

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE NOVELS OF SALMAN RUSHDIE

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ABSTRACT

Literature takes us to a world of fantasy. There are writers who want of their readers live in an unreal world. It's part of the magic, Goethe's Faust and Marlow's *Faust's* transport the readers into the magic world, magic adds to reading and writing. Unreality or magic combined with post-structuralism recalling Laurence Sterne seems to flourish in Salman Rushdie. Rushdie who shot into fame in the past two decades as a novelist is a very scintillating writer of prose and an artist of great imagination. His first novel, *Grimus* (1975) a fairy tale, is about magic and its readers are both enchanted and disenchanted. As fairy tale it does not sustain the imagination for a long time. It carries myth and queerness of mythical world of enchantment. The hero is an expatriate Amerindian Flapping Eagle, a magician, who says "I began to recreate Calf Island, exactly as it was with one difference: It was no Rose. I had decided that this was a better alternative than physically breaking the Rose." Of this novel Rushdie says "I think *Grimus* is a quite clever book."

KEYWORDS: Literature, Salman Rushdie

INTRODUCTION

THE SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE OF HISTORY OF TWO FAMILIES IN THE NOVEL "SHAME"

SHAME (1983) is The history of two families whose destinies are closely intertwined. It deals with the birth of Raza Hyder's and his wife Bilqu's daughter Sufiya, Zinobia is characterised as the wrong miracle. There are a number of catastrophes, the girl develops an Ogre like a man killing monster whose death is as spectacular as her career as a psychopathic murderer. Sufia Zinobia is an embodiment of the beast of shame, whose power cannot be held for long within one frame of flesh and blood because it grows it feeds and swells until the vessel bursts. The monster is causing a shock wave that demolishes and after it comes to fire ball of burning, rolling outwards to the horizon like the sea and last of all the cloud, which rises and spreads and hangs over the nothingness of the scene. The cloud passage is picturesque; miracles described.

THE SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE OF "LIFE AND DEATH" IN THE NOVEL "GRIMUS"

"There are miracles of *Grimus* – a man (Grimus) – A man (Grimus) finds the elixir of life elixir of death all magical feasts recalling Prospero of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* where the vision – the great globe itself dissolves but Prospero is in control of things to the very end and it's not so in *Grimus* where the story ends with the fall of the magician. *Grimus* the magician, whose world nobody can enter without his permission. He has set up a barrier and dismantles it later on and transfers his power to Flapping Eagle who becomes a sun when he loses his own defense, everyone is angry and wants to lynch him".

G.V.Desani's *All About H.Hatter*, an autobiographical novel, seems to influence the style of Rushdie. In Desani the style is linguistically literary hybrid and colloquial. This aspect is reflected here. While *Grimus* is a meeting ground of the Eastern and Western influences, *Midnight's Children* is Oriental in thought but expressed in novel form. The Eastern

content in the Western form, the very opening paragraph gives clue. The influence of the epics *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* with their interspersed paragraphs are noticed in the narrative in Rushdie's words.

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE OF INDIAN HISTORY IN "MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN"

Saleem Sinai of *Midnight's Children* is the hero who arrives very late in the novel. Both he and Omar Khyyam are in search of destiny which they seek dream and memory. The first part deals with a number of characters who do not add to the general themes. Dr. Azeem, talks about Indian history, the 1919 Jalianwala Bagh massacre, General Dyer's hard-heartedness the Rani of Cooch, Neru and India, Major Zulfikar and other Muslims and their rulers like Nadirkhan come in for description. Gradually Mountbatten who had a role in India's Independence is introduced and description of India is interwoven with human beings. General Dyer, Mahatma Gandhi, M. A. Jinnah, and others prominent or not so prominent are brought on the stage. One reads about Dr. Narlikar Nursing Home running on a skeleton staff. The hero's 10th birthday is celebrated in book two and we get more milieu of the Bombay life. The pioneer cafe looms large. Thus a number of scenes from memory are described, there is also described. There is also a conference of *Midnight's Children* which fell apart on the day of Chinese armies came down the Himalayas as there was no resistance from India. There is comment on India's jurisprudence, on veiled figure of Bhutto of Pakistan who will appear in the next novel, *Shame*. However, Parvathi has a role in securing Saleem's return to India from Bangladesh and Parvathi wicker basket which enables her to make man disappear until she returns. The authorial incursions mar the narrative but the history of free India with all its conflicts and tensions is charmingly narrated. *Midnight's Children* (1981) has all aspects of the story interesting in itself. It lacks subtly in some of its features, there is no need to bring in all sorts of events: Nehru's birthday, Chinese invasion and Bhakranangal dam and so on. They do not coalesce. But narration of many ideas although crowded reads well. The identity of *Midnight's Children* is unclear as there is no suggestions. We admire the style and display of fire works and conjuring tricks, which all come from the artist's hat.

THE SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES OF FAMILY, POLITICS, HISTORY IN THE NOVEL "SHAME"

Shame appeared in 1983. *Shame* is divided into 5 books and the contents deal with the setting for the opening chapter the under town of Q the relation between India and Pakistan of General Zia Ul Haq who died in plane crash in 1986. *Shame* is an allegory with the figures of Bhutto and Zia thinly disguised, Benazir is treated as political animal in her own right and chief bearer of the secret flame of her executed father's memory. Rushdie's documents that Benazir Bhutto speaks of her dead father in every public speech in order to win sympathy. In *Shame* the narrator remembers Rubaiyyat of Omar Khyyam rendered into English by Edward Fitzerald in the 19th century. The Opening chapters deal with the border of Q where Geography and topography are central to the construction. There is reference to partition of India and all historical details are fictionalised. Division of the book into 5 parts takes away the technique of narration but the elements of story telling is wrong. Rushdie's treatment of the Shakil sisters attested sexually is interesting and his remarks on migration are painful. *Shame* tells the story with meaning and the meaning of history has to be gathered. Rushdie's understanding of Pakistan seems naive. *Shame* (1983) is a realistic novel woven around real characters. They are looked at "a slight angle to reality". It is a major work in which he also uses memory to uses to demonstrate personal and political necessity away from India and "India's of the Mind". He depends on journals and his dairies compiled during his previous visits for documentation. Once again the milieu is Bombay is invoked, the Portuguese colonial heritage and the Christian invasion on the Malabar coast of southern India.

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL HYBRIDITY

The *Moors Last Sigh* (1995) which won him the Booker Prize has epic sweep. It is inspired by the fall of Grenada. Most of the novel takes place in India and a little bit happens in Spain. The character in the novel is a painter who does paintings about the 15th century. "The Moors Last Sigh" in the novel is the name of painting. Rushdie's interesting in it was an image of miscegenation, of cultural hybridity. It is often romanticised by people who say that in Moorish Spain the Jews the Christians and the Muslims all lived happily together. This is not true, But the living harmony ended by the reconquest of Spain when the Jews were driven out and also were the Muslims, and Catholic Spain returned.

PERSONAL AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

The word "last" in *The Moor's Last Sigh* is not by accident. The miscegenation of cultural hybridity came into being at the Independence of India. The founding of fathers of the country –Nehru and Gandhi-had brought into being at the Independence of India was under threat. And Rushdie thinks that India is not outward looking as it used to be. Some of these ideas are elaborated in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Moor's Zogoby is a combination of Catholic, Jewish, Arabic, Spanish and contemporary India's influences. It is a hybrid through the protagonist the author makes comments on Hindu communalism. He comments on secular democratic India of Nehru's time. The Catholic's conquest of the country about the 15th century is considered a threat to Hindu community. The Moor reworks on *The Mahabharatha* an epic of the conflict between the Kauravas and the Pandavas of the same family. There is emphasis on religion as a main spring of personal and national identity. Indira Gandhi identified herself with the nation for political purpose and her election slogan was "India is Indira and Indira is India". India forms the background of the work, Bharatmata is the Moor's mother the artist Aurora Zogoby and her paintings serve as allegories of the changing face of India. The Moor's story of a Bombay cowboy movie, his relationship with Aurora recall that of Indira and her son Sanjay Gandhi. The myth life of the Zogoby is the myth life of the Nation. There are rumours that Aurora is Nehru's mistress. The author uses a quotation from one of Nehru's letters to Indira and also a letter from Nehru to Aurora to establish this. There is the echo of Rani Harappa's embroidered shawls in *Shame*, Aurora like, Rushdie is obsessed with mythic romantic mode in which history, politics family and fantasy jostle each other, her paintings assume the status of an allegory. They develop from the beginning, that is, the Moor's birth in 1957 to the Emergency 20 years later and reaching and reaching their high point after the fall of Indira Gandhi and the subsequent Hindu fundamentalism of India. The Moor, "strange black man" sees the work of Aurora produced in the decade after Independence untroubled by the tension between realism and fantasy. There are references to committed social realists like Mulk Raj Anand and Sadat Hasan and to the story of the old Gannira Zogoby dynasty intertwined with the plains allowing the author to explain the hybrid elements of Indian history.

THE SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES OF MEMORY AND HISTORY

The Satanic Versus (1989) which brought trouble to Rushdie has a title that does not speak for itself. The purpose of the book was to establish the relationship between memory and history and has a superscription taken from Daniel Defoe's *The History of the Devil* "Satan, being thus confined to a vagabond, wandering unsettled condition, is without any certain abode; for though he has, in consequence of his angelic nature, a kind of empire in the liquid waste or air, yet this is certainly part of his punishment, that he iswithout any fixed place, or space allowed him to rest the sole of his foot upon".

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES OF GOOD AND EVILS OF MIGRANT'S PROBLEMS

The Satanic Versus which deals with good and evil illustrates the migrant's problems of self-contextualisation – being both located and dislocated. It has images and scenarios of India where he was born, Pakistan to which his family migrated after partition and then England. Many characters from India and Pakistan move on the stage: Gibreel Indias legendary movie star, and an anglo file. Saladin Gabriel actress, Zeeny is a doctor a part time art critic. He uses free name 'mahound' for his dream prophet and the process of hybridization goes on and there are echoes of *Grimus* in the work which reflect the Sufi ideal of diversity within unity. It is a book of many strands but aims at the depiction of material culture of contemporary life, narrated rather haphazardly and irrelevantly. Art should respect opinion and beliefs based on tradition.

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES OF BOTH HYBRID AND CULTURAL MODEL

The Moor's Last Sigh (1996) is a hybrid of both cultural model and textual strategy. The author seems to laugh at Homi Bhabha, the arch theorist of hybridity when he gives the study of Aurora the title 'impersonation and Dis/Semi/Nation: Dialogue of Electicism and interrogation of Authenticity'. It recalls Bhabha's own discussion of Rushdie in his essay. The novel has the features of G.V.Desani's "*All about H.Hatter*" in idiosyncratic and Indianised English style. In the altered words of the author the novel is full of these, 'never a church door to nail to'. Among other things, it contains reference to the leader of Sevaseena B.Thackeray. In a conversation between two characters Mainduck and Lambajan, we have actual details of real life.

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES OF POLITICIANS

Haroun and the Sea of Stories, a deceptively simple fantasy about the origins of stories. The book, dedicated to his son, Zafar, is sometimes mistakenly thought of as "merely" a children's story and is perhaps Rushdie's most underappreciated work. It is a funny, energetic allegory that deals with Rushdie's life in hiding and offers insights into the importance of free speech, the power of the imagination, and the dangers of fundamentalism.

Haroun tells the story of a sad city in the country of Alifbay, "so ruinously sad that it had forgotten its name." (14). The city's most famous storyteller, Rashid Khalifa, loses his ability to tell stories when his wife leaves him for an uncreative clerk. When Rashid is threatened by politicians who rely on his skills to entertain crowds and win them votes, Rashid's son, Haroun, embarks on a heroic quest to regain his father's storytelling abilities. Most of the story takes place at night- in Haroun's dreams, perhaps?- and is filled with colorful characters with brilliantly portrayed verbal tics. Like Rushdie's other works, Haroun is filled with wordplay, advertising slogans, clever parallels, and doubled characters. With the help of Iff the water genie and Butt the magical hoopoe, Haroun journeys to the Earth's hidden moon, Kahani, to help the forces of light and guardians of the "sea of stories," the Gupwalas, battle the forces of darkness and silence, the Chupwalas. The Chupwalas are shadowy creatures who live in darkness, ruled over by the evil Khattam-Shud, a figure who more than resembles the Ayatollah Khomeini.

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE OF LOVE STORY

The Ground beneath Her Feet, is a love story about two rock idols: Ormus Cama and Vina Aspara. The story represents new ground for Rushdie, and its focus on rock music, combined with Rushdie's international fame, gave this novel a wider and more diverse appeal, and introduced Rushdie's writing to a new group of readers, particularly to

American baby boomers. In collaboration with the Irish singer Bono, Rushdie even wrote the lyrics to a love song meant to accompany the book and released on U2's recent album. The story charts these two rockers' rise to fame from their childhoods in Bombay (where characters from previous Rushdie novels make appearances) to 1960s London to the New York City music scene of the 1970s and 1980s. This novel incorporates many of the hallmarks of his fiction and examines the themes of family, love, fame, myth, and history. Rushdie, as he has done before, blend fact and fiction, invoking incidents and figures from recent history and popular culture, similar to what he subtly did with Indian history of *Midnight's Children*. This time around the changes are usually more obvious, if not with the musicians and their music (John Lennon singing "Satisfaction"), then certainly with historical figures; for example, in Rushdie's version of the 1960s, John F. Kennedy is never assassinated (Lee Harvey Oswald's rifle jams), and Richard Nixon never becomes president.

The Ground beneath Her Feet is a loosely retold version of the Orpheus myth, with an international rock star of Indian descent named Ormus playing Orpheus. Ormus's electric guitar a more than able stand –in for Orpheus's lyre. Ormus's Eurydice is the beautifully voiced American-born Indian singer Vina, who, in a switch from the original myth, rescues Ormus from his own personal Hades after he is seriously injured in a car accident. As a result of Ormus's accident, he now has the ability ("double vision") to see into a parallel world. This gift of extra vision or power as the result of a traumatic accident is reminiscent of other Rushdie characters, particularly Saleem's gifts of telepathy and extra-nasal sense in *Midnight's Children*. The novel is narrated by Rai, a now famous photographer, in love with Vina, who follows the two musicians become what Greek myth and gods were to the ancient world, a means by which Rushdie can invoke shared experiences and values among his audiences.

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES OF EDUCATION

Fury, is set entirely in New York City and is his most clearly autobiographical work. Set in the summer of 2000, *Fury* tells the story of Malik Solanka, whose biographical details- Indian from Bombay, Cambridge graduate, now a fifty something famous artist, leaves a wife and three-year-old son in London, moves to New York, and takes up with stunningly beautiful younger women-clearly correlate to those of their author. Solanka, trained as a political thinker, has made a fortune by creating a doll called "Little Brain." Little Brain has become a global sensation, but Solanka, now internationally famous, has lost control of both his creation and his own identity. He is filled with rage, and, as the book opens, he is standing above his sleeping wife in London, thinking about killing her.

Instead, Solanka leaves his little boy and his wife, Eleanor, and heads to New York City. There, he becomes involved with two women: Mila Milo is post-punk computer goddess from Serbia, and Neela Mahendra, a drop-dead gorgeous television producer who almost rescues Sloanka from his fury. The three women in Solanka's life represent not only the three furies but also the three fates. These women also serve as his muses, and Rushdie uses Solanka to examine themes now familiar to his readers: the relationship between art and the artist, the fate of individual identity, particularly in the face of fame, and the power of love and anger. Like other Rushdie novels, this story is filled with myriad references to pop culture and current events: *The Sopranos*; Tiger Woods; Puffy and J.Lo.; *Tomb Raider*; and Elian Gonzalez, Hillary Clinton, and Rudy Giuliani, to name but a few.

Geographically, Rushdie's writing has moved from the "Calf Island" to the Indian subcontinent to the Middle East and London and now to New York. However, his most basic themes have remained much the same: the relationship between the artist and his or her creation; the fate of individual identity in the face of history; the effects of colonialism and its relationship to national, cultural, and religious identity; and the often unclear lines between good and bad, reality and

fantasy, love and hate.

Like most great writers, the volume of what has been written about Rushdie and his work has now far exceeded the amount that he himself has written, *Midnight's Children* put Rushdie, and many would say India itself, on the contemporary literary map. In a review Valentine Cunningham proclaims: "What makes *Midnight's Children* so important, and moreover (for literary importance isn't always matched by a fetching readability), what makes it so vertiginously exciting a reading experience, is the way it takes in not just the whole apple cart of India and the problem of being a novel about India but also, and this with the unflagging zest of a *Tristram Shandy*, the business of being a novel at all" (38). Cunningham immediately recognized not only the difficulty in writing about a nation as ethnically, culturally, religiously, and linguistically diverse as India but also the awareness that Rushdie shows while attempting his project.

Rushdie's literary celebrity was further enhanced with *Shame*, which revealed a different side of his many talents. *Shame* was very well-reviewed and also short-listed for the Booker. Rushdie proved himself to be more than a one-hit wonder, prompting Blake Morrison to write. "Whether or not he repeats his earlier success, Salman Rushdie has earned the right to be called one of our great story tellers (31).

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES OF CONTROVERSY

However, it was the publication of *The Satanic Verses* that, for rather unfortunate reasons, made Rushdie a household name throughout a large part of the world. Although *The Satanic Verses* moved thousands of people to protest, to denounce him, and to ban and burn his book, most of these people had not even read the novel. The critics, in general, liked *The Satanic Verses*, praising its scope and originality. Robert Irwin wrote: "In *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie has created a fictional universe whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. It is one of the best novels he has ever written" (1067). Some complained of its length and its unwieldy narrative. Regardless of the reviews, the literary-critical reception of *The Satanic Verses* was really swept aside by the controversy surrounding the contents of the book and by the protests and political events that ensued.

CONCLUSIONS

His most recent novel (at the time of writing this entry), *Fury* was almost universally panned: This clearly transparent autobiography was criticized for being self-absorbed and angry. It is, without a doubt, the most poorly reviewed of Rushdie's major works, particularly in England, where, for the second time in a row, he was not even short-listed for the Booker. Although Rushdie claimed that the novel is a love letter to his latest companion, reviewers using phrases such as "mid-life crisis," "stunningly lousy" and "terminally stinky prose" found very little to love.

Despite the harsh reviews and the Booker snubs, Rushdie has lost little of his status as a brilliant writer. "Writing about *Fury* in the *Guardian*, John Southerland states that "Rushdie is a very great novelist (our greatest-or is he now theirs?). Everything he writes has a tincture of that greatness." Regardless of the reception of his most recent work, Rushdie is thought by many to be among the world's greatest writers, and certainly one of the most important living authors. Many critics and scholars alike think he will almost certainly be awarded a Nobel Prize for Literature. Rushdie has a long writing career ahead of him, having already established himself as one of the most original contemporary writers, whose works, although always controversial, are filled with energy, insight, and humor.

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