CHAPTER - 1

Introduction
CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

The literary Scenario of the World has radically changed after the World War Second. Unprecedented advancement in the field of science and information technology has altered the traditional notions of life and literature. In the present Global context literature cannot be approached or analysed through traditional literary or critical parameters. A literary text is no more considered as an autonomous aesthetic object alone. Advancement in the other disciplines and branches of knowledge also have a direct baring on literature and literary studies. The novel that D.H.Lawrence considered as “A Bright Book of Life” could not have remained unaltered or unaffected. It is, in fact, a genre that has always betrayed a tremendous amount of flexibility to accommodate the swiftly changing socio-historical and cultural changes irrespective of spatio-temporal limitations. In spite of the declaration of ‘The death of the novel’ and the 'Death of the Author', novel remains at the centre of literary production. Of course, the means and methods, modes of perception and presentation have radically changed.
The critics and creative writers now, look at the novel as Mythopoeic, as Surfiction, Metafiction, as a self reflexive genre and above all, in the post modern parlance, as a discourse. An approach to the novel in the recent times, therefore, has to even go beyond the immediate socio-cultural and geographical boundaries. A recourse, many a time, to natural, physical and social sciences becomes imperative to comprehend the multilayered structure of the novel and multiplicity of its meanings. Because novel today is not a single layered presentation of reality, the very notion of reality, today has assumed the dimensions of an arena for sociological, historical or ideological combat. The present thesis undertakes an analysis of Salman Rushdie's fiction in this context.

Salman Rushdie enjoys a prominent place amongst the controversial and provocative fiction writers of the world like Guntur Grass, Gabriel Marciea, Marquez and others. The thesis justifies the selection of the author primarily on this basis and attempts to bring out the chief literary contribution of Salman Rushdie. Rushdie, in fact, is widely acknowledge intellectual novelist, his fiction has drawn such a huge amount of critical attention that would have been an envy of any
creative writer. The critical studies on Rushdie’s fiction, however, have been discursive in nature; or some polemical or controversial dimensions of his fiction have been studied extensively. Critics have also tangentially talked about his linguistic or stylistic achievements. The present thesis certainly does take into critical account this dimension of Rushdie’s creative art. Nevertheless it mainly focuses on the genesis of his art and underscores Rushdie’s stance as an intellectual fiction writer in terms of his rejection of certain notion like commonwealth literature and his rejection of sociopolitical hypocrisy proffered in the garb of ideology or cultural purity. He takes into his devastating creative focus the birth of new identities as a direct consequence of transcontinental migration and new religion and historical or cultural consequences that finally generate socio-psychological and cultural tensions and trauma. Rushdie’s fiction, this thesis argues, calls for a holistic and synthesizing approach. It needs to be studied in certain socio-historical, cultural and global context because his fiction is simultaneously characterized by interrogation, confession, polemics, and irrationality of subjectivity. The thesis also focuses on the stylistic achievements of Rushdie apropos of his
thematic preoccupation. Unlike many of his contemporaries in India Rushdie does not look at reality from a point of view of bourgeois humanist tradition. Rushdie’s notion of reality is postmodern and therefore, it is essentially interrogative. Even the apparent socio-historical and autobiographical aspects of his narrative and chronological continuity of his fiction, in their ultimate analysis, betray his subversive, creative consciousness. It is fantasy that dominates his fictional mode and grants him creative facility to transcend the spatio-temporal conscription and classificatory boundaries of literary forms. Unlike the ‘Fairy tales’, Rushdie’s fiction constantly threatens the real world. As an intellectual writer Rushdie takes up a radical stance and refuses to look at reality as single layered phenomenon. His creative consciousness appears to be given to explore the invisible, irrational and oppressive nuisances of reality. It is, therefore, doubles, and multiples, puns and possibilities govern his continually shifting narrative strategies. The thesis also takes into account the crucial role played by his Indian origin and western exposure in shaping his vision as an intellectual novelist.
There are a host of writers who earned name by writing novels in Indo-English for example R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Anita Desai, V.S.Naipaul, Nayan Tara Sahgal, Arun Joshi, Bharati Mukherjee and Kamala Markandaya and many others. But Rushdie does not like to be subsumed or categorized with these Indo-English writers, as Uma Parameswaran has observed :-

When asked how he saw himself in relation to other English Speaking Indian writers, people like Mulk Raj Anand, Narayan or Raja Rao, Salman Rushdie’s reply was : “Not at all really. The idea that there is a school of Indian British fiction is a sort of mistake. Writers like Mulk Raj Anand and Narayan have many more affinities to Indian writers in the Indian languages than they do to a writer like me who just happens to be writing in English. He felt that except both he and they use English they did not have much in common”.

Rushdie is against the very term Commonwealth Literature as he denounced it in his famous essay ‘Commonwealth Literature Doesn’t Exist’, he says :

When I was invited to speak at the 1983 English Studies Seminar in Cambridge, the lady from the
British Council offered me a few words of reassurance. 'It's all right,' I was told, 'for the purposes of our seminar, English studies are taken to include Commonwealth literature'. At all other times, one was forced to conclude, these two would be kept strictly apart, like squabbling children, or sexually incompatible partners, or, perhaps like unstable, fissile materials whose union might cause explosions.

A few weeks later I was talking to a literature don a specialist, I ought to say, in English literature—a friendly and perceptive man. 'As a Commonwealth writer', he suggested, 'you probably find, don't you, that there's a kind of liberty, certain advantages, in occupying, as you do, a position on the periphery?'

Rushdie was not alone in denouncing the term 'Commonwealth Literature' but he sinned, if it is a sin, in good company as he observes further in the same article as follows:

Many of the delegates, I found, were willing freely to admit that the term 'Commonwealth literature' was a bad one. South Africa and Pakistan, for instance, are not members of the Commonwealth, but their authors apparently belong to its literature. On the other hand, England, which as far as I'm aware, has not been expelled from the Commonwealth quite yet, has been excluded from its literary manifestation. For obvious reasons. It would never do to include English literature, the great sacred thing itself, with this bunch of upstairs, huddling together under this new and badly made umbrella.

With reference to India he says:

To take the case of India, only because it's the one with which I'm most familiar. The debate about the appropriateness of English in post-British India has been raging ever since 1947; but today, I find, it is a debate which has meaning
only for the older generation. The children of independent Indian seem not to think of English as being irredeemably tainted by its colonial provenance. They use it as an Indian language, as one of the tools they have to hand. (I am simplifying, of course, but the point is broadly true).

English literature has its Indian branch. By this I mean the literature of the English language. This literature is also Indian literature. There is no incompatibility here. If history creates complexities, let us not try to simplify them.

He concludes:

So, English is an Indian literary language, and by now, thanks to writers like Tagore, Desani, Chaudhuri, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Anita Desai and others, it has quite a pedigree. Now it is certainly true that the English-language literatures of England, Ireland and the USA are older than, for example, the Indian; so it’s possible that ‘Commonwealth literature’ is no more than an ungainly name for the world’s younger English Literature.3

"Rushdie’s perception of political truth", observes Malise Ruthven "has affinities with that of other, mostly American authors whom the critic Timothy Brennan groups under the label of Third World Cosmopolitans". According to Brennan these writers – including Mario Vargas Llosa, Derek Walcott, Isabel Allende, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Bharati Mukherjee – have all in their various ways supplied skeptical readings of national liberation struggles from the comfort of the observation tower, making that skepticism authoritative.4
While mastering the language of the metropolis, these writers do not become assimilated in a one-sided manner. Being invited to speak as ‘Third World’ intellectuals they have taken the opportunity to state ‘in clear accents that the world is one (not three) and that it is unequal. Reviewers have already compared him (Rushdie) to Garcia Marquez, Gunter Grass for the epic sweep and political thrust of his imaginations. Perhaps one may consider where he stands in the stream of Indian writing in English although he, like many leading commonwealth writers, probably dislikes being seen in relation to a regional literature instead of being considered part of the mainstream of world literature.\[5,6\]

Feroza Jussawalla in her brilliant study about the style of three eminent Indian writers in English viz. G V Desani, Kamala Markandaya and Salman Rushdie, calls Rushdie’s style in the pathbreaking novel *Midnights’ Children* as ‘sui-generic – in a class of its own and generating itself’. She observes: that it is like Desani’s ‘All about H.Hatterr’, another imitative work is overlooked. Its chaotic style is seen as a reflection of the chaotic situation of India after independence - a new style for
the new circumstances. However, S.Krishnan in his review for
the April 1982 issue of Aside (Madras) argues that:

_It is a very un-Indian book about things Indian. In other words it is not the kind of book Indians write about India. It is a rich and lush book, full of invention, fantasy and a wonderful mix of the beautiful and the grotesque that, of all countries in the world, only India seems to offer to the Western World, to the latter's complete, if morbid, satisfaction._

Clark Blaise, a reviewer widely travelled in India, raises
the question of audience. He uses a passage of dialogue which
shows that Rushdie does in fact capture that rhythms of
English as spoken by Indian college students, semi-but
adequately bilingual speakers of fairly hybridized English:

_Much of the dialogue (the best parts) read like the hip vulgarity – yaar! of the Hindi film magazine. The dessicated syllabus of T.S. Eliot, so strong an influence upon other Anglo Indian writers are gone...._

How Indian is it? It is a slangy, and a taste for India (or a
knowledge of Bombay) obviously heightens the response. Here
is a description of a café:

_The pioneer café was not much ... a real rut putty joint,
with painted boards proclaiming lovely lussi and Funtabulous
Falooda and Bhel Puri Bombay Fashion, with film playback_
music... a forbidding world in which broken - toothed men sat at reccine - covered tables... Very Indian. 

Jussawala raises the two questions:

1. How Indian is this language? and

2. Who is the audience meant to derive pleasure from it?

Jussawala provides answer to these questions:

A large part of the dialect is captured from the Goan and Anglo-Indian English spoken around Bombay. Saleem, the narrator, is again a Eurasian or Goan-Indian baby switched in the hospital with an aristocratic Muslim family's baby. He automatically seems to find his community among Eurasians, his Goan ayah (maidservant), her associates, his friends at Cathedral High School and the Europeans who are part of the Indian community.

On the other hand, where Rushdie does do some transliteration and transcreation of language, he is eminently successful in capturing the cadences of Urdu and the wry irony and humor that mark Urdu speech. Are yoh tera nam kya hay, are yar uska nam kya hay, the 'whatsitsname' frequently used by Amina Sinai, the narrator's 'mother', in calling the servants and in referring to very specific objects, is disarmingly familiar to the Indian reader, but is probably missed by the Western reader.

Rushdie was very happy by the runaway success of *Midnight's Children* in America but he was more concerned about its reception in Britain. 'Here is where I live', he had
said to Victoria Glendinning. Interestingly, he now lives in America.

Midnight’s Children’s hero or protagonist was born on India’s Independence day in August 1947. He possesses supernatural powers of perception. Rushdie himself was born in Bombay in 1947 in June not August, though Rushdie says, “It was a family joke that the British left only two months after my arrival”. If the comedy of the book ties in Saleem’s infantile solipsism – as if he actually controls them – the same is manifest with the adult Rushdie. It will be worth our while to note the implication of solipsism on the psyche of a person. The most extreme form of scepticism, solipsism is typically based on claims that all we can perceive are our immediate experiences or states of mind and that these do not supply an adequate basis for knowledge of any thing further. A solipsist therefore denies both that there is an external physical world and that there are any other minds.10

Commenting about his self centredness Rushdie justifies it as he says: ‘This is not really a reflection (his own self-centredness) but being the only son and eldest child in a
middle-class Indian family does make you tend to think that the world revolves round you.\textsuperscript{11}

The India of his novel is as fantastic and extravagant as a dream, and India itself, he wrote in the book is dream. Why? Rushdie’s logic was: ‘Because its existence as a political entity was a fiction invented by the British is 1947. Even the British had never ruled over more than 60 per cent of India. But it was a dream that every one agreed to dream. And now I think there actually is a country called India’.\textsuperscript{11}

His book was well received in India (of the days of Mrs. Indira Gandhi whom Rushdie called in the novel as the widow). His chosen literary family is that of the great European fantastical, satirical tradition: Cervantes, Sterne, Gogol, Grass, Melville Garcia Merquez. Also Joyce, Beckett, Flann O’Brien and Sickens whom he finds ‘astonishingly modern’ in his comic combination of naturalistic background and surrealist foreground. Rushdie commented about them: these are the good group, the ones who knew. Not Henry James.

\textit{Salman Rushdie and D.M. Thomas whose ‘The White Hotel’ was runner-up for the Booker Prize, have never met. Their ideas are strikingly similar. Thomas’s ‘Literary Family’ is almost the same, and also includes Pushkin, Turgenev,}
Rushdie as a writer believes in and aims at running the risk. Carole Corbil has aptly said (on the occasion of Rushdie’s reading at Harbourfront):

Rushdie ... is only interested in writers who risk something, who are willing to fail magnificently. ‘To be very good’, he says ‘you have to be willing to be very bad’. Look at Dostoyevsky or at Shakespeare; if you analyse their plots, you find very lurid, melodramatic stories, but of course they are not lurid and melodramatic works. It’s what they risk, what they include that makes them extraordinary......

Rushdie firmly believes that to understand one life you have to swallow the world. Rushdie, who was born in Bombay and spent his adolescence in Pakistan, comes very close to swallowing both countries in a narrative that spans three decades and that is as politically astute as it is aesthetically eccentric. A compulsive reader, Rushdie had always wanted to write, “I think that big readers are always waiting to be writers. You want to write the books you’d like to read. When
he got the idea to write *Midnight’s Children* (it took him five years, including six months of research and six months of fallow mulling-over to complete the novel), he worked at an advertising agency two days a week to support his project.

“It was very odd to me that no one had tackled this material before. It seemed to me that the comic epic was such a natural form for India. After *Midnight’s Children* was published I was interviewed by an Indian poet who showed me the first chapter of a novel he had abandoned. He had the same idea, starting the book with a child born on Independence Day, so my fantasy is that there are thousands of literary Indian Children who hate me for having completed the novel first”.

**Rushdie’s life-sketch:**

The justification for delving deep into the lifehistory of Rushdie in the words of the author Catherine Cundy, is: “Any attempt to explain the features and preoccupations of Rushdie’s fiction must take account of the diverse cultural elements that combine to give his work its characteristic style.”
Ahmed Salman Rushdie was born in Bombay (now Mumbai) on 19 June 1947. He then is not one of the *Midnight’s Children* like his prototype Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of the novel *Midnight’s Children* who was born at the very moment of independence on 15 August 1947, at Midnight.

Salman Rushdie’s father Anis Ahmed Rushdie was a barrister turned businessman. He acknowledge his father’s influence on his chosen career as a writer. He is a wonderful story-teller. He writes about him: “The Wizard was right there in Bombay. My father Anis Ahmed Rushdie was a magical parent of young children, but he was also prone to explosions, thunderous rages, bolts of emotional lightning, puffs of dragon smoke, and other menaces of the type also practiced by Oz the great that terrible, the first wizard Deluxe”.

His mother Negin Rushdie (Negin Butt before marriage) was a teacher from Aligarh, the seat of famous Aligarh Muslim University in North India. Both had been married earlier, were very rich and lived in Bombay. Anis had studied low at the prestigious Cambridge University. He was very proud of being
an Oxbridge product. He wanted to bring up his son in a very Anglophile and Anglocentric way.\textsuperscript{17}

C.Cundy observes: “The family spoke the Muslim language of Urdu but Rushdie learnt English from the age of five in English medium schools.\textsuperscript{18} and was encouraged by his parents to use English at home as the language of everyday discourse. The dual consciousness, created as a result of this linguistic discussion, is the source of much of the versatility and play in Rushdie’s use of English in his fiction.\textsuperscript{19} Precisely he was educated at the Cathedral and John Cannon Schools in Bombay, the city of his birth. Rushdie loved Bombay and preferred it over Karachi to which his parents had migrated against his will. Though the comparisons are odious Rushdie compares Bombay and Karachi in his interview to Hoffenden. He says: “I don’t like Karachi, whereas I did like Bombay. But even Bombay has been ruined as a city, it’s now an urban nightmare whereas it used to be a courtly, open hilly, seaside city. It has become a kind of Hong Kong, only more incompetent than Hong Kong. In Bombay nothing works, when I was there in February, there had been a fire in the telephone exchange on Malabar Hill, which is the ritziest
residential area, and they had still not got around to providing a telephone service four months afterwards.

If I were to go back to India now, I would not live in Bombay, which is something which I would never have said before. It still has the feeling of being my home town, but it is no longer a place in which I feel comfortable.20

He visited and revisited his dear Bombay in fiction to wit Midnight’s Children, The Satanic Verses and The Moor’s Last Sigh. He hated partition. He always placed a map of undivided India before him like a totem as he wrote.

He was greatly influenced by the Bombay talkie, world’s greatest film industry after Hollywood, hence now called Bollywood.

In 1961 when Rushdie was 13 he was sent to Rugby, the famous English Public School. Malise Ruthven gives an interesting account of his painful life at Rugby: ‘Like Saladin, Rushdie, who went to Rugby, was faced at his first school breakfast with the indignity of having to struggle with a kipper while unsympathetic schoolmates looked on, refusing to help. Rushdie says he hated Rugby. For one thing he suddenly
discovered that he was an Indian.' 'There are no Indians in India', he explained to General Marzorati; 'There are classes, of course, and regional identifications. Here in England it is largely understood as a race – and at the schoolboy level, back then, that was no fun'.\(^{21}\) Rushdie says he never really made a friend at Rugby.... Though pale – skinned, he was subject to racial slurs'.\(^{22}\)

Rushdie’s position in the English public school like Harikumar, a character from Paul Scott’s *The Raj Quartet* the English educated gentleman, too Indian for the English and too English for the Indians, rootless and disaffiliated like the outcast Philoctetes whose name he adopts. His experiences at Rugby resulted in a short autobiographical novel *Terminal Report* which highlighted a conservative conventional type like himself, as the hero who was changed by his experiences into an aggressive radical whenever he encountered racism. Of course, I know that racism is not confined to the British... But you have to combat racism wherever you find it.\(^{23}\)

To a question ‘who inspired you to write?’, Rushdie answered: ‘My father never wanted me to be a writer, and I never had any encouragement to write. My grandfather – my
father's father – was a writer, but then I never knew him: he died before I was born. He was a good poet and published a couple of volumes of Urdu poetry and he is the only literary ancestor I have'.

In spite of his bad memories of Rugby he was well taught there rather better than Cambridge as he says: 'I didn't tell my parents what a bad time I was having... I remember very bad moments when I felt very depressed... I never had any friends at school, and I don't know a single person I was at school with: when I left school I consciously determined never to see any of those people ever again, and I never have, I just wiped them out... I certainly had the impression of being better taught at Rugby than I ever was at Cambridge. Although Cambridge had the great historians – I was studying History – not many of them were great teachers'. He was at Cambridge from 1965 to 1967. Rushdie thinks advantageous at offering History instead of English literature. So that he could select literary books at will. He read Stern's *Tristram Shandy* 'with a sense of discovery as if it had been written yesterday. His dislocation from Bombay and his family doesn't have only negative
overtones. As Rushdie himself admitted in Shame that he has gained as well as lost in translation'.

In his last year at Cambridge Rushdie had offered a special subject, Mohammed and The Rise of Islam. Though the course was cancelled for fewer students had turned up. But Rushdie persisted as the only student following the course. It was here during his studies he came across the incident of the Satanic Verses. Rushdie was at Cambridge from 1965 to 1968. This period, as Rushdie himself says in the Hoffenden interview, was ‘an exciting time to be at Cambridge... it was a very policized period. There was the Vietnam war to protest about, student power to insist upon, drugs to smoke, flowers to put in your hair, good music to listen to. It was a good time to be young, and I am very pleased to have had those years: There was an energy about student life then’.

After Cambridge he worked for a while as an actor, mostly at an extraordinary place called the Oval House in Kensington. In Rushdie’s Words: ‘it, had an enlightened administrator. It began as a youth club.... and a great may groups flocked through. A lot of the people who are now mainstays of the British Theatre were beginning there, stretching their wings in
different groups.... I remember a Brecht* production... and a rock play called Viet Rock, a musical written by Vegan Terry....’ Rushdie relates an episode of his theatre career, which he labels as ‘the worst thing that ever happened to me in a theatre’. Here the first two rows of the audience was composed of a coach party of paraplegics, whom we abused. Rushdie was in a cold sweat, but the producer said we had to do the show, so they had to abuse those cripples while being mortified at what they could hear themselves saying. “At the end they came rushing around in their wheel chairs to say that they’d never had such a good evening in the theatre. They felt wonderful to have been sworn at as human beings, because normally everyone treated them with excessive respect or assumed that they are deaf because they are crippled”.30

---

*Brecht Bertolt (1898-1956) German dramatist, producer and poet. His interest in combining music and drama led to a number of successful collaborations with Kert Weill the first of these being ‘The Three Pensy Operal (1928), an adaption of John Gay’s ‘The Beggar’s Opera’. In his later drama which was written in exile after Hitler’s rise to power and includes ‘Mother Courage’ 1941 and ‘The Caucasian Chalk Circle (1948) Brecht experimented with his ideas of Marxist epic theatre, with its ‘alienation effect’, whereby Theatric illusion is controlled and the audience is confronted with the real political issues at stake.29
Differences cropped with his father (like Changez and Saladin in the *Satanic Verses*) who disapproved of his son’s hippie – like life-style and stopped supporting him both financially and emotionally in his ambition. So he turned to advertising and failed to get a job with the well-known, J Walter Thompson advertising agency. Then he joined a small agency called sharp Mac Mames but left it to work on a novel titled *The Book of the Pir*. It was written in a Joycean style. Rushdie rated Joyce’s *Ulysses* one of the greatest novels. He observed: “I think *Ulysses* is the greatest novel of this century”.31

Then he joined Ogilvy and Mather as he says: ‘I worked for Ogilvy and Mathur, and more recently for a firm called Charles Barker which is the oldest advertising agency in England. At both firms I eventually got a deal where I had to work between two and three days a week, and that effectively gave me between four and five days a week to write for myself. I thought it a kind a luxury I wouldn’t find anywhere else. I thought of it as industrial sponsorship. That was how I wrote *Midnight’s Children*’.32
He had met his would-be wife Clarissa in 1970. A friend had talked about her as ‘a very well-bred English-rose type’. In 1973, Clarissa’s mother emigrated to Spain (her father had committed suicide when she was sixteen). Hence Clarissa, Rushdie and a female lodger occupied her Lower Belgrave Street Flat. The lodger was Liz Calder who had just assumed duties as an editor at Victor Gollancz, the publishers. It was she who told Rushdie that in search of new writers Gollancz had announced a science fiction competition. He said he would enter the book he was then writing.\textsuperscript{33,34} The book that he wrote for the competition is ‘\textit{Grimus}’ – the novel where East meets West, unlike the Kipling dictum : The East is East and the West is West and never the Twain shall meet’. Though a Sci Fi, \textit{Grimus} has Metaphysical concerns as Rushdie himself said so in an interview : ‘Metaphysical concerns were present in a different way in the first novel (\textit{Grimus})’ (Parentheses mine).

Rushdie said : ‘My Theme is fanaticism’.\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Grimus} was published in 1975. Meanwhile he was disillusioned with the process of advertising, as he admits, “when I realized that I couldn’t do it any more – this was before \textit{Midnight’s Children} was published – I told my wife to prepare for poverty. So I left
in the spring of 1981 and I was fortunate when the book came out. There were some press reports that said that I had won the Booker Prize and then left my job, when actually I had done some thing much more risky”.36

Rushdie was not deterred from writing despite the worst reviews as Liz Calder says: ‘the worst reviews I have ever seen for a first novel’.37 When he embarked upon writing the Midnight’s Children, in Rushdie’s words: ‘it was more autobiographical and it only began to work when I started making it fictional. The characters came alive when they stopped being like people in my own family’.38 Unlike his first book Grimus, the second one, Midnight’s children, which is Rushdie’s tour de force elicited rave reviews. Anita Desia, for example wrote in her review in Washington Post: ‘Will surely be recognized as a great tour de force, a dazzling exhibition of the gifts of a new writer of courage; and Sunday Telegraph proclaimed ‘India has found her Gunter Grass’. Newsweek observed. ‘A marvelous epic novel... a brilliant new aspirant to the ranks of V.S.Naipaul and Milan Kundera. All quotations are from the blurb of Midnight’s Children.
The critics were of the opinion that he tapped the rich sources such as Cervantes, Rabelais, Sterne, Swift, Melville Gogol, Joyce, Gunter Grass, Borges, Garcia Marquez. Rushdie himself admitted: "In almost every country and in almost every literature there has been every so often an outburst of this large-scale fantasized, satiric, anti-epic tradition, whether it was Rabelais or Gogol or Boccaccio.... That simply was the literature I liked to read. So it seemed to me that it was also the literature that I would like to write".39

Sunday Telegraph’s observation that ‘India has found her Gunter Grass’ was confirmed by Rushdie himself: I’m sure that Grass is somewhere behind the book. I hadn’t read it for many years at the time I wrote Midnight’s Children, but ‘The Tin Drum’ is one of my favourite novels’.40

Rushdie found his voice through Grass. Hardly had the novel stormed the bookstands it became a rage among literary circles and critics. It won the Booker Prize for the year 1981 and again in 1993 ‘The Booker of the Booker’, the best novel to have won the Booker Prize in its first 25 years. In the same year he was awarded the Austrian State Prize for European Literature. He dedicated the book to his son Zafar, for the book
was completed in June 1979, two weeks before the birth of Zafar.

It was Liz Calder who had shifted from Gollancz to Jonathan Cape, one of London’s most prestigious publishers, who arranged the publication of *Midnight’s Children*. One of the referees Tom Maschter’s opinion was: ‘This was a work of Genius’. *The New York review of Books* hailed *Midnight’s Children* as: ‘One of the most important novels, to come out of the English speaking world in this generation’.

The success of *Midnight’s Children* was phenomenal. Rushdie overnight became a writer of global dimensions and fame. He was in great demand being a celebrity intellectual for polemics in the newspapers, journals and on TV. He learnt from ‘The Tin Drum’. ‘Go for broke. Always try and do too much. Dispense with safety nets. Take a deep breath before you begin talking. Aim for the stars. Keep grinning, Be bloody minded. Argue with the world’.

His second novel *Shame* appeared in 1983 (though it is Rushdie’s Third novel but *Grimus* didn’t meet with success). The readers and critics both consider *Midnight’s Children* as a novel about India and *Shame* about Pakistan. But Rushdie contradicts as he says it
is 'wrong to see Midnight’s Children as the India book and Shame as Pakistani book’. As Midnight’s Children extrapolates India so does Shame go beyond Pakistan. Both are fantasies intermingled and intertwined with the politics of India and Pakistan respectively. These are the two tales of two countries going beyond their political purview here and there.

Pakistan Government took umbrage considering it an open assault on General Zia and Z.A. Bhutto (the assassinated leader) and banned it. Midnight Children has a close shave from meeting the same fate for Rushdie’s caustic attack on Mrs.Gandhi, the Widow in ‘Midnight’s Children’.

If the structure of Midnight’s Children is ‘a post-modern version of the picaresque’ (Goonetilleke), Shame was a political satire on Pakistan. Rushdie loved India, as the country of birth but Shame reflects Rushdie’s revulsion for Pakistan. In an interview Rushdie says: ‘Shame is not written as affectionately as Midnight’s Children, although – as I say somewhere in the book Pakistan is a place I’ve grown to have affection for, so that it’s not written entirely without affection’.44
Shame was banned in 1983 and General Zia died in a plane crash in 1988. Rushdie reportedly said on the occasion: 'Dead dictators are my speciality. I discovered to my horror that all the political figures most featured in my writing – Mrs.G (Gandhi), Sanjay Gandhi, Bhutto, Zia – have now come to sticky ends. It is the grand slam, really. This is a service I can perform, perhaps. A sort of literary contract'. But Rushdie forgot the name of Mujeebur Rahman of Bangladesh who also met with a sticky end in 1975. His next book The Jaguar Smile (1987) is a non-fiction work. V.S.Naipaul's non-fiction is important but Rushdie's non-fiction The Jaguar smile doesn't have much impact on his mainstream fiction writings. It is a political book on the political scenario of Nicaragua which he visited in 1987 as the guest of the Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers. He became a sponsor of the Nicaragua Solidarity campaign in London. Rushdie championed the cause of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

The title of the novel is borrowed from the limerick, the epigraph to the book:

There was a young girl of Nic'ragua

Who smiled as she rode on a Jaguar

28
They returned from the ride
With the girl inside
And the smile on the face of the Jaguar.

Though 33,000 copies of the book were sold out, it was not a grand success. He had started working on his controversial novel, *The Satanic Verses*, before his visit to Nicaragua. But preferred to complete *The Jaguar Smile* first. In 1986, Rushdie met the American writer Marianne Wiggins whom he married in 1988. Rushdie estimated her ‘one of the two most important women in my life, the other being my sister’.

Suzi MacKenzie remembers how lovingly he used to talk about Mariome Wiggins. He dedicated ‘*The Satanic Verses*’ to her. Interestingly enough, in 1987 he completed a film for Britain’s Channel Four, ‘The Riddle of Midnight’, India seen through the eyes of Rushdie’s forty year old generation, recording the shattered dream of Independence. The film was dedicated to his father who died in the same year (1987) with whom he had patched up his relations, at long last.

He broke away with his British agent and friend Deborah Rogers and with Liz Calder to whom he had promised ‘*The Satanic Verses*’ for her new publishing house Bloomsbury after
moving from Cape. Calder called it “The most blatant and unfeeling piece of daylight robbery I’ve ever seen”.\textsuperscript{47} His new publisher sold the novel to a German and an Italian publisher first. The English language publishers Viking Penguin bought the British and American rights for a whopping amount of 8,50,000 dollars. Really a stunning sum for a literary novel. Rushdie said about the novel :- “This is the first time, that I have managed to write a book from the whole of myself. It is written from my entire sense of being in the world”.\textsuperscript{48}

Though a very controversial book \textbf{The Satanic Verses}, according to Rushdie, ‘it is a migrant’s eye-view of the world. It is written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis... That is the migrant condition, and from which, I believe can be derived a metaphor for all humanity’.\textsuperscript{49}

There is a great similarity between the life of Saladin Chamcha, the protagonist of \textit{The Satanic Verses} and Rushdie’s own.

Theme of the novel is autobiographical as Rushdie says : ‘I wanted to write about a thing I find difficult to admit even to myself, which is the fact that I left home. And my relationship
with India, although it remains quite close, is with a country I know I am not going to live in. I wanted to write about someone who does, maybe provisionally, find his way back.\textsuperscript{50}

The beginning of the novel shows the explosion of an Air India Jumbo Jet over the English channel. It is based on a real occurrence: The blowing-up of an Air India Boeing 747 off South-West Ireland in 1985 by Sikh Militants. Here Rushdie presents terrorism as a recent, horrible phenomenon of modern history. The three male hijackers shilly-shally and are curiously uneffectual and unimpressive. But especially via the woman hijacker Tavleen who obviously meant business though she does not seem particularly clever, terrorism is shown as frightening and perverse (nestling in her cleavage were grenades like extra breasts, seen by her captives when she was stripped).

Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha – the two Indian passengers on board the plane are the only survivors who land safely tumbling from the plane. The question ‘Who am I’ is replete with significance about the immigrant all over the world. Are the immigrants Indian, British, West Indian or African? Rushdie has described the fall of Gibreel and Saladin into England as a ‘drastic act of immigration’.\textsuperscript{51}
There is striking resemblance between Saladin Chamchawala (‘Chamcha’ for short) and Rushdie. Like Rushdie this character came to Britain for public school and University education; like Rushdie too was estranged from his father and settled down in his adopted country. When settled in London, Saladin Chamchawala becomes Saladin Chamcha signifying change of identity.

Transplantation of Indian migrants is satirized by Rushdie when Zeeney Vakil (whom Chamcha loves beside his wife Pamela) says stingingly to Rushdie: ‘You know what you are, I’ll tell you. A deserter is what, more English than, your Angrez accent wrapped around you like a flag, and don’t think it’s so perfect, it slips labia, like a false moustache’. Rushdie’s satire becomes caustic and mordant when Saladin acquires horns, goat hooves and a tail and an enlarged and erect phallus – exhibiting uncleanliness, sexuality and lust which the British associate with coloured immigrants, and exuding suggestions of the devil, the ultimate bogie regarding blacks in the white man’s mind. When the police knock Saladin unconscious and dump him at a special medical centre for illegal immigrants he meets other coloured people. ‘They are wrongly categorized as illegal
immigrants who have also undergone a transformation – an Indian male model as a manticore, a woman as mostly water-buffalo, businessmen from Nigeria with sturdy tails, holiday makers from Senegal as snakes. The Indian model explains: They have the power of description and we succumb to the pictures they construct.53

But the Book proved a stormy petrel as it hurt the sensibilities of the Muslim community all over the world. Though not in the mainstream of the novel but in the dream sequences of Saladin Chamcha he wrote abusive and insulting passages about the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) by employing derogatory term of the Crusade days (Mahound) and pejorative references to some of his companions – Bilal, Salman, etc and his wives which are the pious mothers to the Muslims.

India was first to ban the book. Many muslim countries followed the suit. Iran under Khomeini issued a fatwa asking for Rushdie’s head. Till date the death sentence is hanging on Rushdie like the sword of Damocles. Though it was still effective after the death of Khomeini but now it has lost its edge.
Malise Ruthven aptly observes:

'The rage with which this extraordinary challenging novel has been greeted by Muslims in Britain and beyond proves that Rushdie has touched upon some raw nerves in a community experiencing the very insecurities and dilemmas he portrays'.

It will be interesting to go through the chronology of events as a fall-out of the publication of Rushdie’s most controversial book The Satanic Verses, as follows:

**Chronology of events:**

**1988:**

**Sept.26**: Viking Penguin publishes The Satanic Verses in London.

**Nov.5**: India bans the work as offensive to Islam. Pakistan, South Africa and several Islamic counties will later follow suit.

**Nov.8**: The novel wins Whitbread prize, Britain’s richest literary award; Salman Rushdie challenges Indian government to lift its ban.

**1989:**

Jan.25 : Rushdie denies blasphemy charge, saying prophet Mohammed would have no objection to the book and accusing critics of deliberately misunderstanding it.

Feb.12 : Six killed, 100 injured in riot over book in Pakistan.

Feb.13 : One killed, 60 injured in riot in India.

Feb.14 : Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini calls on Muslims to execute Rushdie and his publishers for insulting Islam. Rushdie and wife, Marianne Wiggins, go into hiding under armed guard.


Feb.16 : Pakistan calls for destruction of book and apology from Rushdie and publishers. Western countries enter controversy, with United States and France condemning Khomeini threat as Tehran raises bounty for killing author. Britain protests to Iran and freezes plan to increase its Tehran embassy staff. Some European publishers drop plans to publish novel in translation.

Feb.17 : Revenue Canada orders all copies of book seized at border. Leading U.S. book chain takes novel off its shelves to
protect staff and Viking Penguin closes U.S. offices for the day after bomb threats.

**Feb. 18**: Rushdie issues statement expressing ‘profound regret’ that book has distressed sincere followers of Islam. Iran’s official press says statement falls short of public repentance required for padon.

**Feb. 19**: Revenue Canada lifts ban on book; Khomeini renews “death sentence,” saying every Muslim’s duty is to send Rushdie to hell.

**Feb. 20**: European Community foreign ministers agree to withdraw top envoys from Tehran for consultations and suspend high level visits in protest at Iranian threats. Britain pulls out all its Tehran staff as Khomeini aide renews promise of certain death for Rushdie.

**Feb. 21**: Iran recalls its ambassadors from European Community countries in retaliation for EC move. Canada recalls its charge d'affaires in Tehran. Britain expels Iranian charge d'affaires. U.S. President George Bush condemns Khomeini threats and warns Tehran will be held accountable for any attacks on U.S. interests.
**Feb.22**: French President Francois Mitterrand denounces death threats as “absolute evil.” London’s largest mosque damaged by gasoline bomb in first apparent backlash against death threats. Norman Mailer and other American writers declare support for Rushdie. A Muslim legal body in Mecca says Rushdie should be tried for renouncing Islam.

**Feb.23**: Former pop star Cat Stevens, a Muslim convert, backs Khomeini’s death order. West German parliament calls for more European sanctions against Iran.

**Feb.24**: Indian police shoot dead 12 anti-Rushdie demonstrators in Bombay.

**Feb.25**: Iran cancels planned British trade fair in Tehran and a visit to Bonn by an Iranian minister. Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze meets Khomeini and, although he does not raise the issue in that meeting. Moscow later reveals that it was discussed with other Iranian officials.

**Feb.26**: A bomb attack on the British Council library in Karachi kills one Pakistani security guard.

**Feb.27**: About 300 Nigerian Muslims demand death of Nigeria’s nobel laureate Wole Soyinka for his support of
Rushdie. British government rejects Muslim leaders’ request to change law of blasphemy to allow Rushdie to be prosecuted.

**Feb.28**: Iranian parliament votes to break diplomatic ties with Britain if London does not change its stand on the Rushdie affairs within a week.

**March 3**: Anti-Rushdie protests in India and Bangladesh leave at least one person dead and more than 100 injured. Bomb threats are reported at two mosques in Paris, and a Moslem group in France vows to kill the writer.

Though Rushdie claimed in *Good Faith*, in 'Imaginary Homelands' that; 'If the *Satanic Verses* is anything it is a migrant’s eye-view of the world' (T.S.V.p.394). But then where was the need to attack the sacred person of the Prophet and his household, which hurt the sentiments of Muslims all over the world. This indulgence on Rushdie's part is not only gratuitous but mischievous as well. The book thrived on the campaign against it, selling more than a million copies even during Rushdie's days of tribulation.
It was in September 1991 that Rushdie came out of hiding to receive a felicitation for the book *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* from Writers Guild of Great Britain.

The rationale for the book was ‘why all my books were for grown ups?’ So keeping in view his son Zafar to whom the book is dedicated, he wrote the book *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. He completed the book in 1989 after *The Satanic Verses* and after Khomeini’s fatwa (edict). Though his son Zafar was kept in view while writing *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, it was of interest to adult as well as children. The model for the book was the movie *The Wizard of Oz*. It is a book of wonders and fantastic happenings.

Khomeini died but fatwa remained unchanged. In 1994 Rushdie brought out a collection of short stories entitled *East, West*. The stories in section East are set in the sub-continent of India and Pakistan; the stories in section West focus on three great figures of West – Hamlet, The Wizard of OZ and Christopher Columbus. The third section titled East West is devoted to bring East-West together and concentrates on crossings between them.
The East-West crossing takes the form of two inter-racial liaisons, Eliot-Mala and Khan-Lucy, in ‘The Harmony of the Spheres’, a conventional story. Even in Rushdie’s punctuation marks there is a method in madness as Rushdie rationalizes the use of comma in East, West: ‘When I started thinking of calling the stories East, West, the most important part of the title was the comma. Because it seems to me that I am that comma – or at least I live in the comma’. The comma separates yet connects the two worlds.

Magic Realism, the technique, that subsumes Rushdie along with Gunter Grass and Gabriel Marquez is also manifest in the East, West, especially in the story ‘At The Auction of the Ruby Slippers’.

Next book ‘The Moor’s Last Sigh’ took seven years for coming out as it did in 1995. But Rushdie was running for his life from one hideout to another under the scourge of Khomeini’s death sentence through his fatwa (edict). The seeds of the novel were sown when in his undergraduate days Rushdie had visited the Alhambra palace at Granada in Spain. The famous sigh alludes to the sigh of Spain’s (Andalusia’s) last Sultan heaved in 1492 bidding farewell to the Islamic Kingdom
which came to an end by the Christian aggression. Muslim Spain was a fine blend of multiculturalism which is a transferred epithet to India. As Muslims, Jews and Christians rubbed shoulders in harmony in Spain so did the Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Buddhists in India. Hence the reference to Moorish Spain, metaphorically. The locale is not Spain (Andalusia) but 20th century India.

In the opinion of D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, “The Moor's Last Sigh’ is a sequel to Midnight’s Children written from a different perspective. Its main concern is with the phase of history after Midnight’s Children...”.

The character Fielding in the novel stands for Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray. Fielding is one of the founders of Mumbai’s Axis, named after the mother-goddess of Bombay. What ‘Bombay’ stands for, is different from what Mumbai does (The stinging attack on changing the name : Mumbai from Bombay).

Rushdie lampoons Bal Thackeray as Fielding is the fictionalized equivalent of Bal Thackeray, the supremo of Shiv Sena – an aggressive organization named after the army of
Shivaji, a seventeenth century Maratha warrior. Like Bal Thackeray Fielding is a vicious cartoonist with pretensions to being an artist. His signature was a frog, hence his nickname 'mainduck' i.e. frog in Urdu. As Goonetilleke epitomizes the description from the narrative: 'As in real life, the cartoonist raises himself out of lower middle-class obscurity by hiring his thuggish followers as strike-breakers. He builds a political empire by uniting regional and religious (Hindu) nationalism, not averse to strong-arm methods and links with Bombay's underworld. Rushdie's criticism of Fielding is political, not religious. He sees Fielding's cry for Hindu solidarity as a means of securing power'.

Rushdie depicts in 'The Moor's Last Sigh' the teeming, multifariousness of India which was labelled as 'muddle' by E.M.Foster in A Passage to India — something negative. However 'as the title suggests it is an elegy — for lost ideals, for Bombay, for India, for home, and, ultimately, for Rushdie himself'.

Rushdie is still in exile as he is still in the eye of the storm. Before Rushdie James Joyce, Joseph Conrad and T.S.Eliot were in self-exile. But Rushdie's case is different. He
still lives in the shadow of death though the edge of late Khomeini's fatwa is blunted.

Now he lives in the States. His love for writing is unabated. But no significant book came from his pen after 'The Moor's Last Sigh' let alone a book of the stature of Midnight's Children.

In the following chapters we will delve deep into the literary evaluation of Rushdie's fiction with special reference to the first novel Grimus, along with his political book The Jaguar Smile - a Nicaraguan Journey, his tour de force Midnight's Children for which he was acclaimed as a great writer of the stature of Gunter Grass, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Milan Kundera; and Shame, a political satire on Pakistan.
REFERENCES:


5. Ibid.


7. Quoted by Feroza Jassawala from Aside (Madras) April,1982.


44. Ibid.


51. Ibid, p.43.


57. Ibid, p.142.