



Research Paper

## The Political and Historical background of Rushdie's Shame

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**ABSTRACT:** The paper discusses the political and historical background portrayed in the novel *Shame*. Rushdie narrates the history of Pakistan since its partition from India in 1947 to the publication of the novel *Shame* in 1983. Almost thirty six years of Pakistani history is clearly deployed in the novel. Rushdie beautifully knits the story of a newly born state from historical happenings and characters involved in a fictional manner with his literary genius. The style of using language and literary genres is significantly good. He beautifully depicts the contemporary political history and human drama exists in the postcolonial nations by the use of literary genres such as *Magical realism, fantasy and symbolism*.

**KEY WORDS:** Political, Historical, Shame, Shamelessness, Magical Realism etc.,

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### I. INTRODUCTION:

The story line of *Shame* alludes to the sub-continental history of post-partition period through complex systems of trans-social connections between the individual and the recorded powers. The text focuses on three related families - the Shakils, the Hyders and the Harappas. The story opens in the fanciful town 'Q' - Quetta in Pakistan with the extraordinary birth of Omar Khayyam, the hero of the novel. As Sara Suleri has rightly interprets, "Omar Khayyam, born out of a trinity of mothers, signifies that fresh anival of the Pakistani citizen, born neither of Britain, nor of India, nor of Pakistan, which is still too new to be true." (18) The tale starts with his introduction to the world and closes with his demise in a similar manner. His journey begins and ends in the same place Nishapur, which symbolizes shamelessness. Omar Shakil, the protagonist of the story born and brought up unknowingly by three Shakil sisters - Chhunni, Munnee and Bunny by utilizing the method of enchantment. In other way they have given birth to Omar Shakil through adultery which is against Islamic faith of purity and holiness. Rushdie states about the sisters like

I am prepared to swear that so wholeheartedly did they wish to share the motherhood of their sibling-to transform the public shame of an wedlocked conception into the private triumph of the longed-for group baby-that, in short, twin phantom pregnancies accompanied the real one; while the simultaneity of their behaviour suggests the operation of some form of communal mind. (*Shame* 20)

Omar Shakil grows up on shame identity and later he searches for his self identity in a political and social stigma. Omar goes through three trenchant stages in his life. In the beginning he suffers identity crisis His three resentful mothers taught him that "Shamelessness is virtue." (21) Later Omar Shakil breaks the cocoon of darkness and comes out to outer world. He grows up intelligent and prepares to quit 'Q' to study medicine in Karachi. His progress outside Nishapur is portrayed in drama form by the writer. In the second stage of his life he tries to emancipate himself from the family clutches to establish individuality in the outer world. He practices hypnosis skill. Omar Shakil grows abundantly in his professional side; he achieves lot of reputation and recognition as a professional doctor. But on the other hand he continues to lead utter shamelessness personally and family front. Shakil's shamelessness haunts him like a shadow throughout his life.

Rushdie predicts uncertainty of political Pakistan, and shame incarnation by the introduction of Omar Khayyam. The mysterious birth of Omar Shakil and the adultery of Shakil sisters give image of uncertain and shameless political situation of newly born nation Pakistan.

Rushdie portrays very important elements in the second part of the novel. He introduces shame incarnated and fictitious character Sufiya Zinobia in this part. Sufia Zinobia, a powerful fictitious character developed by, to stand against authoritarian political system of the Nation. As Michael Hollington comments on

Sufia that, "Sufia can be said to stand for the necessary violent reaction, of the women against patriarchy and of the people against dictatorship." (406) Sufia is the daughter of an Authoritarian religious leader Raza Hyder and Bilquis. Her birth itself is unfortunate, because her birth shatters the hopes of her parent's wish of a male baby. Hence she is tagged shame incarnation. She carries the burden of shame throughout her life. The political, religious and social system of Pakistan throws shame on Nation and Zinobia as well. She is made victim for the politics of authoritarian rulers and makes her bear shame throughout the fiction. The shameless acts of authoritarian, male dominated, and women discriminated rulers' grabbed privacy, individuality and independence of women. A nation which imposes certain restriction on women in the name of religion and culture is undoubtedly a shameless act. "Repression is a seamless garment; a society which is authoritarian in its social and sexual codes, which crushes its women beneath the intolerable burdens of honour and propriety, breeds repressions of other kinds as well." (Shame 173) Rushdie clearly warns through the lines that abusing of women in the name of religion, politics, power, and sex is not good for any nation. Rushdie uses this character to crush the authoritarian and religious rule in the form of beast at the end of the fiction.

The partition of India was a despicable demonstration which was an after effect of the self-centeredness of the egotist government officials. As S.K. Tikoo has rightly opined, "Although, historically speaking, the causes of the partition were many, Rushdie presents only a casual picture of the communal disturbances that were to be witnessed on the eve of the great divide when bombs had begun exploding in different places." (46) It additionally mirrors the haughty and foolhardy frame of mind of the gap and standard strategy of the Britishers. Rushdie depicts the boldness of the government officials through the characters like Bilquis. The 'disgrace' which Bilquis felt so firmly at the season of the bomb-impact, she is rescued by Raza Hyder, a military commander. Further they get married, and political and religious situations of partition made them to run parallel to that of the recently conceived nation of the unadulterated Pakistan. Chief Raza Hyder briefly prevails with regards to garments the disgrace of his lady of the hour and takes her to Pakistan.

Hyder's and Harappa's are the two noteworthy families speak about Bilquis and Rani Harappa respectively. They orchestrate, a marital alliance between Iskander's nephew Haroun Harappa and Hyder's more youthful daughter Naveed. There is a political thought process behind orchestrating the marriage proposal. The marriage proposal should be admirable to Marshal A, who is the boss of Raza Hyder. But Haroun has other conspiracy in his mind, and on the other hand Naveed is not interested on Haroun. In these too many different opinions the marriage proposal is made to gain individual benefits. At the end the proposal breaks up, subsequently, the two families are divided over the disappointment of the proposed partnership between them. The characters exhibit shameless attitudes of high class and powerful families of a cultured nation. Marriage is regarded as holy alliance, but it is mocked by conspiracy and political greed.

Rushdie unobtrusively exhibits the transaction between the persecution and viciousness in genuine Pakistan. He draws parallels among Sufiya and Pakistan. Sufiya, defeated by disgrace, physically assaults her sister's significant other Talvar, amid their marriage, by piercing her teeth into his neck. Omar Khayyam, in the mean time has succumbed to his fate by wedding the harrowed oldest girl of Raza Hyder, whom he had treated in his calling as a specialist. Sufiya, troubled with her family's disgrace, step by step finds the concealed way which joins disgrace to brutality and an extraordinary savage power is released. In the end, she executes her better half Omar Khayyam Shakil, an individual unequipped for feeling any disgrace. Uma Parameswaran, "Sufiya becomes the personification not only of Pakistan, but also of all countries where the political climate is conducive to dictatorship." (130) the expanded viciousness finally winds up difficult to control. Her brutality is communicated when both family and political unrest seething from disgrace emit. Her activities reflect the social affair storm on the political scene. In this manner Sufiya works as a picture or the spirit of Pakistan.

The author prudently depicts the despicable exercises like profanity, leniency and depravity as a pretense to display the chronicled occasions of Pakistan. The tale mirrors the recorded actualities of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia-Ulhaq represents Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder respectively in the novel, speaking about the two leaders of Pakistan, the way Bhutto attempted to sustain his capacity by enabling awkward people to higher positions in the military, the way in which Zia removed him by setting up a routine of religious bias and the other political occasions in the book are spun around. Alternate characters in the story likewise speak to the incredible names in the political history of Pakistan - Marshal A. as General Ayub Khan, General Shaggy Dog as Yahya Khan, Sheik Bismillah as Sheik Mujibur Rahman and Ajumand Harappa as Benazir Bhutto.

Rushdie joins the real happenings that occurred in Pakistan following Ayub Khan's ruin and Yahya Khan's seizure of intensity. General Ayub Khan turned into the President of Pakistan and ruled from 1958 to 1969. In 1958, Bhutto turned into the most youthful Pakistani Cabinet Minister. He was given charge of the vitality service by President Muhammad Ayub Khan. He was hence elevated to head the services of business, data and ventures. Bhutto became a dose and confided in counsel to Ayub Khan, ascending in impact and power in spite of his childhood and relative freshness in legislative issues. In 1962 he was named Pakistan's Foreign Minister. The Tashkent Agreement between Ayub Khan and Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri made a noteworthy political furor against Ayub Khan's routine. Despite the fact that at first Bhutto joined Ayub to

arrange this harmony bargain, his analysis of the last assertion caused a noteworthy break among him and Ayub Khan. Bhutto surrendered in June 1967 while communicating solid hatred of Ayub Khan's rule. Following Ayub Khan's acquiescence, Yahya Khan turned into the new President.

Iskander Harappa's change into the most dominant power on the political scene takes after Bhutto's ascent in the legislative issues of Pakistan. Iskander's ascent is designed by the help he gets from his old articles on worldwide undertakings "breaking down his nation's necessities &om the incredible forces, the Islamic world and whatever is left of Asia, lining these up with a burdensome program of talks... his thought ...of a nearby coalition with China had increased wide open help that he was running the country's remote strategy without being an individual from the cabinet." (Shame 150). Every one of these subtleties remind the real remote arrangement received by Pakistan. This arrangement expanded strains in Indo-Pak relations and guaranteed propagation of military standard in Pakistan.

General Hyder was at first unwilling to get down, his colleagues gave him the choice of overthrowing Harappa or falling with him, in the morning after the coup Raza Hyder was seen on national television. He was reciting Quranic verses; he then addresses the nation the Popular Front of Iskander Harappa, would be allowed to contest polls. Raza Hyder, Harappa's protégé, became his slayer, he packed Arjumand Harappa off to Rani at Mohenlo...Chairman Iskander Harappa was detained. (Shame 245)

This passage from Salman Rushdie's *Shame* describes the political chaos that swallowed up Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa. Rushdie writes: "Fortunately, however, I am only telling a sort of modern fairytale, so that's all right; nobody need get upset, or take anything I say too seriously. No drastic action need be taken either." (72) the passage tells the reader the sad limitations and pressures on many writers; however, when this passage, combined with the details of Raza Hyder's rise to power, is put side by side with the actual events taking place in Pakistan in the five or six years prior to the publication of *Shame*, Rushdie's writing becomes much more than a ironic disclaimer.

In reality, it supposes the alarming pressure of a man facing the consequence of exposing the truth behind recent politics in Pakistan. Raza Hyder is General Mohammed Zia ul-Haq; Iskander Harappa is Zulkifar Ali Bhutto; Arjumand Harappa is Benezir Bhutto. In 1947, Pakistan became an independent state, after civil war East Pakistan was formed as Bangladesh in 1972. Zulkifar Ali Bhutto, holder of degrees from the University of California at Berkeley and Oxford Newsweek, Oct 29, 1979 took over as the leadership of the country and became prime minister. Bhutto promised openness, hope, land reform, family planning, and Muslim leadership. In 1973, his government adopted a new constitution and established the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), inspite of being opposed by a strong Islamic faction and military organization.

However, pretty later, Bhutto's rule became extremely unfair (Nation, Aug 14, 1978). Line if limits that separated Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and affairs of the state were clearly washed out. He misused government property and involved government officials in matters of politics and election (Atlas World Press Review, Dec 1978). He did win with a majority of 60% of the vote in the March 1977 election, but was soon accused of cheating for votes. He was then replaced by General Mohammed Zia ul-Haq (Nation, Aug 14, 1979). Zia kept on telling that his sole purpose was to conduct free and fair elections in October 1977. In September '77, Zia imprisoned and charged Bhutto with the messed up 1974 murder plot against a PPP protester named Ahmad RAZA-Kasuri (America, Apr 21, 1979).

Bhutto was put in a dirty, tiny cell. When he was brought out to be tried, he was shrunken beyond recognition. The trial was manipulated twice. The judge proclaims him guilty before he was convicted, and the "witnesses" were kept under custody till they agreed to point fingers at Bhutto (Nation, Aug 14, 1978). The witnesses kept changing their statements from time to time. There were protests and outcries that went unheard. Pleas for clemency from Carter, Brezhnev, and Pope John Paul II were not considered. In the morning of April 4, 1979, Zia's guards entered Bhutto's cell at 2 a.m. four hours before the actual appointed hour and carried out his hanging secretly. It was later that "for all Bhutto's weakness, he belonged to a small group of men who were preoccupied with leading their country into the modern world" America, Apr 21, 1979.

After the news of Bhutto's hanging was made known, protests broke out, and Zia once again promised a free and fair election with the PPP, that was now lead by Bhutto's outstanding 26 year-old daughter, Benezir who completed her education at Harvard. She inherited her father's noble arrogance and his brilliant, emotional manner of speaking. But in October of 1979, Zia once again cancelled the elections and kept Benezir and her mother under house arrest (Newsweek, July 23, 1979).

In March, 1981, Zia was running an Islamization operation in order to gain the confidence of Pakistan's conservative clergy. He took sides with principles of the fundamentalist Jamaat-i-Islami. His army provided internal security. On March 25, 1981, he has cracked down on lawyers and discharged 19 judges of their duties who refused to accept his order that restricted civil courts, which considered secularism a crime, that banned all political parties except his own, and that gave him power to amend the 1973 constitution at his will. Unchecked by legal provision, he became a powerful dictator rather than a promising leader.

All the events mentioned above, match those written by Rushdie in *Shame*. This is the non-fictional situation of the few years before and when the novel was being written. This also depicts the courage Salman Rushdie has for he has in his novel documented Pakistan's situation precisely. Rushdie bravely scatters his intruding voice in the events of *Shame*. He also states this to be a 'modern fairy tale'. But the voice of Rushdie and problems of Pakistan are too powerful to be ignored.

## **II. CONCLUSION:**

All through his portrayal, Rushdie subsequently endeavors to consolidate the incredible and fantastic realities of political Pakistan. He endeavors to reconstruct the feelings of country's disgrace and anticipates indecent demonstrations in it. He considers this might be as another palimpsest account. The joining of disgrace and impropriety gives a pivot whereupon lives of individuals turn. At the point when conditions turn outrageous, forwardness and disgrace the underlying foundations of viciousness eject, unveiling the wicked trail of Pakistani history. Rushdie not just performs his disturb and anguish at the negative parts of the political and social history of Pakistan, yet in addition declares that some time or another individuals would be attracted to the old legend of freedom, correspondence and brotherhood.

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