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**ANALYSIS OF RUSHDIE'S WORK ON
HISTORICAL ANALOGS ABOUT POLITICS AND
SOCIETY**

Analysis of Rushdie's Work on Historical Analogues about Politics and Society

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Abstract – Shame highlights the network of transcultural relationships between the individual and historical forces and the prevailing politico-social situations in Pakistan and even the fate of the poet Omar Khayyam which is transcultural. Thus, Shame is a robust baroque incarnation of the political novel as a fable, a polemic exhortation as history or as fiction. Polemics is forceful verbal or written controversy or argument for or against something or somebody. In this context this novel can be treated as a myth, and also as satire.

One can see Moorish Spain as a fusion of cultures - Spanish, Moorish, Jewish, the 'Peoples of the Book' - which came apart at the fall of Granada. Camoens after flirting with Communism, becomes a Nehru man, dreaming of an independent, unitary India which he hopes will be 'above religion because secular, above class because socialist, above caste because enlightened.' The narrator seems to be carried away often, as here also, the opened net windows of the house which not only let in the sights and sounds of Cochin Harbour but also the news about politics and society are let in.

Key Words: Transcultural, Incarnation, Metaphor, Fusion, Politics.

INTRODUCTION:

The connection of history with literature is well known. In order to begin the present research work it is essential to trace the importance of this relationship. Among the various literary forms, the connection of the novel with history has been the closest and with far-reaching cultural consequences. There has been constant evolution in the nature and scope of the novelist's engagement with history and vice versa too. The novel established its base by imitating history; it progressed by making massive use of history, incorporating within the fictional frame a large number of actual social, political, and cultural events and happenings; and in its most recent phase it has also interrogated and problematized the discourse of history. History and fiction share social, cultural, ideological contexts as well as formal techniques. As a result, most of our modern-day critics have chosen to study the history-novel! fact-fiction connection within the theoretical frames of postmodernism and post-colonialism.

The novelist's active involvement with history stimulated the use and popularization of the generic category of the 'historical novel,' which describes, analyses, and evaluates the connection between history and fiction. It is a form of narrative which reconstructs history imaginatively and as a result both the historical and the fictional characters may appear. It has never had a consistent meaning; in fact, its meaning and scope has changed with every user and

every interpreter. In this relation, Marshall records that Foucault solves Derrida's notion of the endless deferral of meaning by demonstrating the interpretation web of historical, social and cultural contexts. This makes meaning, therefore, a context specific.

The word history is defined as a 'continuous record of events (esp. public)' and also alternatively as a 'systematic or critical account of or research into past events.' Explicitly, it is a record of facts which has become known to the writer from his personal experience and observation; and then it is extended so as to include facts communicated to him by trustworthy and creditable witnesses. As at present understood and applied, it has come to include, besides political events, movements which belong to religion, law, literature and economics. In this process of the development of history, another stage is reached when the record assumes the form of continuous narrative, spontaneously undertaken by the author.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Rushdie has achieved a powerful effect by linking the fictitious exploits of Sufiya Zinobia's younger sister Naveed 'Good News' with the real case of Anna, Anahita Muhammad, the Punjabi girl in London shot dead by her own father for bringing shame on the family by making love to a white boy, for 'Good News' brings similar dishonour on General Raza's family by

marrying 'for love' and breaking the engagement arranged by her parents. Rushdie gives the fictitious name to the real girl, Anahita Muhammad and builds the character, her looks and nature as his own fictional image. This tangential attack on Rushdie's major theme of cultural transplant is another notable success of its kind, and gives punch and power and, above all, relevance to the extensive monologue of the narrator-persona. The character Sufiya Zinobia comes out of two girls Anahita' and the anonymous underground train girl, like the Phoenix. The chapter that deals with the Anahita episode also dwells on the connection between shame and violence. Sufiya represents, as Rushdie tells us, a fusion of qualities selected from three sources. She is a Pakistani girl in the East End of London who was killed by her father for having made love to a white boy, a boy from a news clipping who was said to be blazing with an auto-ignited fire also contributed towards her personality and the third figure from which she is drawn is an imaginary girl who, having been continuously assaulted on subway, throws herself on her molesters 'breaking arms legs noses balls, without knowing whence the violence came, without seeing how she, so slight a figure, could command such awesome strength.' (Shame 117)

Shame highlights the network of transcultural relationships between the individual and historical forces and the prevailing politico-social situations in Pakistan and even the fate of the poet Omar Khayyam which is transcultural. Thus, Shame is a robust baroque incarnation of the political novel as a fable, a polemic exhortation as history or as fiction. Polemics is forceful verbal or written controversy or argument for or against something or somebody. In this context this novel can be treated as a myth, and also as satire.

MATERIAL AND METHOD:

The reference to the Islamic Calendar indicates the repressive life of the people dragged backward and chained to the Middle Ages; the world where heroes are clowns and clowns are heroes, where fair is foul and foul is fair, where life is full of turmoil and suffering and there is no escape from shame, from the Kafkaesque nightmare in totalitarian state. Rushdie in his egoistic and showy, malicious and mischievous manner gives the novel a factitious glamour and ponders on the gullibility of British intellectuals.

Though this poet refused to speak to him about his experiences, the narrator learnt from others that

... he was in bad shape for a long time after he got out. They said that he had been hung upside-down by the ankles and beaten, as if he were a new-born baby whose lungs had to be coerced into action so that he could squeal. (Shame 28)

The political situation in the country gives rise to the deterioration of the social conditions, the people are on civil war path moving in the street, setting 'fire to motor cars, school buses, Army trucks and the libraries of the

British Council and United States Information Service to express their displeasure. Field- Marshal A. ordered troops into the streets to restore peace' (Shame 167). Very soon, the power is transferred to another General to pacify the mob. He puts the President under house arrest and promises to restore democracy. This factual description shows that the narrator is giving the true account of the transfer of power of President Ayub Khan to General Yahya Khan in Pakistan.

The society in Pakistan is as repressive as the politicians who take recourse to repression. It is a society that is authoritarian in its social and sexual codes which crushes its women beneath the intolerable burdens of honour and propriety. Iskander Harappa once told his daughter:

'As a nation we have a positive genius for self-destruction, we nibble away at ourselves, we eat our children, we pull down anyone who climbs up' (Shame 184).

It is this background of political and social atmosphere that the characters and events in Shame act and react to. This limitless repression breeds violence, it creates psychological horrors in society. The poets and artists are subjected to various kinds of punishment as, in the novel we have an instance, where a reputed poet in Karachi is put in jail for his patriotic composition. This shows the condition of poets and artists in Pakistan. Everything is worked out on the dictates of religious fanatics. The coming of General Raza is welcomed by the religious fanatics, though it brings some moral reforms with it as a ban on the consumption of liquor and mullahs on the TV giving theological lectures. It allows charities and donations to politicians but crushes individual liberty.

Also punished are those who are found watching western movies, unveiled women in the streets, professors inadequately devout who smoke in fasting months etc. The novelist comments

My point is that Islam might well have proved an effective unifying force in post-Bangladesh Pakistan, if people had not tried to make it into such an almighty big deal. Maybe Sindhis, Baluchis, Punjabis and pathans, not to mention immigrants, would have sunk their differences for the sake of their common faith.' (Shame 251)

Palimpsest is a dominant metaphor in Shame and also in The Moor's Last Sigh where culture is seen as an eclectic amalgamation from diverse social groups. The Moor's Last Sigh is a translation of a phrase in Spanish, el ultimo suspiro del Moor - a tag attached to the history of Moor's expulsion from Granada. Rushdie in this evolution deals with transition from unicultural to multicultural depiction. He attempts to deal with a melange of composite cultures, which is India.

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Rushdie's fondness for the Hindu-God Ganesha is conspicuous again as he reuses it often. It is clear that whenever Rushdie's novels deal with India, Bombay has to be in it and it can be well understood that Ganesha and the city are inseparable. Here, also we are told that Aires had a hobby-collection of Ganeshas. And years later Aurora named her own home 'Elephanta.' And she used to dance frenziedly on Ganesha Festivals without any sort of inhibition and Rushdie gives a vivid description of the festival. Later Lambajan Chandiwalla educates the Zogoiby children and Rushdie's readers about Elephanta Island.

Rushdie, through his narrators, repeatedly stresses the beauty of the plurality of India and the Moor along with Indian pluralism also represents the pluralism of the entire world. Yet Rushdie's love for pluralism is deeply Indian, rooted in his own understanding of what is most characteristic of the Indian ethos- past, present and future.

For a nation of seven hundred millions to make any kind of sense, it must base itself firmly on the concept of multiplicity, of plurality and tolerance, of devolution and decentralization wherever possible. There can only be one way -- religious, cultural, or linguistic -- of being an Indian; let difference reign. (Imaginary Homelands 44)

The episodic scene where Lambajan takes the Moor to Raman Fielding for his acquittal from murder charge reminds us of a scene from some masala Bombay Talkie like Shehanshah or the latest Sarkaar both starring the legendary Amitabh Bachhan. In such movies, the hero is the gang leader which works against ineffective government and the law in order to rescue and protect a common man in the society. Raman is the don, here, who in exchange of his favour for Lambajan treats him on his mercy. He gives an explanation of such a rude treatment that it is in exchange of the protection and care he is offering to Lambajan's people there in his village. Here, he makes the Indian readers wonder on their situation that they think they are in charge of the big industrialists like Birlas and Tatas or politicians like Indira but in reality they are taken care of by the people like himself. Because he has saved Moraes from false charges, Moraes in turn would give away his body and soul and

become 'zombie.' This dramatic portrayal reminds one of definitely some typical celluloid but more importantly it reveals the sad plea of the citizens of India or shall we say the world? Amusingly Moraes' crooked fist of 'a hammer worth' can be compared to the hammer-like arm Mr. Amitabh Bachhan possesses in Shehanshah. It also reminds of 12th century English legendary outlaw Robin Hood of Stow's Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode, who used to rob the rich to save the poor.

CONCLUSION:

Rushdie has taken liberties with historical analogs in numerous instances in order to remain true to his muse. He makes ironical use of setting and in the choice of names to trace the course of his plot. Rani's last name, Humayun, recalls the Moghul Emperor who spent most of his reign in exile. Her marital name changes to Harappa and she is immured alive in a baroque mansion of Mohenjo's arid landscape.

Rushdie also shows concern over the wronged social status of women. He suggests the cage-like life of women in the very opening scene of the novel. Omar's mothers have to lead a cloistered existence because their father raises them in strict conformity with 'an irony morality that was mostly Muslim' (Shame 13). They remained uneducated, in a state of interminable captivity, imprisoned in the zenana. The demand of faith put an additional burden on them; constricting chains of patriarchy grow stronger than in other places. This diminishes their role and place in society.

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