

The Displacement Issues in the novel “Shame” and “Midnight’s Children” by Salman Rushdie

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Abstract- *Indian Writing in English refers to writers who write their fiction or any writing in Indian English. Writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Nirad Chaudhuri, Anita Desai, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Manohar Malgonkar, Kamala Markandaya, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Nissim Ezekiel have gained national and international reputation. Salman Rushdie established himself as one of the most powerful of modern novelists with his great six novels. Salman Rushdie’s writings express the deep anguish of fragmented vision seen through his writing. He examines the life of the migrant and explores the universal mystery of being born and the puzzle regarding one’s identity. Even Rushdie’s life has quest for identity. He focuses on the theme of ‘double identity’, ‘fragmented vision of life’, ‘divided selves’ and ‘shadow figures’. He is a migrant who has gained a unique perspective from rather unique life.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Sir Ahamad Salman Rushdie was born on 19th June 1947, is a British Indian novelist and essayist. Rushdie’s first novel, *Grimus*(1975) is a partly a science fiction tale which was ignored by the public and literary critics. His next novel, *Midnight’s Children*(1981), catapulted him to literary notability and won the Booker Prize in 1981. His third novel is *Shame*(1983) portrays the lives of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto(Iskander Harappa) and General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq(General Raza Hyder) and their relationship. The central theme of the novel *Shame* is that violence is born out of shame. His fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses*(1988), was the subject of a major controversy, provoking protests from Muslims in several countries. Death threats fatwa was issued by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran on february 1989. His fifth novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is 1990 Children’s book is a phantasmagorical story and an allegory which focuses Indian subcontinent. *Moor’s Last Sigh* is the sixth novel published in 1995. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is Salman Rushdie’s seventh novel published in 1999 is a book which speaks about the variation on the orpheus/ Eurydice myth with rock music replacing orpheus lyre.

Fury, published in 2001, is the novel which deploys Roman conceit as an extended metaphor where he depicts

contemporary New York City as an epicenter of globalisation and all of its tragic flaws. *Shalimar the Clown* is a novel by Salman Rushdie which portrays that once Kashmir was a paradise and how the politics of the sub-continent ripped apart the lives of those caught in the middle of the battleground. *The Enchantress of Florence* is a story which moves between continents and the court of Akbar to Renaissance Florence mixing history, fantasy and fable. *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty Eight Nights* is a 2015 novel by Salman Rushdie is a reference to the 1001 nights scheherezade spent telling stories in the Arabian Nights. Rushdie has also written many essays and non fiction.

Today the world is suffering from identity crisis. In each novel Rushdie uses the same pattern he explores the philosophical significance of ideals and concepts through a number of characters who are so intimately connected that they literally or figuratively fuse, and when they separate they share the identity of one another. *Shame* also recreates the motive of identity in Omar Khayyam. Though *Shame* and *Midnight's Children* recreate identical thematic designs, the latter appears to be a far more complex and rewarding artistic experience. Unlike Saleem Sinai, Omar Khayyam is not truly bedeviled by a dual perception, between India and Pakistan. His relationship with the Indian psyche is as a form of transfer. Thematically, if Saleem is supposedly rooted in the Indian psyche and the Pakistan psyche acts as a form of comparison and contrast and another aspect of opposite. His drift is from Pakistan (at least, apparently so) to India unlike Saleem Sinai, Omar Khayyam is deliberately stationed as a 'peripheral hero' experience, such as Independence and Emergency. Saleem is truly integrated in the case of Omar Khayyam, his destiny even from his birth is anonymously divorced from the national history. He is a "peripheral hero", whose vision is meant to be as his destiny.

"Dizzy, peripheral, inverted, infatuated, insomniac, stargazing, fat : what manner of hero is this." His parentage like Saleem Sinai, is indeed a case of mystery, as he was to discover his mother among the three sisters, Chunni, Munnee, Bunny. Even the three sisters are lost in a haze of the past history and reluctant to drift into a hopeful future.

As Omar Khayyam's destiny is "inverted", he is lost for ever in the dissonances of Time and Space. His perception of life is shattered by a wrong apprehension of priorities: He finds a chaotic situation or a different world to himself. His quest for reality is futile Omar Khayyam, unlike Saleem Sinai, is peculiarly inhibited by history. If Saleem feels unredeemed in Time, Omar Khayyam develops even from its very conception a grim negation to Time. His drift from the shackles of a temporal order becomes an insistent urge for him even from his childhood.

In the world of his three mothers, his drift is into an irretrievable past. Anihilist sense of nothingness is realized in the world of the past, As a result of such a stupefying experience, his psyche is fatally limited,. Unlike Saleem, Omar Khayyam's quest is losing oneself into the death and decay of the sense of past history. As Omar Khayyam gets ready to start his search for a world of sanity and hope on his twelfth birthday, in an anonymous city, this is also the beginning of the search, in the life and world of Nishapur and in the lives of his three mothers. Omar Khayyam's release into a world of future is, indeed, a liberation into total freedom of spirit and mind. His release, symbolically is into a world of knowledge and reality, against the decadence of a past history.

Saleem's quest for identity with the Indian psyche is as much unsettled in its ultimate meaning, as it is in the mind quest of Omar Khayyam in his identity with an anonymous country. Saleem wants to establish his identity with the entire Indian subcontinent. For, his quest is not nationally limited to either India or Pakistan but largely universal. "The terrible fatalism which had overcome me of late had taken on an even more terrible form; drowning in the disintegration of family, of both countries to which I had belonged, of everything which can sanely be called real." The occasion is the further bruising of the sub-continental psyche with its partition into Bangladesh. The causes for such amnesia in his own mind cannot be resolved because of the irretrievable forces of history. Thus, his reconciliation and even sanity are to be sought in fantasy and dreams. After his list less drifting in Pakistan, his roots continue to be tenuous and insubstantial in India.

Salman Rushdie's writings express the deep anguish of fragmented vision seen through his writing. He examines the life of the migrant and explores the universal mystery of being born and the puzzle regarding one's identity. Even Rushdie's life has quest for identity. He focuses on the theme of 'double identity', 'fragmented vision of life', 'divided selves' and 'shadow figures'. He is a migrant who has gained a unique perspective from rather unique life. Rushdie was born in India, schooled in England forced by his parent to

move to Pakistan and finally exiled back to England. He has never been accepted in any of his homes. In England, he was considered very foreign and exotic at Rugby Public School and subsequently at Cambridge. In India, he was ridiculed by his peers for his perfect British accent. He has been considered brainwashed and corrupted even by the materialist West.

In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem asks himself that question and the novel asks us that question about him. Thus the selective filtration of memory often results in fragmented description of past events. Many critics feel that in *Midnight's Children* the narration of the protagonist Saleem is unreliable. He gets numerous historical events and dates muddled up as he tries desperately to convince his readers that he is at the centre of India's history. He claims to have chosen to insert 'remembered truths' rather than literal truths'. The theme of blurred remembrance builds upon that of perforated sheet. At the beginning of the novel Saleem's grandfather Aadam falls in love with his future wife only by seeing her piece by piece through a perforated sheet. The theme of the fragmented vision recurs throughout the novel. In *Midnight's Children*, the psychic conferences contain one thousand children with plurality of languages, cultures and beliefs. Rushdie's most powerful weapon for redescription is his magnificent prose. He has a wonderful knack for word-plays. He has- a supreme command over English Language. His education at Cambridge gives him an edge in this regard. He combines the English language with Indian colloquialisms. He recreates the English language by combining Urdu and Hindi words also. He often inserts Indian Vernacular habits into flawless English. Rushdie projects duality in his migrant protagonists. The identity of the protagonist is torn into two opposing directions. Rushdie's protagonists have alter-egos. In *Shame* Raza Hyder is an army general. He is paired with the civilian politician Iskander Harappa. Rushdie writes about them: 'Hyder and Harappa, my leading men, Immigrant and native, Godly and profane, military and civilian'. In *Shame* Omar complains bitterly that he is "Peripheral man". He is able to connect different characters. Rushdie himself embarks on a journey of self discovery through his writings. This talent of writing people towards self sknowledge.

In *Shame*, their tribulations, vulnerability and resignation are forcefully mapped. They are the victims of the male ego, whether it is of the father or the husband, and the construction of the other female characters are replete with images concerning repression. The three Shakil sisters, for instance, are imprisoned by their father "inside that labyrinthine mansion until his dying day; virtually uneducated". Similarly, Bilquis Hyder, Raza's wife who is forced to migrate during Partition when her father's cinema empire is set ablaze, is so conditioned by her father's will that

she is left with nothing except her shame and a “dupatta of modesty” In *Shame* all the characters suffer identity crisis and fragmented issues.sss

[11] Times Review, Book Mark: The Times of India, October 17, 2005.

Therefore it can be said that the theme of fragmented vision recurs in Rushdie’s novels where there are those pieces of the ‘jigsaw’ which have to be put together. For Rushdie, politics is the backdrop that often make and mar human lives. However, politics is not life. It is a fog that hinders the vision of life. Therefore it becomes necessary to clear the fog and undertake the journey of self discovery. Migrant’s double identity helps him more look at his, own life more dispassionately than others. Rushdie is a master craftsman who moulds language to his purpose very successfully and efficiently.

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[6] ssRushdie, Salman, ‘*Midnight’s Children*’, New York, Penguin Book, 1980.

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[9] Rushdie, Salman, ‘*Shalimar*’.

[10] Rushdie, Salman, ‘*Imaginary Homelands*’.