

CHAPTER – IV

A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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The comparative study of Eric Ambler's *The Mask of Dimitrios* (1939) and *Journey into Fear* (1940) is essential because they have a lot of similarities and differences. However, the present chapter deals with the comparative study of these select novels. The present research work concerned with the study of Eric Ambler's select novels in the context of the concept Thriller and Thriller Fiction. So, the thriller and its various kinds are majorly reflected in these two novels.

The Mask of Dimitrios is considered as a masterpiece of Ambler, which gave him fame than *Journey into fear*. Both novels are published between September 1939 and July 1940, that period as the 'phony war'. The novelist uses trenchantly and presciently language to describe the events in Europe from 1935 to 1940. In 1939, he published his finest novel *The Mask of Dimitrios*, which is adapted into the finest film in 1944. In the following year he published his novel *Journey into fear* which is adapted into film in 1945.

A Mask of Dimitrios is appeared in the same month when Hitler invaded Poland. In his autobiography, Ambler says that: "*The Mask of Dimitrios* had just been published and had the distinction of being made Daily Mail Book-of-the-Month during the week that Britain, Germany and France declared war" (154). He also says about the *Journey into Fear*: "*Journey into Fear* was the Evening Standard Book-of-the-month for July 1940, the month in which the Third French Republic ceased to exist and the Battle of Britain began" (158).

The titles of these both novels suggest that there are something dangerous and strange. *The Mask of Dimitrios* is his fourth novel which was

first published under the title of '*A Coffin for Dimitrios.*' In it novel the protagonist named Latimer is a detective writer who reveals the real mask of the man Dimitrios through his journey. Dimitrios is really a dangerous man who is a murderer, a spy, and a drug-peddler. Colonel Haki, a Turkish Secret Police show him the dead body of a man:

Latimer stared at the corpse. So this was Dimitrios. This was the man who had, perhaps, slit the throat of Sholem, the Jew turned Moslem. This was the man who had connived at assassinations, who had spied for France. This was the man who had trafficked in drugs, who had given a gun to a gun to a Croat terrorist and who, in the end, had himself died by violence. This putty-coloured bulk was the end of an Odyssey. Dimitrios had returned at last to the country whence he had set out so many years before. (19)

Above information reveals that Dimitrios is not a common man but a very strange man. Latimer is eager to know much more about him. However, he travels different cities to meet the people who have contact with Dimitrios in their past life. During the travelling, one of his informers gives him a surprise that Dimitrios is alive. At the end of the story, Dimitrios is dead in the game of blackmailing by Mr. Peters and Latimer. So, he unfolds the whole history of him and shows the real mask of Dimitrios.

Journey into Fear is Ambler's fifth novel. The title of it suggests that there is a long journey which is a full of fear. The protagonist named Graham, who travels by the Italian boat where he caught up in the strange atmosphere. He decides to travel by a boat because someone tries to shoot him for no reason. Colonel Haki identifies that there are two murders one is Moeller, a German agent, and other is Banat, a Romanian veteran, who is

unsuccessful to shoot Graham through the hotel windows. On the boat he meets mysterious characters like Mr. Kuvetli who is a Turkish agent appointed by Colonel. Moeller and Banat present there, they want to kill him. However, along with fear his journey gives him a lot of tension and surprise.

The stories of these two novels revolve around a journey of the protagonists. They have got success in their adventurous journey which is not simple but with a lot of obstacles. Actually, they are common men caught up in the trap of obstacles. They have a mission and they fight for completing their mission. While completing their journey, they face life and death situations. It is really fearful and horrible. At the end of the novel, they achieve their mission and novels end happily. A critic Philip Hewitt-Myring describes *A Coffin for Dimitrios* as, “a beautifully written and highly original book which displays a symmetry and degree of careful planning that one does not find in one in a thousand adventure stories” (Lewis 62).

Latimer, a detective writer who is the protagonist and Dimitrios, is an antagonist of *The Mask of Dimitrios*. On the other hand, Graham, an engineer who is the protagonist and Moeller and Banat are villainous characters in *Journey into Fear*. Here, Ambler depicts fictional characters but they represent real kind of people. His heroes are ordinary people innocently caught in a strange atmosphere. His villains are actual people who generate violence in the society. They die at the end of the novels. In the first novel only one female and in the second novel four female characters are portrayed. The secondary characters are less developed in these novels. Through these characters, the novelist depicts the people of Europe in 20th century.

There is a character Colonel Haki, a head of the Turkish Secret Police, who appears in the *The Mask of Dimitrios*. He is a tall man with lean near about fifty years old. He has muscular cheeks and grey hair cropped Prussian fashion. He has a narrow frontal bone, a long beak of a nose and thin lips. Latimer meets him in a party in Istanbul. Colonel Haki tells him about a current incident for his new plot. He encourages him to meet the people in different areas for collecting the information about Dimitrios. He also appears in the second novel *Journey into Fear*. In it, he suggests to Graham to travel by the boat because it will be danger for him to go by a train or bus. His role is same in the novels. He morally supports to the protagonists of the novels. He gives proper suggestions for their further adventurous activities.

To see the setting of these novels is important thing. They are set in Europe in the 20th century. The first novel takes place in the different cities in Europe. There are various hotels, bars, houses, and dark rooms. The second novel takes place in the static environment of a small ship bound from Turkey to Greece to Italy. The atmosphere of these novels is creepy menace, dark, rainy, night, and dark. The horrible settings create fear, excitement, and curiosity in the mind of readers.

The plots of these novels are fast-moving. There is a systematic arrangement between events and incidents. There is no absurdity. The development of plot of the first novel is Latimer's meeting with Colonel Haki in Istanbul, fascinated by the dead body Dimitrios, his visits to the different cities in Europe, Mr. Peters tells him truth about Dimitrios, who is still alive, and Dimitrios is dead in the game of money at the end of the story. In the second novel, there are attack on Graham, who travels by the ship, Banat's arrival on the ship, death of Mr. Kuvetli, and escape of Graham from Moeller and Banat. The novels have an exciting plot, which contains excitement, mystery, suspense, surprise, thriller, violence, horror, tension,

and fear. These elements create curiosity in the mind of readers while reading them.

The horror is often present in the plot of the novels. The horrible incidents capture the sight of the readers. *The Mask of Dimitrios* opens with a sudden death of man and *Journey into Fear* opens with someone's attack on the protagonist. However, the novels open with inescapable danger. Both incidents are on the centre because the further activities of protagonists depend on them. There is not only horror at the beginning of the novels but it often presents in the whole stories. Such horrible incidents create thriller in the mind of people.

The novels unfold the contemporary social realities, for instance-crimes like murder, assassination, drug smuggling, a serial killer, and robbery. These crimes show that the evil enters in the society. The people have two masks while living in the society first is good and second is evil. Good and evil qualities are inborn in the human being. These qualities depend on in which atmosphere people grow. The evil masks spoil the society in different ways. The evil manners are very dangerous and harmful to the society. Through these two manners, author shows moral and immoral things in the world. It is true to say that evil dominates over good, but at the end good demolishes evil. Along with the entertainment the novels deal with morality which is useful to the society.

In the novels, the novelist points out the chaos in Europe in the earlier period of the twentieth century. He focuses on the social and political background of the period. The novels portray the world which is full of violence. Here, the novelist not only gives stress on the particular sub-genres of thriller fiction but he covers an adventure, suspense, political, and historical thriller in his novels. He focuses on the adventurous actions of the

protagonists, sense of suspense, political, and historical events in order to create a thriller. Through these elements he shows horror in the world.

The novels explore the elements of excitement, mystery, adventurous action, suspense, surprise, tension, and fear. They explore the themes of espionage, crime, murder, adventure, detection, violence and horror. Through them, he creates fearful excitement. His intention is not to create a thriller in the mind of readers, but to point out the violence or horror in the society. He depicts some historical and political events show that assassination, massacre, and bloodshed in the society which create thriller in the mind while reading.

There are a lot of violent actions presented in these novels. In *The Mask of Dimitrios*, Latimer sees the dead body of a man. All understand that, it is a body of Dimitrios, but this is the dead body of Visser, who is killed by Dimitrios. He is a criminal who lacks of morality. He is busy in a bad business like murder, assassination, and spying. He is a violent man who creates violence in the society. *Journey into Fear* is also full of violence. There are three violent incidents presented in the novel. The first violence is someone's attack on Graham without reason, second is Mr. Kuvetli's death, and third is the escape of Graham from the hands of Moeller and Graham.

The characters play a significant role in the development of the stories. The action of the novels is fast-paced. The adventurous actions present in the stories. The readers are very excited to read such action-adventurous novels. Each and every incident relies on the other incidents. However, there is coherence between events and incidents. The readers are very curious about what will happen next while reading.

The novels are written for entertainment. Along with entertainment they unfold some problems in the society. The fictional worlds in the novels

focus on the social realities like murder, theft, robbery, drug smuggling, a serial killer, and assassination. They also emphasize on the social, political, and historical events in order to show the horror. The main intension of the writer is to create awareness among the people about such events.

The novels explore the theme of espionage. In the first novel Dimitrios is an antagonist who betrayed his country and spied for France in his past life. There is another character Wladylaw Grodok a former successful government agent in Europe. In the second novel Kuvetli is an agent appointed by Haki on the boat. Moeller is another character who is a German agent.

There are few characters in the novels, they mask their true identity. In the first novel, Dimitrios and Mr. Peters try to hide their identity. The story of Dimitrios' life is emerged in fragmentary form. His dossier shows a larger scale of illegal activities including- robbery and murder in Smyrna, blackmail and pimping in Sofia, attempted assassinations in various parts of Europe, spied for France, international drug running, and the white slave trade. While doing such things he transforms his identity frequently, discarding his own Greek surname of Makropoulos for Talat, Taladis, von Kiessling, Rougement, and C. K. He has many identities but he always tries to hide them. Mr. Peters hides his true identity. His real name is Frederik Petersen, who supports to Dimitrios in his bad business. In the second novel Mr. Kuvetli and Moeller are the two passengers who mask their true identities. Kuvetli is one of Haki's agent appointed on the ship and Moeller is a German agent, who supports to Banat, a professional killer.

The women characters play a significant role in the novels. In *The Mask of Dimitrios*, there is only one female character named Irana Preveza who is an ex-lover of Dimitrios. Dimitrios her cheats over her the money. He

takes money from her but never returned. There are four female characters in the *Journey into Fear*; these are Stephanie, Josette, Madam Mathis, and Italian women. Stephanie is Graham's wife who appears in first and second parts of the novel. She does not travel by a boat with Graham. Her role is a minor but important one. Josette is a dancer who has played a major role in the novel. Madam Mathis is a wife of Mr. Mathis. She always supports to her husband in his deeds. There is an unmarried Italian woman who is travels by the boat with her son.

The novels are based on who-dun-it format. In the first novel at the beginning of the novel all understand that Dimitrios is dead whose body is found in the Turkish boat. However, nobody knows who killed him. At first the intention is also not clear why he is killed and how. These same things happen in the second novel also. In it, at the beginning no one knows the name of the man who wants to kill the protagonist. Colonel Haki informs him undoubtedly that there is a man named Banat who is the professional killer who tries to kill him. There is another murder of Mr. Kuvetli. There is suspense that nobody knows who killed him. Such types of incidents create violence, suspense, surprise, and fear in the mind. At the end of the stories all the problems are solved and there is happy ending.

In the novels, Ambler uses the flashback technique. In the first novel, he uses it, to illustrate Dimitrios's past life. Latimer is interested in the past life of Dimitrios. He meets different people like Muishkin, a Russian translator, Marukakis, a Greek Communist and foreign correspondent and Irana Preveza, a former prostitute are some of his informants. They are in the contact of Dimitrios in their past life. They reveal their past experiences how they came in the contact of Dimitrios and its consequences. The novelist also uses flashback technique in the *Journey into Fear* to explain the mysterious opening as Graham, recovers from a bullet wound.

Along with curiosity the novels are full of suspense. In *The Mask of Dimitrios*, all feel that Dimitrios is dead but Mr. Peters reveals that he is still alive. The dead body on the Turkish beach is the man of Vissor not of Dimitrios. In *Journey into Fear*, at first nobody knows who attacks Graham. Colonel Haki reveals him the name of an attacker but suspense is that why he wants to kill him. The suspense in the novels is that whether the protagonists will be killed or not in their fearful journey.

There is a lot of surprise, tension, and fear found in the novels. In the first novel, the incidents like the dead body of Dimitrios, dossier of Dimitrios, mask of Mr. Peters who tells the truth that Dimitrios is not dead but alive, Dimitrios's arrival in the hotel room, and Mr. Peters and Latimer's fighting with Dimitrios create these elements. In the second novel, there are some incidents like someone attacks on Graham without reason, Banat's arrival on the boat, disappear once of revolver from a room, Haller real name is Moeller, Kuvetli's real mask, sudden death of Kuvetli, and escape of Graham from the trap of Moeller and Banat arouse surprise, tension, and fear.

Both novels emphasize on some historical events. They show effects of the Second World War on the life of people. *The Mask of Dimitrios* reveals the real picture of that is, "The massacre continued with unabated ferocity. ...The narrow, gutted streets became so choked with corpses...Many refugees had tried to reach ships in the inner harbor. Shot, drowned, mangled by propellers, their bodies floated hideously in the blood-tinged water." (23) In *Journey into Fear*, Graham says that, "I was thinking of the Serbian atrocities in Turkish villages. Most armies commit what are called atrocities at some time or other. They usually call them reprisals" (61). It shows horror of the World War II.

It is necessary to think about the differences between these two novels. *The mask of Dimitrios* is the novel of two hundred and twenty six pages. It is divided into fifteen parts and each part has a separate name. *Journey into Fear* is divided into two hundred and eleven pages. It is also divided into twelve parts without titles. Each and every page of the novels has aroused curiosity in the mind of readers. Because of curiosity they move to the next page quickly. They stimulate while reading such thriller stories.

The protagonists of these two novels involve in their journey but their intentions are different. In the first novel Latimer, a detective writer wants to reveal real mask of Dimitrios. So, he decides to meet different people who are come in contact of Dimitrios in their past life. However, he travels various cities all over the Europe. In the second novel Graham, an engineer travels by the ship because it will be dangerous for him to travel by the bus or train.

The first novel emphasizes on the detective formula. It is true to say that it is a novel of detection because its themes are crimes and the main characters are the experiment in detection. The protagonist is in search of true identity of the man Dimitrios. He travels different cities in Europe by the train. The second novel is not based on the form of detection. There is a sea voyage of the protagonist.

All the problems are solved at the end of the novels. The protagonists are released from life and death situations. So, they have happy ending.