compared to Asghar and Bilqeece wedding, the pandemic significantly affected Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan and Ananya Dagar's wedding plans, "Due to the ongoing global pandemic, we decided on an intimate, 100-people wedding in Rampur for the couple. The festivities took place over two days, including a traditional nikah ceremony, in the presence of close friends and family from Delhi" (Sawhney, 2021)*,* causing them to select a more intimate celebration. Prioritizing everyone's safety and well-being, they invited only 100 people instead of their original plan for a large party. This modification resulted in a two-day celebration that including a customary nikkah ritual. Rather than the massive audience you'd expect at a royal wedding, close friends and relatives from Delhi attended. Representatives of the royal family, influential politicians, well-known socialites, and representatives of the media are among the guests. The magnitude of this event demonstrates how elegant royal weddings of today are, frequently drawing hundreds or even thousands of guests.

The henna ceremonies at the recent royal marriage of Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan and Ananya Dagar were quite different from those at Asghar and Bilqeece's wedding in early 1900s Delhi. These differences show both how traditions have stayed the same and how modern ideas have changed things.

During the pre-wedding ceremonies of Asghar and Bilqeece, *"*Mir Ejaz Hussain put the engagement ring on Asghar's hand"*,* and then, according to the ritual, "he handed him a purse containing one hundred and eleven rupees" (Ali, 164).

Durkheim's idea about rituals shows how mehndi ceremonies in both cases help bring people together and keep cultural identity strong. Today even though the size and style have changed, mehndi rituals still do what they have always done: they celebrate love

and community. The royal wedding mixes old and new, showing how rituals change over time but still play a key role in society. The bigger guest list and new entertainment at the royal wedding show a move towards more public celebrations. On the other hand, Asghar and Bilqeece wedding shows a time when close relationships and community involvement were the most important parts of wedding rituals.

In *Twilight in Delhi,* the Nikkah ceremony has a crucial role in Asghar and Bilqeece's wedding. This Islamic marriage contract happens in a simple traditional place showing the culture of early 1900s Delhi. The nikkah "was performed by the venerable old Akhunji Saheb" (Ali, 172), who recite verses from the Quran. Both sides then accept the marriage contract. Male family members and community elders must be there to witness the marriage. The ceremony is serious, focusing on the religious meaning of the union and the binding agreement between the couple.

Family and community have a key part in the Nikkah. Relatives and respected people from the local Muslim community come to the ceremony. Community involvement shows the social fabric of the time. Back then, marriages weren't just personal unions. They were also community events that made social bonds and religious values stronger as shown in the text "Then the guests depart one by one, and as they went to the door they were handed sweets........., along with their children and grandchildren whom they had brought with them uninvited" (Ali, 172,173). The focus is on modesty, tradition, and everyone in the community taking part, not on luxury or big shows.

The Nikkah ceremony of Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan and Ananya Dagar, which took place at the fancy Noor Mahal in Rampur, shows a mix of old and new customs. The main parts of the Nikkah stay the same - people still read verses from the Quran, both sides still say yes to the marriage contract, and a Qazi is still there. But now, the ceremony happens in a much fancier place. The event is big and showy, with more people watching. It's not just close family and friends anymore, now politicians, famous people, and news reporters come too. The Nikkah happens in a fancy place, with all the latest stuff and expensive decorations. This shows off how rich and important the families are.

Unlike Asghar and Bilqeece's small, community-focused Nikkah, the royal Nikkah attracted media and public figures showing a big change in how people view what used to be a private, community event. News coverage of the ceremony shows how modern tech has an impact on communication and highlights the growing role of social image and status in today's world.

The Nikkah ceremonies in both settings help strengthen shared religious and cultural beliefs. Traditional Nikkah puts emphasis on community involvement and religious commitment. On the other hand, modern Nikkah, with its public showcase and media attention, plays a part in shaping a wider more shared cultural awareness. This awareness goes beyond local groups and shows the impact of global trends.

Émile Durkheim's concept of "collective effervescence" refers to the shared emotional experience that individuals feel when they come together as a group during

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rituals or significant events. This concept can be applied to the emotional atmosphere during the bride's departure in both Asghar and Bilqeece's wedding in *Twilight in Delhi* and the recent royal wedding of Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan and Ananya Dagar.

In *Twilight in Delhi,* the departure of the bride, Bilqeece, is a deeply emotional moment "Women are born and are brought up by their parents only to be given away to strangers" (Ali, 176) that resonates strongly with the close-knit community. The ritual of the bride's departure, or "Rukhsati", is marked by an intense outpouring of emotions from both the bride's and groom's families as mentioned in the text, "Everyone in the house looked sorrowful, and all eyes were filled with tears. Even some of Asghar's relations were filled with sadness......, Begum Waheed, lost between the emotions of joy and grief" (Ali, 177). The gathering of family members, friends, and community members at this moment creates a collective emotional experience that binds everyone together.

The members' shared sorrow, happiness, and solemnity during Bilqeece's departure create an intense sensation of group euphoria. The bride's tears, the elders' comforting remarks, and the group prayers for the couple's future all add to an elevated emotional state that beyond personal emotions and forges a powerful sense of oneness among everyone in attendance. The community's social ties are strengthened by this collective emotional response, which also underlines shared religious and cultural values.

Deep emotional significance is also attached to the bride's departure at the recent royal wedding of Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan and Ananya Dagar, even though it takes place in a more contemporary and diversified social context. At the opulent Noor Mahal, there is a Rukhsati attended by a sizable crowd of people from all walks of life, including politicians, socialites, nobility, and broadcasters.

Despite the splendor and diversity of today's weddings, there is still a collective effervescence at the bride's departure. An emotional ambiance that unites the bride, groom, and their family is created by the shared emotions of the broader audience. The shared sense of happiness, sorrow, and optimism during the Rukhsati unites the participants, temporarily erasing their differences, even in this more open and diverse environment. Because the event is being seen and felt by a wider community, its grandeur and the presence of a diverse audience serve to enhance rather than lessen the shared emotional experience.

In both weddings, the collective effervescence during the bride's departure plays a crucial role in reinforcing social cohesion. In the traditional setting of *Twilight in Delhi,* it strengthens the bonds within a closely interconnected community. In the modern royal wedding, it serves to unite a broader, more diverse group, reflecting the ability of rituals to adapt to changing social structures while still fulfilling their function of promoting unity and shared values.

Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence is clear in both weddings. The shared emotional experience during the bride's departure in each case helps to reaffirm the collective identity of the group, whether it is a small, traditional community or a large,

modern, and diverse gathering. The ritual of the bride's departure, with its powerful emotional impact, serves as a moment of collective reaffirmation of social ties and cultural values, demonstrating the enduring significance of rituals in maintaining social cohesion across different contexts (Grant, 2021).

The palanquin in *Twilight in Delhi* and the car in the recent wedding of Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan and Ananya Dagar show a big change in how people travel during weddings. This change in transportation has an impact on culture and technology pointing to larger shifts in society.

In *Twilight in Delhi,* the palanquin, or "Doli," serves as a traditional way to transport the bride during her Rukhsati when she leaves her parents' home to start her new life with her husband, "Asghar stood there waiting to take the bride to the palanquin" (Ali, 178). The palanquin has deep cultural and symbolic meaning. It stands for modesty, respect, and shows how the bride's family wants to protect her. The slow careful journey in the palanquin as "carried by eight palanquin-bearers" (Ali, 180), gives the bride and her family time to deal with the emotions of her leaving. This way of transport also ties to the community and family bonds that play a big part in the wedding ceremony. It highlights how close-knit the society was in the novel.

On the other hand, the modern royal wedding of Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan and Ananya Dagar shows the bride leaving in a car. The car is a fancy one, stands for new ways, ease, and social standing. Unlike the palanquin, which people from the community carry, a driver or family member drives the car. This change points to a move towards doing things on one's own and using new tech in daily life. The use of cars also shows how symbols of social status have changed. Now high-end cars serve as a sign of wealth and respect.

The palanquin and car both transport the bride, but they represent different cultural values and social structures. A palanquin shows tradition, community, and group support, while a car stands for modern ideas personal choice, and social standing. The change from palanquin to car shows bigger changes in society, like the move from a group-focused community to one that cares more about individual status. Still, both ways of moving the bride, in their own settings, keep doing the job of marking her move from her parents' home to her new life. This means the Rukhsati ritual stays important even as culture and technology change around it.

The social and cultural environment of early 20-century Muslim society is reflected in *Twilight in Delhi*, where space has an immense effect on wedding rituals. However, modern weddings often make more efficient use of available space, reflecting the inclusiveness and equality that are popular today. The traditional gender- specific zones of mardana (the men's area) and zanana (the women's area) in *Twilight in Delhi* can be examined in detail, with a focus on how they differ from mixed-gender gatherings seen at contemporary weddings.

The marriage rituals in *Twilight in Delhi* exhibit a distinct division between the mardana (the men' section) and the zanana (the women's section). The culture and beliefs of Delhi's Muslim population in the early 1900s are deeply ingrained in this division of areas. The mardana area served as a male-only gathering place for visitors to converse, offer prayers, and participate in the ceremonial portions of the wedding. This location is connected to the public sphere, where reputation, honor, and social standing are highly valued. The mardana rituals emphasize the men's duties as protectors and providers for their families. This place has formal social discourse with an atmosphere of obligation and accountability.

On the other hand, the zanana is a more private setting where women congregate and are usually involved in the bride's getting ready and heartfelt farewells. This division of areas highlights the gender roles prevalent at the period, which clearly delineates the public and private domains. The rituals performed in these settings are rich in cultural meaning since they uphold social hierarchies and familial relationships in addition to celebrating the union of two people. For example, the revealing of the bride takes place in the zanana, which preserves the decorum customary of women in that age while signaling a shift from her familial identity to her new status as a wife. "At dinner time long food-cloths were spread, inside the zenana for the women, in the mardana for the men" (Ali, 159).

However, Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan's recent royal wedding at Noor Mahal demonstrates a shift in favor of transparency and modern wedding traditions. Mixed-gender celebrations are common at weddings nowadays, which suggests that social norms are shifting, and that men and women are becoming more equal. While some traditional elements remain, the ceremonies have included modern elements such as incorporating other cultural customs and allowing both genders to participate in every aspect of the event.

"The guests began to arrive one by one, relations from near and far, and there was no room in the house. Begum Kalim's house was full. Another house which was connected with it was borrowed from the residents for the marriage. All the houses were packed full of guests, and the real atmosphere of marriage prevailed" (Ali, 159).

However, modern marriage rituals reflect a more heterogeneous society. Gender diversity and the participation of many groups represent a common identity that embraces innovation while honoring long-standing traditions. This alteration in wedding customs reflects a change in societal ideals, emphasizing the importance of fostering relationships and exchanging experiences.

The bridal gown that Ananya Dagar, also known as Shaukat Zamani Begum, worn on her wedding to Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan holds great traditional and ancestral significance. It illustrates both her upbringing and the development of bridal traditions in modern Indian marriages.

Being a family relic, Ananya Dagar's wedding gown was originally worn by her husband's great-grandmother, which makes it special. This decision highlights the value of

family ties in marriage and the enduring nature of customs. In addition to showcasing the magnificence of royal weddings, the 45-kg gown has pure gold embroidery that demonstrates the work and craftsmanship that have been passed down through the years. The elaborate pattern and heavy embroidery draw attention to the area's rich cultural legacy and underscore the value that people place on handcrafted items and retro style when it comes to bridal gowns.

In South Asian cultures, wearing a bridal tire is associated with luck and pleasure. The idea that weddings are more than simply intimate unions but also occasions for community and family celebration is strengthened by Ananya's choice to dress in vintage, which links her to her family's historical heritage. The additions of a traditional nath, a maangtikka, and a Jhoomer set with Basra pearls enhance the outfit's cultural significance. This demonstrates how tradition and style coexist at royal weddings. "The traditional attire a bride wears for her wedding is passed down generations. The outfit my daughter-in-law wore for her nikah was originally worn by my grandmother. Over 45 kilos in weight, it featured pure gold embroidery, which was accessorized with a traditional nath, maangtikka, and jhoomar encrusted with Basra pearls" (Sawhney, 2021).

However, Bilqeece's bridal attire in *Twilight in Delhi* has a close tie to custom, illustrating the social and cultural norms of Muslim life in Delhi in the early 1900s. According to Ahmed Ali, her bridal gown serves as a potent emblem of the social mores of the time and the expectations placed on each gender. Bilqeece would have been "wearing red clothes, with the exception of the flowing paijama which was made of green sateen, clothes which had come from Asghar's house; and a sehra was tied to her head" (Ali, 174). Flowing garments with lavish ornamentation would demonstrate the wealth and social standing of the bride's family. Richly embroidered, the dupatta or veil symbolized modesty, honor, and the bride adhering to traditional notions of womanhood. It frequently covered the bride's head and face as mentioned in the novel "Her face could not be seen as her headcloth had been pulled low down over her face; and she sat bend low" (Ali, 174). The veil revealed the purdah system as well, emphasizing the need of keeping women hidden from public view.

Incorporating Victor Turner's Rites of Passage framework into the analysis provides further depth by emphasizing the liminality of weddings and the transformation of individuals and communities through rituals. Asghar and Bilqeece's nuptials in *Twilight in Delhi* also mark a threshold, a in-between moment when a couple shifts from unmarried to married, marked here by complicated rituals and prohibitions, as well as by social expectations, that signify that change. In Twilight in Delhi, for instance, the temporary bond created through wedding ceremonies represents Turner's notion of communitas despite the existence of social hierarchies within and across classes, and these are evoked by shared customs among families and communities. On the other hand, on the Noor Mahal

wedding, inclusivity is also highlighted by the wedding, but social divisions are stronger as well through media coverage, presence of elite/high society people leading to Durkheim's collective consciousness building.

Additionally, Turner's stages of rites of passage — separation, transition (liminality) and incorporation — can be employed to wedding itself. In both contexts, the rukhsati signifies the bride leaving her parental home, ending one identity (daughter) and starting another (wife). The rituals of engagement, mehndi, and the wedding feast function as transitional spaces that crystallize social roles while facilitating cultural continuity. Turner's perspective extends the analysis to more complex forms of identity and transition than the Durkhemian lens provides, considering less collective-based than personal and structural transformations that can occur during wedding rituals.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, an analysis of the wedding traditions of Delhi and the most recent royal wedding of Nawabzada Haider Ali Khan illustrates the manner in which traditions and modern life coexist and change. Certain rituals, like the nikkah ceremony and the bride's departure, nevertheless have the same fundamental meanings. But the customs surrounding these ceremonies have changed along with modernity. Their use of cars and palanquins, the people they invite, and the whole atmosphere they create for families all serve to illustrate this. These objects serve as examples of how culture is changing. Rituals still serve to bring people together, and act as a reminder of their common identity despite of all of these shifts.

This study opens avenues for future research on how globalization and digital media influence traditional rituals, shaping perceptions of heritage and identity. Further studies can also explore how different generations within the same cultural context negotiate these changes, or how wedding rituals adapt in diasporic communities, blending local and ancestral traditions. Understanding these evolving practices can provide deeper insights into the resilience and transformation of cultural customs in a rapidly modernizing world.

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