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Transhuman Aspirations and Posthuman Transformations in Sami Ahmed Khan's *Aliens in Delhi*

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Abstract

Sami Ahmed Khan's *Aliens in Delhi* reimagines the alien-invasion narrative as a philosophical and geopolitical exploration of human evolution. The novel suggests that contemporary humans are diminished versions of their future descendants, the "MetaUmans," who once achieved technological singularity before fragmenting into three species – the reptilian Qa'haQs, the insectoid Soryaks, and the technologically advanced MetaUmans themselves. Displaced into the past, these beings intervene in human history and reshape Earth's political and biological structures. This paper argues that the novel presents a critical tension between transhumanism and posthumanism. The MetaUmans symbolise technological enhancements that expand human capabilities while maintaining recognisable human desires for dominance and hierarchy. In contrast, the Qa'haqs exemplify a radical posthuman transformation that destabilizes anthropocentrism and rewrites biological identity through technological intervention. By situating these evolutionary paths within contemporary geopolitics, surveillance systems, and biopolitical strategies, *Aliens in Delhi* emerges not only as science fiction but as a reflection on technological power, biocapitalism, and the uncertain future of humanity.

Keywords: Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Posthuman Identity, Biopolitics, Bioweapon, Biocapitalism, Gene Manipulation, Geopolitics

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Introduction

Posthumanism challenges the humanist belief in the centrality and superiority of human beings. Thinkers such as Donna Haraway (150) and Rosi Braidotti (13-16) argue that the “human” is neither stable nor self-contained but historically constructed and technologically mediated. As Francesca Ferrando explains, “Posthumanism sees technology as a trait of human outfit, but not its main focus, which would reduce its theoretical attempt to form a techno-reductionism” (39). Thus, posthumanism does not celebrate technology blindly; instead, it questions how technological developments reshape ethical, political, and ontological categories. As Chattopadhyay sums up the crux of Posthumanism, “Posthumanist philosophy builds a post- or anti-anthropocentrism that looks at the world without putting the human species at its core” (32) –

Transhumanism, though related, emphasises different aspects. Popularized by Julian Huxley in 1957, transhumanism envisions humanity actively directing its own evolution. Associated with thinkers such as Nick Bostrom and Ray Kurzweil, it centres on enhancement – overcoming disease, disability, and death through scientific advances. As Newton Lee writes, “Transhumanism is the next logical step in the evolution of humankind, and it is the existential solution to the long-term survival of human race” (vii). Natasha Vita-More states, “At the core of transhumanism is the conviction that the lifespan be extended, aging reversed, and that death should be optional rather than compulsory. Transhumanism also proposes that artificial intelligence be used to help improve human-level decision-making, that nanotechnology resolve environmental hazards, that molecular manufacturing stop poverty, and that genetic engineering mitigate diseases” (49). The transhuman is an intermediate stage - still human, but technologically amplified. Sayyed Ali Mirenayat et al. believe that transhumanism is “a movement which follows several transformation goals to reach immortality and superiority of human through advanced technology” (264). The distinction is subtle but important. While transhumanism aims to extend the human, posthumanism questions the very category of the human. *Aliens in Delhi* offers a compelling fictional landscape where these two evolutionary paths are dramatized and placed in conflict.

Evolutionary Circularity and the Fragmented Singularity

Khan’s novel suggests a circular theory of evolution. Humans evolve into MetaUmans and reach a technological singularity – a unified supreme consciousness – before fragmenting into three species: MetaUmans, Qa’haQs, and Soryaks. The singularity becomes unstable, causing these beings to be hurled back in time. This cyclical model complicates linear notions of progress. Evolution is not a smooth ascent toward perfection but an unstable, reversible, and politically charged process. Technological singularity does not produce harmony; instead, it produces fragmentation, rivalry, and war.

Elements of Posthumanism: The Qa’haQs and the Decentering of the Human

One of the central posthuman ideas in the novel is the rejection of human exceptionalism. The arrival of the Qa’haQs destabilizes the belief that humans occupy the highest position in the cosmic hierarchy. Their existence forces governments and intelligence agencies such as

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RAW and ISI to confront an unprecedented adversary beyond conventional geopolitical logic. The invasion is described through genetic mutation rather than military assault:

‘What, The Qa’haQ have decided to invade Earth?’

‘Yes!’

‘But how?’

‘Through genetic mutation, of course.’

‘So you mean the human gene pool...’

‘Compromised.’

‘How do you know? What happened?’

‘We have received word from our associate in South Asia. The Qa’haQ have deployed their weapon. The Genetic Transmutor.’

‘What? How? Where?’

One of our members, whose house was the first to receive the cell tower design the Qa’haQ gave us, started exhibiting signs of spontaneous genetic mutation.’

‘And what exactly does that mean?’

‘It means that there has been a change in the nucleotide sequence of the genome of an organism, in this case, a human. Mutations. Usually stem from damaged DNA/RNA genomes. This one seems to be caused by radiation. (131)

Here, everyday infrastructure – cell phone towers – becomes a bioweapon. The Qa’haQs amplify radiation into an unknown frequency, triggering genetic reconfiguration. Smartphones, symbols of modern connectivity and biocapitalist expansion, become instruments of planetary-scale biological control. This strategy reflects biopolitics, the management and manipulation of life itself. The Qa’haQs do not seek annihilation but transformation. They attempt to reclaim Earth by converting humans into Qa’haQ hybrids. Their power lies not merely in weaponry but in their mastery over life processes. ‘The transformation process is excruciating. Cellular structures rearrange; bones and tissues mutate; speech and cognition change. The converted individuals enter a liminal hybrid state, destabilizing fixed notions of identity. Posthuman identity here is not enhancement but ontological rupture. The Qa’haQs thus represent a posthuman condition as they decenter humanity, erase the boundary between biology and technology, and operate at a systemic rather than individual level. Their final words – “We will be back” (283) – underscore the instability of human dominance.

Elements of Transhumanism: The MetaUmans and Enhanced Humanity

If the Qa’haQs embody posthuman transformation, the MetaUmans represent transhuman aspiration. They are technologically enhanced humans with superior physical strength, telepathic abilities, heightened perception, and advanced cognitive power. Characters such as Yasser Basheer undergo cellular rearrangement through alien serum and gain enhanced abilities. Similarly, Osama Bin Laden’s restructured cellular makeup makes him immune to pain and capable of telekinetic movement. These figures exemplify transhumanist goals: exceeding biological limits through science. However, despite their superiority, MetaUmans are still driven by recognizably human motivations – power, territorial control, and domination.

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They wage war against Qa'haQs and Soryaks to secure Earth solely for themselves. Even after reaching singularity, they fail to maintain unity. Thus, enhancement does not eliminate hierarchy or greed. Transhumanism amplifies human capacities but does not transcend human ambition. MetaUmans enhance human intelligence and longevity, reach technological singularity, and maintain hierarchical, anthropocentric instincts. They embody a primary evolutionary stage rather than a radical break as seen in posthumanism.

Technology, Geopolitics, and Biocapitalism

Khan places these speculative transformations within current geopolitical tensions. RAW, ISI, and global intelligence networks interpret the crisis through familiar frameworks of national rivalry. Even in the face of extraterrestrial transformation, state logic remains dominant. The novel suggests that technological systems are never neutral. The Qa'haQs subtly guide humans in developing smartphone infrastructure, embedding future bioweapons within everyday technology. Tools of communication become tools of genetic control. The Chandrayaan mission, reimagined as a secret effort to detect extraterrestrial life, symbolizes transhuman aspiration – humanity's desire to go beyond Earth. Yet scientific progress remains intertwined with national interests and strategic competition. Technology thus becomes a site of enhancement, a means of surveillance, an instrument of geopolitical power, and a vehicle of biocapitalist control.

Delhi as a Political and Ontological Site

The choice of Delhi as the setting is meaningful. As India's political hub, Delhi represents state power, surveillance, and bureaucratic authority. The alien "invasion" here becomes more than just a military event; it becomes a crisis of existence and sovereignty. Unlike conventional alien invasion stories, Khan depicts extraterrestrials not as foreign enemies but as the next step in human evolution. The invasion shifts from being a military conflict to a civilizational challenge – a confrontation with humanity's future.

Transhuman Optimism vs Posthuman Disruption

The novel ultimately presents a tense struggle between transhumanism and posthumanism. Transhumanism offers survival, enhancement, and progress, while posthumanism questions whether the term "human" is still the right reference point. *Aliens in Delhi* critiques transhuman optimism by suggesting that regaining MetaUman power might erase recognizable humanity. At the same time, it does not romanticize posthuman decentering; the Qa'haQs are not ethical utopians but strategic colonizers. Evolution in the novel is unstable, circular, and conflict-driven. Technological progress creates new capabilities and vulnerabilities.

Conclusion

Aliens in Delhi blends speculative science with philosophical inquiry to examine the boundaries between transhumanism and posthumanism. The MetaUmans expand humanity through enhancement but remain connected to human ambition. The Qa'haQs challenge the very definition of the human by rewriting biological identity through systemic technological intervention. By embedding these transformations within global geopolitics, biopolitics, and

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technological infrastructures, the novel suggests that the future of humanity will be shaped not only by science but also by power, control, and contested definitions of life itself. The evolutionary trajectory in the novel does not culminate in perfection. Instead, it leaves readers confronting a fundamental question, whether humanity's future lies either in becoming more human through enhancement or in transcending the human altogether.

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