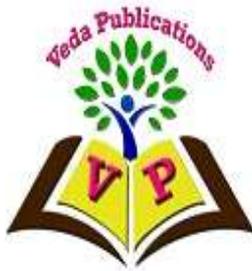




RESEARCH ARTICLE

**SALMAN RUSHDIE'S NOVELS: NARRATOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF POST COLONIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY, CRITICISM & DECONSTRUCTION OF THE ACTUAL POLITICS OF POSTCOLONIAL NATION – STATES THROUGH CONSTRUCTION OF POSSIBLE WORLDS & ALTERNATIVE SPACES**

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^{1*}(Research Scholar (English) , Tantia University, Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan)²(Research Guide, Tantia University, Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan.)doi.org/10.33329/joell.8.3.21.45**ABSTRACT**

Salman Rushdie, no doubt, one of the celebrated contemporary novelists, startled the whole world with his commendable novels. According to Timothy Brennan- "He is a celebrity writer who holds a distinguishable place at the 'crossroads' of the English literary scene: the old 'Novel of Empire'; 'Commonwealth Literature'; and the 'tradition of anti – colonial polemic.'"

He opens a 'new post – colonial phase' through his invaluable contributions to the literary world. His novels deal with multifarious themes : 'political', 'historical', 'moral' , 'social' – racial , communal, cultural, religious and current problems like corruption etc. Apart from history and politics, he gives stress on the culture of 'migration' in almost all his novels. Baijayanti Swain rightly observes: "Rushdie, one of the well known post – colonial satirists of 'nationalism' and 'dependency' adopts history in his 'national narratives' to unveil the 'political dogma' and social concerns that are encircling and overpowering almost every nation nowadays."

So, Rushdie's novels presents narratological constructions of postcolonial history and deconstruct actual politics of post colonial nation states via construction of possible histories, worlds and alternative spaces.

Keywords: *Novels, Postcolonial, History, Politics, Narrative, Historical, Political.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Salman Rushdie's deep rooted knowledge of politics, history, culture, race and religion along with his belongingness to both the East and West, constitute the thrust of his novels. As he himself has been a migrant from his very childhood, he has been facing acute problem of identity throughout his life. His secular mind, extraordinary talent, voracious study, keen observation, cosmopolitan thinking and superb articulation of thematic aspects – historical, socio – cultural, political, moral etc. have crowned him as the mighty ruler of the fictional world. Baijayanti Swain in her work 'Critical Analysis of Salman Rushdie's Novels' remarks that:

"Politics has become one of the dominating themes of post – modern fiction. As a post – modern author, Rushdie has magnificently delineated the politics of the East as well as the West inhis novels..... In his first novel, he speaks about Western super power politics; in *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*, he narrates the post – colonial politics in India and Pakistan; in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, we find his loop from the East to West..... The history of post – independence era plays a significant role in the novels of Salman Rushdie..... The author, in his novels, passionately shows his concern for the loss of moral values and social discipline..... As a post – colonial writer, the author is very much concerned about the developments – socio, political, cultural, religious and racial unrest....."

In Rushdie's metafictional novels, the clash between the realist and magical codes and their possible worlds is ostentatiously high-lighted via metafictional commentary. In 'Magical Realism as Postcolonial Discourse', Slemon explains it:

"In the language of narration in a magic realist text, *a battle between two Opposing positional systems takes place*, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other."

GRIMUS

Rushdie is the kind of cloven writer produced by migration, inhabiting and addressing both worlds, the East and the West, the world of his mother country and that of his adopted country, belonging wholly to neither one nor the other. The position of the main setting of the novel is significant, an island in the Mediterranean, which straddles the West and the East. D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke in his work 'Salman Rushdie' explains:

"Rushdie tries to combine the East and the West, to use flawed but useful binaries, but in an entirely new way. His roots are in his Eastern / Islamic background though and the source of *Grimus* is a twelfth – century Sufi narrative poem, Farid – ud – din – Attar's *The Conference of Birds*."

Rushdie adds: "Although the plot of *Grimus* is not that of the poem, it has it as its centre, and that gave me something to cling on to. I was trying to take a theme out of eastern philosophy or mythology and transpose it into a western convention."

Grimus is a historical novel. The novel opens with Virgil Jones, a man devoid of friends and with a tongue rather too large for his mouth sitting in his rocking chair on a small beach away from the Mediterranean Sea. Flapping Eagle narrates his past and the novel closes with his decision to resurrect Calf Island without Stone Rose. Rushdie's *Grimus* presents us an apprehended mundane actuality. *Grimus* plays the part of a creator with his Stone Rose, which makes him traverse time and space. G.R. Taneja & R.K. Dhawan tell us:

"Flapping Eagle feels the complex effect of derealizing of a routine common-sense world together with the evoking of a reality that lies hidden among the unrealities."

So, in his fantastic journey, Flapping Eagle explores and experience many forms of life that enable him to predict and plan the shape of future. Fantasy echoes with the real conditions in the novel. *Grimus* aims at providing an alternate form of reality and to construct a conceivable way of seeking reality from diverse dimensions.

**MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN**

To narrativize India's postcolonial history and interpret its complex, multifaceted reality from Rushdie's socio – political point, the novel portrays the lives of three generations of the Sinai family that are historically situated in a different periods of India's modern history by combining the realistic code via 'historical anchoring' and to create a magical possible world that critiques the actual world of Indian politics.

Midnight's Children narrates the trajectory of India's modern history from the cusp of independence in August 1947 as a predominantly Hindu nation and its division from Pakistan as a predominantly Muslim nation. Rushdie is considered as an eminent postcolonial writer because, according to Steve Connor, "such texts expose the fictionality of history itself." Midnight's Children portrays the political history of India from the time of Jallianwala Bagh incident to the end of Emergency in 1977. D.C.R.A Goonetilleke remarks about novel's narratological construction -

"The links between the personal history and national / world history are co – incidental or circumstantial. In the summer of 1956, Saleem's sister, the Brass Monkey, developed the curious habit of setting fire to shoes and thereby tried to impede family progress, while Nasser sank ships at Suez and thereby slowed down the movements of the world by obliging it to travel round the Cape of Good Hope..... The British imposition of English during the Raj as the single most important and dominant language led to the dormancy of Indian language rivalries."

Midnight's Children is concerned with various political events such as Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar, the conflict between Indian and Pakistani troops, Indo – Pak wars in 1965 and 1971, the declaration of Emergency by Mrs. Indira Gandhi etc. G.R. Taneja & R.K. Dhawan observes:

" This vast sprawling narrative of a nation's history over a period of some sixty- Two years – indeed it is proper to call it the

history of the nations over various lengths of time – has been given a certain integrity by means of special devices."

Thus, in this novel personal history merges the political history which is set against a mythic backdrop gathered from India and Middle Eastern sources. Rushdie's Midnight's Children has been acclaimed as a landmark in the history of Indian literature written in English.

SHAME

In Rushdie's novel, Shame, we find third – person intrusive narrator. He is all powerful to intrude and to give his personal opinions and fabricate an illusion secretly. The narrator in Shame also portrays an alienated world. It is a world which is devoid of humanity - sincerity, honesty, generosity, faithfulness, equality, tolerance etc. – thus, alienated from the human society. To expose this alienated world Rushdie uses a significant technique that brings to our mind the inhuman behavior of the politicians. Baijayanti Swain highlights:

"The narrative.....discloses the political scenario in Pakistan. The political situation in Pakistan has been allegorized by the narrator. Fall of President Ayub Khan and rise of General Zia Ul Haq are the "objective reality" on which the narrator builds his narrative. However, he takes "symbolic characters" to unfold Pakistan's violent inhuman political history. The narrator adopts the form of fantasy and allegory to disclose the reality."

The title of 'Shame' deduce from the Urdu word 'Sharam' and in novel all the characters experience shame in one or another form as inhibition, embarrassment, immodesty as well as some of its contrary shamelessness. The novel devotes a great deal of attention to the political ambition of Raza Hyder. Rushdie tries to distance the story of his fictional country from the story of Pakistan by sounding the necessary caution to the reader at intervals :

"The country in this story is not Pakistan or not quite. There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space, or



almost the same space. My story, my fictional country exist, like myself, at a slight angle to reality. I have found this off – centering to be necessary; but its value is, of course, open to debate. My view is that I am not writing only about Pakistan.”

Rushdie is no doubt writing a story about several countries but the focus is on the rise and fall of national heroes of one country (real or fictional) and narration is effected in a comic – epic style. Baijayanti Swain portrays:

“Rushdie distinctly narrates the uncertain political history of Pakistan, both as ‘fictional subject’ and ‘fictional technique’ for being a conscious artisan. His uprootedness from his own culture establishes a parallel with Pakistan’s division from India. Here both Rushdie and Pakistan undergo a crisis of identity in the novel..... Shame is the outcome of this strain between the past and the present. Rushdie’s *Shame* is a fantasy whose underneath we find the reality. It explores the past as much as it exposes the present and the future. *Shame*, infact, is a novel of ‘Time and Memory’.”

THE MOOR’S LAST SIGH

The *Moor’s Last Sigh* is a tale that tells us about the complex story of four generations of Christian-Jewish family, busy in the spice trade in India. Paul A. Cantor says – “ The political, financial, romantic, sexual and emotional entanglements of the Da Gama – Zogoiby family, easily fill the 400 or so pages of the novel.”

In this novel, Rushdie unfolds the strains of ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ forms of Indian nationalism through vigorous interplay of ‘inclusive’ and ‘exclusive’ forms of satire. This novel is based on Spanish political history as well as Indian. Especially, the background of *Moor’s Last Sigh* is built on the regime of Boabdil, the last Moorish ruler of Granada. Mohit K.Ray and Rama Kundu stresses:

“The Moor’s Last Sigh (1995)..... Rushdie focuses on contemporary Indian life, particularly the life of the minorities and low – castes as targets of Hindu terrorism.

The story of a semi – historical, semi – fictitious family is a superb fantasy, which spans over centuries, stretching from Vasco da Gama to Moraes, and a family saga is made to capture the nostalgia and yearnings of a nation. The narrator hero Moraes Zogoiby or “the Moor” is of mixed origin, related to the early Portuguese Christian merchant settlers in South India on his mother’s side..... The Moor’s Last Sigh, a fantastic narrative with profound historical insight, which crosses over the boundaries and border lines of historical times and social spaces, also marked Rushdie’s re – emergence as an active literary figure.”

In the novel, the protagonist, Moor tells us about the four generations of his ancestors and Rushdie mixed real historical events with the Moor’s story in a fabulous way. The novel covers the historical events from 1876 to 1992 and touches the socio – political issues such as the problems of growing corruption, illiteracy and poverty in the post Independent era of India. Rushdie condemns Indian politics for its chaotic condition. Rushdie concludes the novel with Moraes journey from Vasco’s imitation Alhambra to the real ruins of a monument to a lost possibility that nevertheless has gone on standing, long after its conquerors have fallen; like a testament to lost but sweetest love, to love that endures beyond defeat, beyond annihilation, beyond despair. Laura Moss comments:

“ while magic realism is parodied in the novel, the parody is juxtaposed with an expansion of political awareness in the increased politicization of the narrative ; the increased exposure of corruption in Corporate India; the increased depiction of the devastation brought by religious fundamentalism in Bombay and the increased hopelessness of a secular pluralism.”

CONCLUSION

So, from the above discussed novels it is clear that Rushdie’s novels are narratological



constructions of postcolonial historiography, criticism and deconstruction of the actual politics of the post colonial nation- states through construction of possible worlds and alternative spaces. In his novels, the author narrating the sub – continent and its interaction with the rest of the world – with the West and beyond – from the British era through Independence and Partition to the era of globalization. *Midnight's Children*, *Shame* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* all spread in chronology from the Raj – era – from early twentieth century to the real time of composition. It can be concluded in the words of D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke –

“Rushdie has roots in India, Pakistan and Britain, finds the cultural riches of two hemispheres cross- fertilizing, and evolves a mode of writing particularly suited to today's global culture..... The real India parallels the fictional India in *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*; the India in these novels is both India and not India. In *Shame*, Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder are Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia – Ul – Haq as well as not them, and so on. The Monochrome real India is played off against the 'magical' India in *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*; so too Pakistan in *Shame*.....Physically, Rushdie has left the subcontinent, but his imagination has not. In *Grimus*, India appears in terms of occasional references to Hindu myth and ancient history. *Midnight's Children* takes in North India, Kashmir, Pakistan and Bangladesh; *Shame*, Pakistan; *The Moor's Last Sigh* South India and Bombay.”

So far as the narrative is concerned, Rushdie adopts varied styles in his novels. His genre is multi – layered. Elements of magic, fantasy and realism are skillfully interwoven into the structure of his fiction. His narrative is not restricted by the tyranny of 'time's and 'place' and the traditional form of plot, character and meaning. It shows that he is on a mission to criticize and revamp the 'society 'and 'nation' of the post – colonial era. Aijaz Ahmad explained that- “ Rushdie's novels are representative of the 'counter - canon' and 'display its characteristic

concerns such as 'colonialism , nationhood, post-coloniality, the typology of rulers, their powers, corruptions and so forth.”

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