CHAPTER VII
RUSHDIE’S THE MOOR’S LAST SIGH

I. Introduction: The Moor’s Last Sigh is woven around the Moraes Zogoiby’s reminiscing of his family saga of four generations. He recalls to his mind the rise and fall of his ancestors, parents and his own. His narration covers his family’s association with the national movement, spice trade, public and political affairs and the loss of the pictures of Moraes’s mother pictures. The narrative includes the theme of love, feud, adultery, politics and misadventure etc. In this chapter, The Moor’s Last Sigh is studied as a subversion of the conventional notions of the Image of Mother India, Realist Art and Punishment to Artist. There is sufficient scope to read The Moor’s Last Sigh from the above perspectives with regard to the content. The novel also embodies the features of technique to present itself as a subversion of the conventional narrative form.

II. Subversive themes in the moor’s last sigh: The novel has three subversive themes, namely: (i) the notion of the Image of Ideal Mother India, (ii) the notion of Realistic Art (iii) the notion of Punishment to Artist. A detailed analysis of the narrative is undertaken to find out how these themes are dealt with.

(i) Subversion of the notion the Ideal Mother India Image. The Mother India image is deep-rooted in Indian consciousness. It manifests itself in myths and legends, which have enriched our culture and literature. India is the mother of all things – animate and inanimate, it is a fertile divine land in the lap of which innumerable creatures, includingibre of human beings play, it is a land of mountains and rivers, all of which are worshipped as divine things. Thus, India is the mother of mountains, rivers, forests, all the flora and fauna, besides more than hundred crores of human beings.

The mother image is dominant in Indian mythology. Sakti plays a significant role in the eastern part of this universe. Sakti is dynamism. When she joins Purusha, Purusha becomes active, and sporting and creating. Sakti’s forms are myriad. She manifests her myriad forms in several ways. Parvati is Sakti, Kali is Sakti, Vaishnavi is Sakti. All those are holy forms of mother image.
Every woman in India assumes significance of the holy image of mother India; her virtues are mother India’s virtues, any harm or disgrace done to even an ignorant village woman is the harm and disgrace done to India i.e, Mother India. It is the responsibility of every Indian to safeguard her modesty. So also legendary figures, like Sita, Savitri, Shakuntala, Draupadi symbolize Mother India. It is for Sita’s sake that the battle of Srilanka was fought; for the sake of Draupadi the battle of Mahabharata was fought or i.e, it is to protect the chastity and grace of Mother India that the battles have been fought from time immemorial. The stories of foreign invasions and the freedom struggle speak volumes for the loved devotion of Indians for their Mother land.

With Gandhiji’s entry into the Indian Freedom struggle, the spirit of nationalism and unity overflowed not only among the people but also among the creative writers. The reference to India as mother is suggestive in the works produced during this period. What is important in the rendering of India in all these contexts is that the image of India is rather ideal, positive and affirmative. All these depictions espouse the notion that the Mother India represents virtues such as purity, endurance, faithfulness, kindness, truthfulness, honesty etc.

The Moor’s Last Sigh can be read as a subversion of the notion of the ideal mother India image. At this juncture, M.L. Pandit’s observations are worthwhile to note: “Moor projects her (Aurora) as a kind of Mother India figure”. The author’s ironical scoff at the notion of the Mother India image may be cited to begin with the protagonist’s assertion: “Motherness -- excuse me if I underline the point -- is a big idea in India, may be our biggest: the land as mother, the mother as land, as a firm ground beneath our feet”.

The novel’s subversion of the notion of image of Mother India is discernable in the portrayal of Isabella and Aurora who are mother and daughter respectively. In the comparison between Isabella and Aurora, the subversion comes to light clearly. Though they are mother and daughter, they are opposite to each other in their pursuit of virtue. While the former stands for the conventional image of Mother India, the latter stands for the post-colonial hybrid image of Mother India, adulterated in many respects.
Isabella Souza enters the family of Gamas to the discontent of her other-in-law. She marries a rich heir of Gama's called Camoens DA GAMA. She is at once outspoken and affectionate at the same time. Since the Gamas are surrounded by the spice godowns, the health of the family, particularly that of her husband, is affected. As a dutiful and concerned wife, she resolves to take care of him: "Belle had made him her project. In those days he had begun to sleep badly and, asthmatically, to wheeze. 'It's all that bad air,' she told him. So, so. I must save one da Gama at least".

Elizabeth's strength is seen in her successful endeavour to reconstruct the family business. Her husband and brother-in-law are imprisoned for fifteen years. In June 1925, the da Gama brothers were sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment. Elizabeth is literally left with no fortunes at all. On the other hand, she has daughter, business to be managed. Like brave Indian queens, like Janshi Rani Padmini, Rani Chennamma, Isabella girds up her loins to stand up and fight against all odds: "So it was that belle da Gama, at the age of twenty one, took charge of her jailed husband's fortune; and, though there were many vicissitudes in the following years, husbanded them well".

She sets right the Gama trading Company, and builds up steadily into a strong company. As a first step, she persuades the lawyers of Gama Trading Company to divide it into two as per the will of Francisco DA GAMA, which states that the company properties must be transferred to both his sons. She defends her stand stating that: "If we do not live separately then we will die together". Next, she resolves all the complications concerning the business and she herself holds the reins of the administration. She persistently works for months together to set her business free from all disputes. She goes to the extent of greasing the palm of the officials concerned to achieve her objective. After that, she tactfully refuses to sell her firm. Her involvement in the business was hundred percent, as stated below: "She started dressing in men's trousers, white cotton shirts and Camoens cream fedora. She went to every field, every orchard, every plantation under her control and won back the confidence of the terrified employees, many of whom had bolted for their lives. She found managers whom she could trust and whom the work-force would follow with
respect but without fear. She charmed banks into lending her money, bullied departed clients into returning, and became a mistress of small print.6

Isabella overpowers his enemies who envy her growing prosperity. When her in-laws Aires and Carmen approach her to sell Aire’s half, Isabella does not treat them crudely. Instead, she buys it paying a double premium. She rises to a considerable height without any stain on her dignity and character. Indeed, her mother-in-law approaches her with a lesbian thirst. She at once retaliates her lewd behaviour. She honestly awaits her husband without revealing her sexual recluse. When her husband returns from the jail, she pours all her stored love over him saying: “I think, I hope, that they were wonderful lovers, Belle and Camoens, that his shy gentleness and her voluptuary hunger made a perfect pairing; that, for those so-brief-too-brief three years after Camoens was freed, they satisfied one another, and lay happily in each other’s arms”.7

Isabella is elevated to a greater height in her act of accepting her husband’s suggestion to allow his brother Aires to return to their company. Her humanitarian bent of mind and sympathetic attitude make her a perfect mother. Unfortunately she is infected with tuberculosis and becomes a victim of lung cancer too. At the age of thirty-one, Isabella contracts the lung-cancer and dies.

Isabella may not be accredited perfection. Despite her imperfections, she rises high in estimation for her weakness is legible when compared to her virtues. So the author depicts her in the image of the Mother India in the conventional sense: “But above all, in the very center of the ceiling, at the point where all the horn-of-plenty lines converged, Mother India with Belle’s face. Queen Isabella was the only mother goddess here,”.8

If Isabella resembles the conventional Mother India Image, Aurora tries to subvert such a notion, which is noted by Dr. P. Balaswamy as: “In Aurora (Da Gama) Zogobiy, the flamboyant mother of the Moor, however, Rushdie goes further and supplants the traditional image of the kind, a compassionate, rural, heroic Mother (courtesy Nargis of Mehboob Khan’s movie classic
“Mother India”) with, to put it in his own words, his “own sort of Mother India [...] metropolitan, sophisticated, noisy, angry and different”.9

Aurora’s misconduct before her marriage: Aurora lacks the compassion, kindness and sympathy her mother has had. While Aurora’s mother awaited her husband for fifteen years from his imprisonment, and lived the remaining years with him devotedly and faithfully, Aurora is so impatient and ruthless that she puts her father in-house confinement and treats him like a dog. She fails in her duty as a daughter and behaves with her own father dictatorially as: “Her father paled. ‘Baby, for what?’ The bulldog, snarling, bared his gums. ‘Don’t call me baby’, she answered, defying even him. ‘It is what my mother always wanted to do. You will see: from now I am in her place’.”10

Aurora’s temper towards her grandmother also is proof of her ruthlessness. It is true that her grand mother has been very unkind towards her mother and, to a certain degree, towards her too. Considering her old age and helplessness, Aurora is expected to treat her with tenderness, but she fails in that, and her indifference too towards her in the crucial moment is viewed as a crime: “And on seeing her grandmother still alive, did she then act to save her life? ... If murder can be committed by inaction, then yes. If Epifania had suffered so great a blow that she could not have survived, then no. The point is moot. Did Epifania die? After an hour, her mouth moved one last time; her eyes turned again to her grandchild. Whose ear, placed against dying lips, heard her grandmother’s curse? And the murderess? Or, in fairness: he may be – murderess?”11 Her grandmother could have survived, if Aurora had shown her a little sympathy. In her negligence and indifference, one can clearly notice, she approximates the image of bad mother which is contrary to the conventional image of Mother India. Dr. P. Balaswmay comments on Aurora’s behaviour rightly as follows: “Isabella’s only child Aurora also harbours a deep hatred and ill will towards her grandmother. Her reactions to Epifania’s last, dying moments on the chapel floor on the Christmas eve of 1938 are so cold and calculated that they would have horrified any other family member present there...that shows Aurora to be some kind of demoness”.12 Thus The Moor’s Last
Sigh subverts the image of the ideal Mother India in the depiction of Aurora's temper towards her own grandmother and father.

Aurora's conduct with her lover before marriage is contrary to that of her mother. Though Isabella has also loved Camoens before marriage, her conduct is characterized by self-control, discipline and dignity. But Aurora does not only indulge in lovemaking but also initiates and forces her lover Abraham into fornication: "In the perfumed half-light of C-50 Godown No. 1, Aurora da Gama grabbed Abraham Zogoiby by the chin and looked deep into his eyes... She led the manager into the murky depths of the godown, and why, motioning him to follow, she climbed a long and bouncy ladder to the highest level of the most remote stacks... Way up there near the roof the Godown No. I, Aurora da Gama at the age of fifteen lay, back on peper sacks, breathed in the hot spice-laden air, and waited for Abraham". Aurora's voluptuous nature is contrary to her mother's virtuous nature. Isabella's love for Camoens is coupled with earnestness and dignity. This self-control is persistent in Isabella even during separation from her husband during his imprisonment of fifteen years, whereas Aurora is impatient and lacks self-control and degenerates into a shameless slut.

With regard to her marriage with Abraham, her behaviour is dictatorial. She insists that her groom should become a Christian which is contrary to the practice in the Indian tradition in which it is the bride who embraces the religion of her groom in the case of inter-caste marriages. Dr. P. Balaswamy says that: "In true Shylock fashion she demands that he become a Christian in order to marry her. Aurora is thus 'a shameless hussy,' as her grandmother would put it, in going through stormy marriage with a scandal to boot at every stage-in stark contrast to the soft, demure bride of tradition who marries a man even without looking at his face". The 'shameless hussy' Aurora is characterized by animal passion, arrogance, impatience, ruthlessness and shamelessness. Dr. Balaswamy succinctly comments on her character thus: "Aurora Da Gama, from her girlhood' proves herself to be a ruthless, exploitative, calculative and even cruel female".
Post-Married Life of Aurora: Even after marriage, Aurora continues her clandestine activities. Unfortunately, the ships do not return which causes the tables of Aurora’s business to turn. So Abraham seeks the help of his mother to borrow some money. She lends the jewels but tells him to give her in return the first male child born to them. But Aurora roars: ‘Tell your mother’, that there will be no children born in this house while she remains alive.’ She moved him out of her bedroom”.16 She does not permit Abraham to touch her, until the demise of her mother-in-law. She becomes very popular as an artist during this time and leads lecherous life in Bombay. She is suspected to be having an illicit liaison with Jawaharlal Nehru: “So it was in his absence, away from his lamed, hangdog expression of unbearable longing, that Aurora zogoiby grew into the giant public figure we all know, the great beauty at the heart of the nationalist movement, the loose-haired bohemian marching boldly alongside Vallabhai Patel and Abdul Kalam Azad when they took processions, the confidante – and, according to persistent rumors, mistress- of Pandit Nehru”.17

Aurora is guilty of double offence. She betrays her husband and becomes the image of a nationalist of high stature by her extra marital relationship with a nationalist. It also indicates the tendency of the novel to allegorize India through the characterization Aurora. In Midnight’s Children, Jawaharlal is projected as the father of India. By depicting Aurora as a mistress of Jawaharlal Nehru in this work, Aurora degraded to the tarnished image of the Mother India. Catherine Cundy’s comment on this point is worth noting: “Rushdie goes further by interpolating the myth-life of the zoogamy into the myth-life of the nation, with rumors that Aurora is Nehru’s mistress and is loathed by Indira”.18

But the depiction of Aurora as Mother India is not in accordance with the traditional notion. In the portrait of Aurora as a mistress of Jawaharlal Nehru who is regarded as the father of India, the image of Mother India, tarred as it is with the blackest brush, is degraded beyond one’s imagination. In other words, in The Moor’s Last Sigh, the intention of the author to subvert the notion of the conventional image of the Mother India through the characterization of Aurora as a mistress of Jawaharlal Nehru is very clear.

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Aurora’s extramarital relationship does not end up with Nehru only. She carries on her illicit love affair with a few more persons like Lambajan Chandiwala, Raman Fielding and Moor. Aurora happens to drive to the naval base when the Naval Strike Committee is about to call off their proposed strike. When she drives in the reverse gear, she causes an accident in which a Sailor’s leg is cut. His name is Lambajan Chandiwala. He is treated and a steal leg is fixed in the place of his broken leg. Consequently, he is appointed as the watchman in her house in Bombay. With the passage of time, the same lame Lambajan develops love for his landlady: “She had ruined his life, but she saved him from the worst, gutter-dwelling, begging-bowl consequences of that ruination. As a result, he fell in love with her, and the fabulous elephant tales he told were his way of expressing his love, which was impossible dog-devoted love of a slave for his queen”.19

After Lambajan, Vasco Miranda enters Aurora’s life as an artist friend. He seeks to meet Aurora in 1947 but is not admitted by the gate man Lambajan into the house of Aurora. He is manhandled and even driven away by Lambajan. He does not give up his efforts of contacting Aurora. He writes a letter introducing himself as a soul mate of Aurora, and thereby gains entry into Aurora’s house. On the very second day, he is brought before Aurora and he instantly falls in love with her, which is narrated with a pinch of humour as: “He fell in love with her before she had spoken, fell for her as he had meant never to fall for any woman, and in his falling set in motion a great deal of what would follow. As a spurned lover, he became a darker man”.20 The use of magic realism is very cleverly incorporated here in order to depict the glamour of Aurora.

He is provided with shelter and a job in Aurora’s studio. He paints the walls with nursery sketches. Then Abraham commissions him to paint a portrait of his wife while she is pregnant. When the portrait is unveiled, Abraham is startled to find no sign of Aurora being pregnant. On the contrary Aurora is sketched voluptuously with her bosom being exposed from one side: “Vasco had depicted my mother sitting cross-legged on a giant lizard under her chart cradling empty air. Her full left breast, weighty with motherhood was
exposed”, Vasco painted her pornographically despite being asked to depict her elegantly showing the signs of her pregnancy. Aurora did not pose to him bare bosomed. Vasco's hidden deep love for Aurora is reflected in his depiction of her. Consequently, he is driven away from the house by Abraham.

Vasco leaves for Spain with the stolen paintings of Aurora from the house of a businessman. He preserves them and commissions a Japanese lady to remove the upper layer of his own painting in order to regain the effect of his depiction of Aurora. From these acts of Vasco, what is evident is his deep passion for Aurora.

One more evidence of Aurora's extramarital affair is found in her relationship with Raman Fielding, who is a cartoon artist turned politician. He is associated with cricket and thereby he is ironically called Main duck also i.e., the duck walk in cricket. He rises as a powerful politician with the Hindu ideology in Bombay under the banner called Mumbai's Axis abbreviated as M.A. Uma Saraswathi informs the Moor that his mother has had an affair with Raman Fielding also and the Moor himself seems to admit it later as: “Her genius and grandeur and there were a few Bombay males who would have dared to woo her. That explained Main duck. . . then she, Aurora the great, would gain her revenge by surrendering her body to Fielding's pawing and thrusting eyes; yes, I could see how that would arouse her, how it might unleash her own wildness. May be Uma was right: may be my mother was Main duck's whore”.22

Aurora's relationship with Jawaharlal Nehru has not remained as a mistress only. It is speculated that she conceived through her relation with him and she gives birth to a son exactly after having stayed with him. It means that Jawahar is responsible for her pregnancy. The Moor suspects Mr. Nehru to be his father — " in my musings on Abraham’s decision to journey south when Aurora headed north for her last meeting with Mr. Nehru and the scandal of Lotus, I suspected my father of playing the complaisant spouse".23 There is a clear hint that the Moor is born to Jawaharlal Nehru. Dr. Balaswamy's observation endorses this very point:

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Her love for Abraham evaporates after a few years' of conjugal life, especially when she learns that Abraham has started fooling around with girls during her absences. She pays him back in his own coin-by launching her own extra-marital affairs: one of them, the moor audaciously reports, is with the first Prime Minister of India- Jawaharlal Nehru. In fact, the boy Moraes as strongly suspects that Nehru might have sired him.\textsuperscript{24}

The depiction of Aurora as a mistress, bearing a child of Jawaharlal Nehru amounting to a severe adultery, is a sly comment on Aurora as a mother figure which is not in harmony with the Indian tradition at all. Hence The Moor's Last Sigh may be regarded as a burlesque of the notion of conventional Mother India Image.

The most striking element of contradiction in the image of Aurora as mother India is the assimilation of the Oedipus complex between Arora and her son the Moor. Uma Saraswati reveals that Aurora has loved the Moor not as a son but as a man. When examined from the birth of Moraes, one tends to feel that such an assumption is not dismissible.

Moraes is the fourth and last son of Aurora. She has not breast fed her first three children at all. But she does so Moraes with a new passion, which has never been found in her before. And in her painting series, she has depicted her own portrait to be breast feeding Moraes as: “She suckled me, and the first ‘Moor’ pictures were done while I nestled at her breasts. ... Aurora and I posed somewhat blasphemously, as a godless Madona and child”.\textsuperscript{25}

In the next sequences, they have posed as father and daughter suggesting Electra complex, Othello and Desdemona with caption of a sketch reading “To Die upon a Kiss” etc. In this series of paintings, the son and the mother do not appear as they are but like man and woman. For another picture, he is asked to pose nude. A rational mother is never likely to behave like this at all. Aurora, being modern, metropolitan, is doubted to be obsessed with mother fixation. Dr. P. Balaswamy rightly notes that:

The fact that the Moor is “the only child she suckled at her breast” has Freudian implications, Overtly and covertly scattered
throughout the novel, and also in the movie Mother India, as well as in the lives of its stars. Fascinating and intricate weaving of the elements of real and imaginary lives—both on screen and off and in the novel—has been handled in a masterly manner by Rushdie. That Nargis (who played the role of the mother in Mother India) married Sunil Dutt (who played the bad son's role) in real life is everybody's knowledge; but transforming this Oedipal element into the celluloid story, by finding a couple of apt reference in the naming process in the movie, has been a masterly stroke of Rushdie's. . . . The daring Aurora seems to express a hidden longing for how handsome, hefty son Morass.(...) This Oedipal element has been dormant in her probably from the days she suckled her only son. One way of sublimating her original sexual impulse is seen in her artistic endeavors, which result in the famous Moor paintings".26

Aurora, who is projected as a mother figure in the beginning is depicted as a ruthless grand daughter with her grandmother, as arrogant daughter with her father, uncle, and as a saucy daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law, as a seductive deceptive impure and immoral adulterate wife with her husband and as a supercilious mother with her son. Such a depiction amounts to subvert the notion of conventional Mother India image. Dr. P. Balaswamy comments on this aspect of Aurora very aptly: "One aspect of the conventional bird/wife, celebrated in literature and movies, is her steadfast love, devotion and fidelity to her husband. The heroine of Mother India demonstrates this in a admirably skilful manner. . . . "Bitchy, cosmopolitan, westernized" Aurora Zogoiby is the Moor's concept of a metropolitan Mother India".27

Mother image in Aurora As An Artist: Aurora's art series is treated as a reflection and representation of the vast changes that are taking place in India. India is for the first time confronted with violence from multiple directions and with an unusual change in the cultural experiences. India is the mother land of Mahatma Gandhiji who is said to have won freedom for India through non-violence. His preaching of non-violence and religious tolerance is at stake now.
The Muslims generate violence from the underground and the Hindu counter 
parts inflict terror through communal violence and through destroying the 
Muslim Mosques such as the Babari Masjid. In both cases hooliganism is 
rampant.

In national politics, assassination of the top leaders speaks volumes for 
violence. Mrs. Indira Gandhi is gunned down by her own security guard. Rajiv 
Gandhi is assassinated in his motherland by foreign terrorists. This is an open 
assault on the notion of India as a single nation.

Aurora as an artist does not abide by the traditional doctrine of realistic 
art, which her husband advocates. On the other hand, her art series is full of 
provocation, controversies and subversion. Her artistic consciousness is 
moulded by changes that occur in the country and her sensibility is typical of 
the new extravagant, fashionable and seductive generation. As a representative 
artist of cosmopolitan and urban Bombay, she is regarded as an ultra modern 
mother figure. But she is not the mother figure of traditionalist's imagination. In 
this regard, Cundy observes: "The text's own alter native Bharat Mata is the 
Moors's mother, the artist Aurora Zogoiby, with her paintings which serve as 
allegories of the changing face of India".

If the paintings of Aurora are regarded as an allegory of the changing 
face of India, her image emerges as a mother of post-modernist paintings. She is 
not at all symbol of the conventional mother figure, which represents solidarity. 
By depicting Aurora as an ultra modern Bharat Mata, The Moor's Last Sigh 
subverts the ancient holy image of Bharat Mata.

The narrative is critique of the received notion of Mother India image. It 
tries to unfold the constructedness of this age-old image in the portrayal of 
several women characters in general and Aurora in particular. The mother-in-
-law of Isabella - Epifania, the mother of Abraham Zogoiby, Camen Lobo are 
the women who possess envy, hatred and intolerance. Aurora and Uma 
Saraswati are the women who are immoral. Isabella alone remains faithful and 
moral. In depicting most of the women as latent with one sin or the other, the 
narrative grapples with the prevalent notion of woman in general and that of 
mother in particular.
The Moor's Last Sigh as a subversion of the notion of Realistic Art: According to Kortenaar, The Moor's Last Sigh is more concerned with love and art than with the nation.²⁹ Though The Moor's Last Sigh is concerned with art, the obvious questions that are to be answered are what sort of art is it and what components and characteristic features determine it. The answers to these questions reveal that The Moor's Last Sigh is a subversion of the notion of realistic art.

The Moor's Last Sigh dwells upon the theme of 'painting' belonging to the category of fine arts. The art of painting is associated with the characterization of Aurora, Vasco Miranda, Uma, Zeenath, Raman Fielding, and Aoi, etc. The nucleus among these is Aurora who is the woman protagonist in the novel. Before the examination of these characters a brief note on the traditional notion of art becomes prerequisite.

The birth of art in Europe is ascribed to Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo of the Italian renaissance in Europe. Both of them are Florentine artists. Leonardo da Vinci is remembered best for his spirit which has been reflected in his artistic endeavours. He has tried his hand at multiple forms of art. His sensibility is characterized by perception through eyes. For him eyes were the main channels of knowledge. According to the New Encyclopaedia Britannica: “... to Leonardo, sight was man's highest sense organ because sight alone conveyed the facts of experience immediately, correctly and with certainty. Hence, every phenomenon perceived became an object of knowledge”.³⁰

His paintings range from common matters to theology. Some of them are the portraits of Cecilia Gallerni and a Musician, an altar painting of "the Virgin of the Rocks, a monumental wall painting of the Last Supper" in the refectory of monestary of Sita, Maria delle Grazie, and the decorative ceiling painting of the Sata delle Asse in the Milan Castello Storzesco. There are three more, which are either lost or not completed. They are Nativity, Madonna and the portrait of Lucrezia Crivelli. The world famous painting of Moan Lisa was his own master creation. He has also attempted the theories of Art. His 'Science of Painting' and Treatise on Painting and Drawing. These treatises are well known.
monuments in the history of art. Michelangelo Buonarroti was considered the
greatest living artist in his lifetime. According to the New Encyclopedia
Britannica: “A number of his works in painting, sculpture and architecture rank
among the most famous in existence”. The names of these artists and their
paintings are mentioned in The Moor's Last Sigh, with a view to tracing the
evolution of art.

Aurora's career as a painter commences very ironically. She orders his
uncle to lock the dog up in a room, but she is herself found in the lock up.
During these days, Aurora has decorated the walls, ceiling, and floor with
sketches just with the help of charcoal, brushes and paints. She has dealt with
various subjects in her sketches, like history, politics, geography, religion etc.
What is striking about her talent is her depicting the unseen and non-existing:
“Camoens began to pick out family portraits only of the dead and living but
even of the never -born-of, for example, her unborn siblings group gravely
around her dead mother beside a grand piano”.32

In this one can notice Aurora's attempt at subverting the doctrine of
Leonardo de Vinci to whom 'sight' is the main source of artistic creativity.
Aurora has depicted this without having ever seen the objects that are found in
her pictures. There is an outright subversion of Vinci's in the recast of 'Last
Supper' in her own way as:

He was startled to find an image of Aires da Gama stark naked in
a dock yard, light glowing from him while dark shapes closed in
all around, and shaken by the parody of the Last Supper in which
the family servants caroused widely at the dining-table while their
ruggedly ancestors stared down from the portraits on the wall and
the da Gama served as waiters, bringing food and pouring wine
and being treated badly, Carmen having her bottom pinched,
Epifania's rump being kicked by a drunken gardener,” . . . She
was suggesting that privacy of Carbal Island was an illusion.33

Aurora’s career as a painter at the beginning itself is marked with
subversive ness, because de Vinci’s ‘Last Supper’ is an attribute of spirituality.
The Last Supper is a painting that deals with the theme [of the guilty
consciousness of the forecast of the betrayal of one of twelve disciples of Christ who dines with Christ as related in the New Testament. But Aurora’s Last supper deals with her family’s hidden reality. Thus at the outset itself one can notice the subversive tendency of The Moor’s Last Sigh towards the notion of realist art. Viney Kirpal’s in her critical note states:

Magic Realism or the epic-fabulist manner or the mythic-romantic mode to which she had turned obsessively since she was thirteen had freed her as an artist. She could mix history, family politics, fantasy with “the great crowds an V.T or Churchgate stations” without having to visit them in actuality ... Since Magic Realism allows an artist to fuse ordinary day events with the fantastic or the dreamlike elements, it gave Aurora ample scope to represent India - her favourite theme - as cosmopolitan and multicultural rather limit herself to a realistic representation of India as Hindu nationalist.34

With the passage of time, as Kortnaar observes: “Aurora becomes “India’s greatest living painter”.35 This compliment echoes the reputation of Michelangelo. But a detailed examination of her painting will prove that Aurora is a parody of Leonardo de Vinci and Michelangelo. Aurora’s painting entitled ‘The Scandal’ stands a world apart from the traditional painting. This is displayed along with Ravi Verma’s Woman Holding a Fruit, Gaganendra Nath Tagore’s spooky Water-colour ‘Jadoogar’ (Magician), Amrita Sher-Gil’s ‘Ancient story Teller’ in the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi. Except Aurora’s painting, all other paintings come under traditional art. Ravi Verma’s painting, though it exemplifies sensuousness and voluptuousness resembles the portrait of Mona Lisa with a single projection. Gaganendra Nath Tagore’s Jadoogar exemplifies a monochrome Indian version; it is also in the traditional mould.

But Aurora’s picture is a narrative painting. It is ‘a dance of tongues’. But the mode is that of the postmodern collage. The figures are drawn in the form of tongues and amalgamation of various species as:

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The dance is not of bodies but of tongues, and all the tongues of the highly coloured figures whispering lick-lick-lick into one another's ears are black, black, black. I will not speak here of the pictures painterly qualities, but simply point out some of its thousand-one- anecdotes, for as we know. Aurora had learned much from the narrative-painting traditions of the South: see, here is, the repeated and cryptic figure of ginger-coloured, seating priest with the head of a dog, and we can agree, I hope, that this is, in many ways, the figure which orchestrates the action of the painting.\textsuperscript{36}

This approach to the definition of post-modernism as elucidated by Jim Powell: "The montage might feature a female dancer with an East Indian head, a male Navaho left leg, the right leg of an Afro-American modern dancer, a torso half-covered by a suit and tie."\textsuperscript{37}

Aurora's series of art entitled The Moor's sequences or The Moor's Last Sigh represents multiple layers of subversion. Firstly, her painting is based on palimpsest-art. It is not original. Aurora has learnt this art form from Vasco Miranda. It is important to note that the palimpsest-art, which consists of several arts one upon another, is inherently subversive for it is contrary to the traditional art which is only one. The latter represents originality. The paintings of Vinci, Michaelangelo, Raphael, and Tagore belong to this type. But Aurora's painting is art upon another art. The art frame contains several paintings in palimpsest. Regarding the employment of the palimpsest-art form by Aurora, Viney Kirpal rightly remarks: "Painted in her characteristic, ancient epic fabulist style it merges the departure of the Sultan Boabdil (from Granada) with the expulsion of Moreas from the zogoiby home. Thus she keeps alive her ideal of a hybrid paler that she had invented to make her statement as an artist."\textsuperscript{38}

In Addison, Aurora's art amounts to be subversive in respect of posers. Aurora paints a picture series depicting herself and her son using themselves as models. A keen observation shows that they are obsessed with the Oedipus complex. The palimpsest art is subversive of the notion of originality in the
creation of arts. All arts are imitative, palimpsest art is in contrast to the realist art, because the latter claims that art is original.

Aurora’s art historicizes her family. She has painted the family history of the da Gammas of Cochin, Lobos, Menezes, the Catholics, the Anglicans, the Jews etc. In this spiral of a scene, animal figures are blended with the human figures: “the Menezes people all have serpents’ heads and tails and the Lobos, of course, are wolves. But in the background are the streets and waterways of Cochin, and they teem with scandalized congregations: fish-Catholics, dog Anglicans, and the Jews all painted Delphi blue, like figures in Chinese tiles”.

One can observe the liberty Aurora enjoys through anthropomorphism in her paintings. The device of ascribing human body to animals and vice-versa is a surrealistic form of art. Since Aurora has incorporated her family into her themes, her art has been criticized as: “Reduced (art) to mere gossip”. There is advancement in The Moor’s Last Sigh because art has been reduced to gossip.

Aurora’s art is polemical also. There are two levels of controversy in the paintings of Aurora. The first is with regard to the depiction of certain well-known figures in her son and herself. It is not only pornographic in appeal but also contains an element of the Oedipus complex.

In the first of the series of Moor pictures, Aurora and her son Moraes pose for the depiction. It becomes not only blasphemous, but also subversive of Leonardo da Vinci. In the first place, the mother-son posing does not suit the traditional art. Secondly, Vinci’s ‘Madonna Benois’ is a painting which is the depiction of the child Jesus reaching for the flower in Mary’s hand in a sweet and tender manner. It is also an old traditional picture, which Vinci has succeeded in transforming into a new one. But Aurora’s imitation of the same is a subversive statement of the ancient painting, for the Moor says:

She suckled me, and the first ‘Moor’ pictures were done while I nestled at her breast: charcoal sketches, watercolours, pastes and finally a large work in oils. Aurora and I posed, somewhat blasphemously, as a godless madona and child . . . It showed the
truth about Aurora, her capacity for profound and selfless passion as well as her habit of self-aggrandizement; it revealed the magnificence, the grandeur of her loving-out with the world, and her determination to transcend and redeem its imperfections through art.41

Moraes’s addressing his mother by her name suggests irreverence towards his mother which is a violation of the sacred mother – son relationship.

In the later pictures in the same series, there are elements of the Oedipus complex. The picture’s title ‘courtship’ itself is subversive because Aurora and her son have posed for the picture. It tends to project a courtship between a mother and a son: “In one picture- Courtship I was Moor-as-Peacock, spreading my many-eyed tail, she painted her own head on top of a dowdy pea-hen’s body”.42 To paint a picture of the courtship of two birds with the images of the mother and the son is a play of wild imagination and is contrary to the traditional art form.

The consequent pictures also deal with a similar theme. The mother and the son are assimilated in the depiction of Eleanor Marx and Karl Marx under the title Moor and Tussy, Desdemona and Othello under the title of To Die upon a kiss. These pictures, as the author himself admitted, are characterized by ‘high-voltage eroticism’. But Aurora, in a typical post-modernist fashion regards the art form as “panto pictures intended for the household private entertainment”. This series is humorously acknowledged as not Authorized Version but Auorised Version”.43 In this series, the art as a personalized version is contrary to the traditional and realist art form, because the latter is marked by objectivity rather than subjectivity.

Aurora’s other polemic picture is found in her picture on cricket. Aurora, being a lover of cricket, happens to watch a cricket match between India and Australia. When Abbas Ali Baig reaches a half-century in the second innings, a pretty young woman runs to him and kisses him. Aurora at once depicts this scene in her painting with R.K. Laxman, politicians, scientists and industrialists etc as watching. Kekoo Mody displays this picture in the national press.
This picture, in addition to having various implications, raises a political controversy. This has been projected as an assault on the Hindus by the Muslims. Raman Fielding, a Hindu activist and politician gives a communal turn to the cricketers there: “Fielding- already better know, after the form, as Main duck vilely and falsely accused the honorable and richly gifted Being of having deliberately thrown away his wicket against Pakistan because he was a Muslim. And this is the fellow who has the nerve to kiss our patriotic Hindu girls,’ mustered the spotted frog in the corner”.44 And again. “In his bizarre conception of cricket as a fundamentally communalist game, essentially Hindu but with its Hindu-ness constantly under threat from the counters’ other, tread heroes communities, lay the political philosophy and of ‘Mumbai’s Axis itself”.45

Aurora’s art form includes personal life, history, drama, politics and sports etc. It is also an amalgamation of fact, fiction, sex, interaction etc. With these multiple layers, it amounts not only to an art of collage but also to ‘Masala Art.’ By espousing the form of Masala art, The Moor’s Last Sigh becomes certainly a subversion of the notion of traditional art.

The Moor’s Last Sigh subverts the notion of traditional and realist art through the depiction of Vasco Miranda also. In the very self-introduction, his image as an artist is expressed as being contrary to that of a traditional one as:

“In the letter he announced himself as Aurora’s unsuspected soul-mate. Southern stars; both ‘anti-Christians,’ both exponents of an Epico-Tragico-Comic o-Super-Sex-High -Masala-Art”.46

Vasco Miranda starts his career in the house of Aurora as a ‘House painter’. He is commissioned to paint Cartoons for decoration in her nursery. Aurora asks him to recall scenes like the mouse, the duck, the cat, the bird, the funny scenes and others that are common in the films, and the cartoon serves as a model for his painting in her nursery. She tells him not to “mind about harps and angels, forget all those stinking gardens; for my kiddies, this is the Paradise I want”.47 It shows that both Aurora and Vasco Miranda are in favour of postmodernist art form. Their artistic sensibility is characterized by the spirit of revolt as well as by an inclination to reject the traditional art.
In another instance, there is the exposition of not only of Vasco Miranda's post modernist art form but also his own critique of art form. Aurora's husband Abraham asks him to depict a portrait of his wife as being pregnant with a child in her arm. Vasco Miranda fails not only to abide by his master's word but also to be faithful to the model before him. He sketches her through his intuition. As a result, the portrait is depicted voluptuously. Instead of making a sketch of Aurora as being pregnant with a baby in her arm, Vasco paints only Aurora as being cross-legged on a giant lizard under chatter with her left breast fully exposed. To the dismay of Abraham, Vasco has ignored Ina - the baby in Aurora's arm. He has not painted the child at all. When Abraham demands an explanation, his reply appears as a discourse on the painting: "'Genius is no rich man's slave, he alerted. 'A canvas is not a mirror to reflect goo-goo smile' I have seen what I have seen: a presence, and an absence. Fullness, and emptiness. You wanted a double portrait? Behold, He who hath eyes to see, let him see'". 48

The above is an example of the subversive art form. Vasco has overlooked the instruction of Abraham and drawn the portrait of Aurora, as he has perceived her through his imaginative eyes. He seems to uphold that art cannot be made to order. In addition, he also rejects the notion that art is a mirror held up to life. On the contrary, his words suggest that art is the mirror held up to the imaginative creation of the artist. This echoes one of the definitions of post-modernism that it contests the realist notion of representation in art.

Vasco Miranda is indeed the first painter of the picture series called 'The Moor's Last Sigh'. Later Aurora also follows suit. Vasco also claims that the palimpsest art is his innovation and Aurora has imitated it for her art series. In addition, Vasco is depicted as a thief of pictures for he steals the portraits of Aurora from the house of Bhaba and flees to Spain. In his attempt to get the surface layer removed from the sketches of Aurora, all the portraits are destroyed. Here one can notice the subversion of art as immortal and permanent. In suggesting that no art is permanent and immortal, The Moor's Last Sigh tends to subvert the traditional notion of art that art is immortal.

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Uma Saraswati's art form is contrary to Aurora's and Vasco Miranda's. She is a rival to Aurora in their private life. M.L. Pandit describes her: "Uma Saraswati, the art student from Baroda, has some role to play in shaping the destiny of Moor during his last days in Bombay". Uma is used as a device to represent the traditional art as against the art of Aurora and also to incorporate various art forms. She is rather a sculptor than a painter suggesting the image of Michelangelo who was also more known for his sculpture than for painting. Uma's painting represents the traditional art form supported by the Hindu ideology for it is said:

The work of the young Sculptor Uma Saraswati was receiving its first Bombay showing. The center piece of the show was a group of seven roughly spherical, meter-high stone pieces with a small hollow scooped out at the top and filled with richly coloured powders—scarlet, ultramarine, saffron, emerald, purple, orange, gold... The critics who mauled Aurora zogoiby hailed Uma as Indian art's new star, young, beautiful, and driven by her religious faith.

In the description of Uma's art, one can clearly observe its overt allegiance with Hinduism. Uma also admits that she supports Hinduism as an artist and says: "You must see that just as you are from a tiny minority so I am a child of the gigantic Hindu nation, and as an artist I must reckon with the same. I must make my own encounter with origins, my own accommodations with eternal verities".

Besides introducing the concepts of art such as religious art and multi-dimensional art, The Moor's Last Sigh also has a dig at the process of communalization of art. The notion of art generally goes beyond caste, colour, creed and race. In any case Uma's art by being communal and contrary to the secular art form of Aurora indicates the tendency of the novel to subvert the practice of confining to a particular caste or creed.

Raman Fielding is also an artist turned politician. His art form is 'cartooning'. Cartooning is nothing but parodying, and parody is one of the devices of the post-modernist art. His perspective of art is more important than
his own art form, because there is little about his art in the narrative. He is pleading for the type of art that amounts to communalization and colonization of art. His attempt to treat religion and art in the same manner serves as a double-edged satire as it mauls the notion of fundamentalism and the notion of universality in art. He declares openly: "I myself was an artist originally. Therefore I say with some authority that art and beauty must serve national interest also". This sort of proposition to curtail the free flow of art amounts to turning the principles of aesthetics turtle.

*The Moor's Last Sigh* is woven around the theme of subversion of the traditional notion of art as representation of reality, as a symbol of solidarity, unique and immortal. Aurora's art eschews all these conventional characteristics of art. Her art is a collage made up of various subjects like history, politics, family, sports etc. Her friend Vasco Miranda also later ventures into commercial art as well. Uma Saraswati and Raman Fielding transform art into religious fundamentalism. Thus all the artists in the novel subvert the notion of art as a simple, pure and sacred imaginative representation.

(iii) *The Moor's Last Sigh* as a subversion of punishment: Salman Rushdie is one of the few creative writers who have been subjected to severe punishment for the exercise of poetic license. The students of English literature can never forget the depiction of the character of the fool in *King Lear* with the unrestricted freedom and privilege even to make fun of the king himself. But Rushdie's three novels prior to *The Moor's Last Sigh* fell prey to the fury of religious and political fundamentalists.

As a result, he evolved the theme of the revolt against such punishing by pleading for the writers' freedom in *The Moor's Last Sigh* only to be banned again in India. At this juncture it is worthwhile to note the observation Pandit makes: Salman Rushdie is a writer who thrives on controversy. First, it was with *Midnight's Children*, which narrowly escaped being banned in India by the Indira Gandhi government, in 1983. Second, it was the turn of *Shame*, which was assailed in Pakistan. Next, it was *The Satinic*
Verses, which was first condemned and then banned in India under the Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi. The great irony was that not many people, who bitterly attacked the book, had actually read it. And, now it is happening to Rushdie’s latest novel, The Moor’s Last Sigh, which was initially banned in parts of India without legitimate reason for such an outrage.53

A suit was filed against Rushdie for his alleged reference in Midnight’s Children that Feroze Gandhi’s demise was quickened by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Consequently, those references were removed from the novel. But it has become a an event not only in literary history but also in human history that Midnight’s Children has won so much international acclaim for Salman Rushdie that he first came to the attention of the word’s literary community with Midnight’s Children, “a big, brilliant novel of modern India”.54 That work won him England’s Booker Prize” in 1981, and in 1992 it was named the “Booker of Bookers” the best novel of the prize’s twenty-five year history.

His Shame has suffered from the even more severe attack by the Pakistani polite bureau for the alleged references to the Pakistani Presidents and depiction of Pakistan as a god-forsaken land. His Satanic Verses has been banned and guillotine has been passed to the author in the form of fatwa. Though Ayatolla Khomeni passed death punishment for the author’s alleged character assassination of the Prophet Mouhammad in The Satanic Verses, and declared three million dollars for the head of Rushdie, he has not ceased to write. It is for this bravery and rationality, he has recently been selected as one of the best intellectuals in the world. It is reported in Deccan Herald on Oct. 4, 2004 that he is one among the world’s leading 100 contemporary public intellectuals. He has managed to come out with yet another brilliant book ‘The Moor’s Last Sigh’ in which he contests the very notion of fatwa or death punishment to the creative artists for their free representations of men and matters in their creations. The notion of the punishment to the literary artists reminds one of the dictatorial attitudes that existed in Germany and in China. Indeed, Thomas Gray has dwelt upon the massacre of the native poets at the
advent of Edward II and the rebirth of poets later during the reign of Queen Elizabeth as a major theme in his famous ode *The Bard*. It suggests that it is foolish to think that art will be destroyed forever for punishing the artists. In other words, *The Moor's Last Sigh*‘s subversion of punishment to the artist is displayed in pleading for the freedom of artistic expression.

Moraes, who is known more as ‘the Moor,’ is the author—narrator in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* and represents a creative writer. He may very well be regarded as the alter ego of Salman Rushdie himself. When the Moor arrives in Spain to reclaim the lost pictures of his mother from the once artist friend and lover of his mother Vasco Miranda, he is made captive of Vasco Miranda. He is made a house prisoner in Vasco Miranda’s house and is supplied with the pen and papers to write down his whole family story. He is sentenced to death either on the day he stops writing or on the day the story itself comes to an end. This is as good as Ayatolla’s passing Fatwa to Rushdie.

In addition to the Moor, Vasco Miranda has conspired and made another Japanese woman ‘Aoi’ a captive. She has been ordered to peel off the surface layer of the Aurora’s painting with the technological tools like X-ray. She is also under death threat.

When the Moor is captured a captive, his growth corresponds to seventy-two years of age as though he is really thirty-six only. One of the implications of the title ‘*The Moor’s Last sigh*’ is that the Moor endeavors to narrate the story at a stretch before he breathes his last. Since the Moor is under the death punishment, he delays to complete the narration as much as he can. In this regard what is stated in *A Companion to the Indian Fiction in English* is worthy of our attention: “Morais Zogoiby, called the "Moor," tells the story of four generations of his family line as he sits in a prison tower in Andalusia. Forced to write the story by his captor, Vasco Miranda, a painter and former lover of the Moor’s mother, he makes the story as long and convoluted as possible in order to delay his death.”

Between the two needles of the compass, the author narrator has accommodated multiple aspects of the life in India. In the narrative of the Moor’s family, the business, the national movement, hybrid marriages,
underworld dealings and association with art are brought out suggestively, and elaborated according to the requirement. In the narrative of the political scenario of India, the decadence of nationalism, hooliganism, criminalization, immorality, etc. are also included. Communalism is very skillfully assimilated and thereby an attempt is made to ridicule the notion of democracy. Film industry, modelling and beauty contests, the spiritual and social activities are all mixed in the novel. The whole novel is summed up in a few words subtly by Dr. Gregary as follows: "As the Moor unfolds his tale, we witness a reeling pageant of mad passions and dark secrets, deep crimes and high art, poignant innocence and cruel revenge, all descending through four generations of spice traders, artists, aristocrats and revolutionaries". 56

It seems the author never bothered about the consequences of the treatment of certain controversial matters. The first controversy occurs in the naming of a dog. A dog is named Jawaharlal. It certainly creates a doubt as to whether the name is that of the former Prime Minister. Again Aurora is depicted as a mistress of Jawaharlal Nehru during the pre independence and the wife of the last Viceroy of India, Edwina Mount Batan, is depicted as a mistress of Jawaharlal Nehru. His obsession with criticizing Mrs. Gandhi has continued in this novel also. In this novel he goes to the extent of depicting Mrs. Indira and Sanjay Gandhi as being obsessed with the Oedipus complex. There is a resemblance of Siva Sena Supremo Bal Thakray in the characterization of Raman Fielding. The depiction of the alleged affair between Raman Fielding and Aurora is an assault on Bal Thakray, if one sees Thakray in the portrait of Raman Fielding. Raman Fielding’s horse-trading in the local elections, his influence on the government officials and machinery are examples of the author’s assertion of freedom. The character of Uma Saraswati has a close resemblance to that of the former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh Uma Bharati, which some critics have also endorsed.

The resemblance of Ibrahim Dawood in Abraham Zogoiby is also a controversial matter. Uma Saraswati as a parody of Uma Bharati and her imaginative rendering as immoral and lesbian are the outcome of Rushdie’s
fury against the passing of fatwa on him. Viney Kirpal rightly remarks that: “The Moor’s Last Sigh (1995) is also about the writer’s freedom”.57

An attempt is made here to show how the Moor survives the fatwa of Vasco Miranda. To his dismay and disappointment, the Moor finds a totally different person in Vasco Miranda on his arrival at Benengeli. He does not behave as the one who was the Moor’s companion in his house in India. The change in Miranda is noticeable in his ruthlessness. On demanding the pictures of his mother, the Moor is not only denied them but also imprisoned in his palace.

The Moor’s capture is systematically conspired right from the moment he lands in Spain till his entry into the palace of Vasco Miranda. The taxi driver, Vivar, is asked to take the Moor to the place called Little Alhambra, but the Moor is taken to a different place. So the Moor pays off the taxi. Vexed with the decision of the Moor, Vivar curses him that he would never reach his destination. When he manages to reach Benengeli, he approaches the persons in a bar called La Gobemadora to ask for directions. But no body responds to his request. Then he wonders whether he is visible to them at all. Finally, one person makes a sign towards the opposite direction which is of no use to him. When he comes across a person by name ‘got fired Helsing’ who speaks about Vasco Miranda negatively, he gets an impression that he is insane.

While the Moor is still conversing with Helsing, a couple of girls approach and offer to take him to their house, stating that they would secure for him an entry into the palace of Vasco Miranda. He stays with them as a paying quest and when he meets Vasco Miranda, he realizes that he has been led into his trap. Miranda is no longer the one who used to revolve round Aurora like a mad lover, the painter under Aurora who worked for payment from the Zogoibys, played and amused the Moor in his childhood. Now he has become an autocrat, he makes the Moor his captive.

As stated earlier, the Moor is the second hostage of Vasco Miranda. A Japanese woman who has worked as a restorer of paintings is already there as a captive. She is trained in the art of removing the top of the palimpsest picture. In a way, she too is an artist. She refuses to undertake the work of peeling the
top layer of the painting on the ground that it amounts to damaging and
destroying a work of art. On her second refusal, Vasco Miranda becomes wild
and makes her a hostage. She subsequently agrees to do as he wishes in order to
protect herself: "At her second refusal he had produced a pistol and her
incarceration had commenced. She would not be freed, he told her, until she
had completed her duties; if she declined to carry them out he would shoot her
down ‘like a dog’".58

The Moor and Aoi find solace in each other’s company as hostages. Beside sharing their grievances, they also counsel each other and work out a
plot of escape from the house of Vasco Miranda. Each in the company of the
other, they transform the prison life into a cheerful one. They are relieved from
the depression by their various activities, and thereby defy the captivity and
punishment symbolically. As a testimony to this, a few lines may be cited from
the novel: “We clung to humanity, and refused to allow our captivity to define
us. We are greater than this prison,’ Aoi said. ‘We must not shrink to fit its little
walls. We must not become the ghosts haunting this stupid castle.’ We played
games-word-games, memory-games, pat-a-cake”.59

The Moor completes his work but all the efforts of Aoi to ask for help
through coded letters bear no fruit. Vasco arrives with his revolver. When he
poses to shoot Aoi, she pleads with him for life. When asked whether he
would defend her, the Moor replies ‘No’. Then Vasco kills Aoi.

After killing Aoi, Vasco Miranda points his revolver at the Moor. When
the Moor, who represents the community of writers, loses all the hopes of
survival, the Moor escapes from claws of death miraculously. There has
been a needle in the vein of Vasco. In the process of blood circulation, it reaches
his heart just a second before he fires his pistol to kill the Moor. The needle
punctures his heart and thus he collapses without being able to kill the Moor. His
death is described vividly: “There was a gurgling in him, and he was jerked by
invisible strings, and the tides of his blood were unleashed, they poured from
his nose, his mouth, his ears, his eyes”.60

Vasco Miranda dies before he could kill the Moor. There is a stroke of
irony that he, who passes death punishment to the Moor should die miserably
right before the Moor. This suggests how Rushdie survived the fatwa Khomini had passed to him, and how Khomini expired without witnessing his fatwa being excuted. By showing how the Moor escaped the death punishment and obtained freedom from captivity, the novel succeeds in securing freedom for the creative writers and thereby subverting the notion of punishment to the artists.

IV. SUBVERSIVE TECHNIQUE: The author has relied on those devices which are helpful for him to coordinate with the subversive themes in the major components of the form i.e., structure, characterization and diction. The technique serves two purposes. On the one hand, it joins hands with the narrative to subvert the received notions like the Mother India image, Realistic Art and Punishment and it subverts the given notion of the novel itself.

(i) STRUCTURE: The narrative has a circular structure. It begins with the Moor who recalls his escape from Vasco and starts the narration of his family story of four generations as: “I Have Lost Count of the days that have passed since I fled the horrors of Vasco Miranda’s mad fortress in the Andalusian mountain-village of Benengeli; ran from death under cover of darkness and left message nailed to the door”. And the story of his family from the time of his great grand parents to his own time flows from him. After telling the story of his (maternal) grand father’s participation in the national movement, his grand father’s tragic story of a long-term imprisonment and his grand mother’s renovation of the family business followed by her death from cancer, the love and married life of his parents, the story of his sisters’ pursuit and his own misadventure in love and in his efforts to recover his mother’s pictures, he comes back where he has begun: “I Have Lost Count of the days that have passed since I began my prison sentence in the topmost tower-room of Vasco Miranda’s mad fortress in the Andalusian mountain-village of Benengeli”. Thus the narrative moves in a circular pattern. This technique anticipates Tharoor to follow suit in his The Great Indian Novel.

The narrative is marked by a non-linear progression. The author, who tells the story of his family from his great grand parents, begins not with the story of his great grand parents but with that of his mother Aurora da Gama. Yet
he fails in his consistency to tell the story of his mother because he switches 
over to the story of his grand mother's story abruptly after having just 
introduced his mother 'Isabella'. Before the completion of that story, he chooses 
to tell the story of his great grand mother Epifania. Thus the pendulum of the 
narrative sways not in one direction only. The narrative is marked by 
continuous discontinuity. It oscillates continuously, which, in turn, causes 
disturbance the linear movement of the narrative. This interference with the 
narrative is outcome of the intention to distort the notion of linear 
narrative.

The narrative is openended. This is called an endless end. The notions of 
proper beginning, middle and end are subverted. It is a cluster of stories which 
do not comply with the norms of coherence among the stories. It transforms The 
Moor's Last Sigh from art to artefact. To distort the notion of well-made 
structure, the author has incorporated such devices as intertextuality, 
metafiction, mixed genres etc in the narrative.

(a) Intertextuality: The technique of intertextuality to represent pluralism and to 
challenge the notion of a single text has been most extensively employed in the 
Moor's Last Sigh. It seems, his own texts have been revived in the Moor's 
Last Sigh. His Midnight's Children, Shame and Satanic Verses are revised with 
regard to the theme and characters. Rewriting the political history as a private 
discourse is common to Midnight's Children and the Moor's Last Sigh, while danger of religious fundamentalism is common theme in Shame and The Moor's Last Sigh.

Moraes is similar to Saleem in Midnight's Children, and Isabella is similar 
to Biliquis in Shame and Adam Zogoiby is the adult of baby Aadam Sinai in 
Midnights Children. There are various levels at which Rushdie's three novels 
prior to the Moor's Last Sigh have been incorporated.

Besides Rushdie's own as mentioned above, R.K. Narayan's The Waiting 
for the Mahatma, the Hindi films Mother India, Mr. India and the popular song 
'cholike beeche kya hai' are implanted in the novel. The India Vs Australia 
Cricket match, the beauty contest of Nadia Kapadia are ingrained in the 

Marvell's poem entitled On a Drop of Dew is included in the narrative:
“So the soul, that Drop, that Ray
Of the dear Fountain of eternal Day
...
The greater Heaven in an Heaven less.”

The favourite prayer song of Mahatma Gandhi is also incorporated:
Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram
...
Sabko Sanmati de Bhagwan”.  

Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice, Othello, The Ramayana, The Mahabharat, and the Iliad* are mixed in the narrative. Therefore *The Moor’s Last* is a very good example of the technique of intertextuality.

**Mixed Genres:** *The Moor’s Last Sigh* cuts across the notion of a single genre. It embodies multiple genres and gives the impression that the novel is of mixed genres. While the novel can be read as a detective novel, historical novel and epic novel, there are several poetical pieces. One example occurs in the ovation given to Nadia Wadia when she won the title of Miss world as:

“No Nadia Wadia you’ve gone fardia,
Whole of India has admiredia
... I love Nadia wadia hardia,
Hardia, Nadia Wadia, hardia.”

**Magic Realism:** This is a common device in almost all the novels of Rushdie who uses this device to represent the unrepresentable. The unusual ageing of Moraes is depicted with the help of magic realism. He grows twice his actual age. He is born in four and half months conception against the usual nine months. This is not to be mistaken for a pre-mature delivery as in some cases. He grows since his conception inside his mother’s womb with double speed.

There is another instance of magic realism discernable in Moraes’s encounter with a weird woman in the plane while going to Spain. She appears as a stewardess in the plane by name Eduvigis Refugio. She befriends him with her courtesy to serve him with extra food and drinks. She briefs him about her
background and purpose in being a stewardess. She confesses that she has joined the service in the plane to be free from the social policing prevalent in her Catholic country. She goes to the extent of offering her body to Moraes which is vividly described as: ‘I did not understand that she was offering me her body. She had to spell it out. ‘On this flight we help each other, she said. My colleagues will keep watch and make sure we are not disturbed.’ She led me to a small toilet cubicle and we had sex very briefly: she reached her orgasm with a few swift movements while I was unable to do so at all, especially as she appeared lose all interest in me the instant her own needs had been satisfied’.66

When Moraes wants to talk to the same stewardess a little later, he requests another stewardess to send her to him. At this juncture, he is made to realize that nobody by name Eduvigis Refgio as stewardess boarded the plane at all. He comes to know that there is nobody by that name even among the passengers on board the plane at all. Then with whom he has had fun in the toilet cubicle a little earlier remains a mystery. It serves one important purpose to understand that Moraes’s aspiration to regain his mother’s pictures is motivated not by his taintless love for his mother. Because as the above instance bears out, his mind is full of lust while he is travelling abroad in order to recover the said pictures.

Vasco Miranda having a needle in his blood vein looks somewhat like a magic. One wonders how he could survive with a needle in his vein all those years and how it could puncture his heart when he was about to kill Moraes – There are matters beyond the reach of the common understanding. With the help of these devices, the author has distorted the notion of realistic art.

**Characterization**: The art of characterization in this novel is marked by two features, namely, hybridity and ambiguity. There is nothing new about this device. It is only as the proverbial saying goes ‘Old wine in a new bottle’. Like the palimpsest in art, the characters are built upon the characters of his earlier novels and some of them reappear here. This is highly subversive in spirit and nature because it distorts the chief purpose of characterization such as “formation of identity”. There is some threat to the identity of characters since they are not the representation of a single identity but of many identities.
Moraes is an amalgamation of Saleem Sinai and Shiva of *Midnight's Children* and Sufiya of *Shame*. Moraes is identified with Saleem with regard to the pace at which the novel is narrated. Saleem moves his narration as fast as possible so that he can complete it before he collapses. Moraes does the same. The physical strength of Moraes is identical with that of Shiva. While Shiva is endowed with powerful knees, Moraes with a powerful arm. Moraes’s over maturity is in contrast with Sufiya’s lack of maturity. Though they are contrary in kind, they are similar in effect and purpose of challenging normal growth. While Sufiya looks younger than her actual age, Moraes looks older than his actual age and thereby both of them defy the notion of normal growth. Moraes is a descendent of a mixed ancestry. Cundy rightly notes the characteristics of hybridity in Moraes in the following words: “The identity of the text’s hero, Moraes zogoiby or the ‘Moor’, is a blend of Catholic, Jewish, Arabic/Spanish and contemporary Indian influences. His is truly the hybrid, mongrel self proclaimed throughout Rushdie’s work”.\(^6^7\) Genetically also his identity is dubious. It is hinted that Aoura notices her conception after she returns from Delhi where she had stayed with Nehru. Her illicit relation with other men adds to the difficulty of his father’s identity. It cannot be said for certain that he is his father’s son. This reminds one of Saleem Sinai’s position in *Midnight’s Children*, because he is depicted as having multiple fathers. His also, like Saleem Sinai’s, is a case of hybridity.

Abraham is also a blend of many races. His initial identity is as a Jew. There is his nick name as COD. This COD does not represent any detective branch (Corps of Detective) but his secret business of flesh trade. It is derived from cashondelivery( C for cash, O for on, and D for Delivery) since prostitution is a business which is conducted on spot payment. Abraham, who is revealed at the end as a Don of Bombay underworld, has been involved in the business of supplying prostitutes. He is identified as Ibrahaim Dawood. Thus there is a game of hide and seek in the characterization of Abraham too.

Raman Fielding takes his father’s name. He was nicknamed Fielding due to his craze for cricket. He was also nicknamed Main duck. It is because he holds the control of cricket in Bombay. Since a cricketer who comes back to the
pavilion with a zero score is called 'duck walk', Raman Fielding is called Main duck for he is the chief of all the cricketers. He is also nicknamed 'toad faced'. The association of Ram Fielding with the Hindu political wing leads to the speculation that he is modelled on Bal Thakray the supreme of Shiva Sena. Certainly some features of Ram Fielding are identical with Bal Thakray's. M.L. Pandit comments in this regard is significant: "The mere fact that one minor character – Ram Fielding – has some resemblance to the Shiv Sena Supremo, Bal Thakray, is not a sufficient reason for banning the book . . . Even if the caricature of the Shiva Sena Chief were intentional, there are features in the character of Fielding that have no resemblance what so ever with the mannerisms and political practice of Bal Thakray". 68

Among the women characters, only two stand out as prominent. Aurora is a multifaceted person. She is a businesswoman, artist, nationalist and a modern mother India. She is a Catholic but marries a Jew. She is a mistress of Jawaharlal Nehru and also frequently visits Ram Fielding. In the paintings, she is depicted as Elianer, daughter of Carl Marx, Desdemona, wife of Othello and Godless Madonna. All these reflect the complex nature of her personality as a modern mother India.

Uma Saraswati is yet another character whose identity is ambiguous. She is an art student from Baroda. She arrives at Bombay and participates in social activity. She becomes a friend of Aurora's daughters, an admirer of Aurora herself and a rival of Aurora in respect of possessing Moraes. There are various versions about her identity and none of them proves to be correct. Her relationship with Raman Fielding, Abraham, Moraes, Jamshed is very fishy. Thus Uma Saraswati's character also challenges the authenticity of identity. Rushdie has used the device of hybridity in the creation of characters in order to show how the conventional image of India is undergoing a dramatic change in the post-independent India, how human relationship is subjected to vulgarity. As The Moor's Last Sigh is preoccupied with the portrayal of decline of democracy in Indian, some characters are alluded to the real politicians. This helps the novel to become 'faction' – the synthesis of facts and fiction.
Diction: In addition to multi-lingual diction, Rushdie has challenged the traditional way of word formation in English. Usually new words are coined from one part of speech or another or borrowing the words from other languages as they are. But in this novel, Rushdie has experimented with the coining of words. There is a strange way of forming words which defies any logic i.e, verb from verb and past form of verb from the past form only: Killofy, shuttofy, blindofy, eatofy, speakofy,( verb from verb) drewefied.( past form from past form)

One more subversive mode of word formation is found in its tampering with fixed phrases: Instead of ‘first and foremost’, first and one most is used, instead of Ladies and gents, ladies and ladahs is used. The run on words like sneezy sleepy happy dopey grum pybashfuldoc, sleepydopeygrumpybashful etc. are numerous. Nonsensical phrases also are in abundance:

Boom-yacka-yacka-yacka-boom
Lick-lick,lick,black, black, black
Jaw-jaw-Jawaharlal
I-am-busy-with-my-great-work
Don’t-tell-me-things-I-don’t-want-to-know-

There are funny and lengthy word formations in his well known device of run on words such as sneezy sleepy happy dopey grumpy bashful doc, sleepydopeygrumpybashful etc. There are his own compound word formations in the mode of a chain such as I-am-busy-with-my-Great-work, don’t-telll-me-things-I-don’t-tell-me-things-I don’t-want-to-know. Besides reflecting the Indianization of speech style in a chain form, this style also defies the rule of making compounds.

There are examples of rhythmic sounds of Indian oral tradition in the narration of stories. To cite a few, for instances: boom-yack-yack-yack-boom; lick,lick,lick, black,black; Jaw-Jaw-Jawaharlal, See See See Pee. It reflects the style of the oral tradition on the one hand, and subverts the notion of standard diction on the other.

He has coined contracted words like Westoxication, cancergram. Westoxication is denotive of the intoxication for the west. Aurara sends a
telegram to her son-in-law stating that his wife suffers from cancer. By blending them, cancergram is coined.

Yet another subversive mode is found in the formation of words like hit-fortune as the opposite of mis-fortune. The author uses the prefix hit as an antonym for mis(s) in the formation of opposites. This reflects the register of cricket in which missing and hitting the ball are used. The subversion lies in forming an antonym for the antonym only. The word mis-fortune is the opposite of fortune, but hit-fortune is the opposite of the opposite. The opposite is not based on the root word 'fortune' but on the prefix which cannot exist independently. Thus this style is subversive of the word formation of opposites. There are some more words like hit-take for mistake, hit-alliance for hit-conception, hit-terious for mysterious. In the last word, his own norm itself is not sustained that 'mis' in mysterious is derived from the pronunciation of the first syllable not from the written form. This seems to follow the rules of 'article'. The indefinite article a/an is used on the basis of the pronunciation of the first letter of the singular noun not on the spelling of the first letter. This is where the style has to be viewed as post-modernist because post-modernism does not approve of any sustained alternative.

The last but not the least is the mode of word formation based on the interrogatives. It appears in the words of Vasco: "Unaccountable gaps in the language were filled in: if the opposes answer-and-question pairs there\where, then\when, that\what, thither\whither, thence\whence all existed, then, Vasco argued, every this must also have its whis, every these its whese, every those its whoase." 69

Indeed they are applied in the speech of Vasco Miranda. The discussion on the diction may be concluded with what R.S. Pathak says in this connection:

Rushdie is such a popular writer of sheer fun and entertainment that he consistently provides; he rarely disappoints the expectations of his readers. He is a kind of magician who dexterously plays tricks with language, character and real life situations. His penchant for punching and coining ever new expressions and turns of phrase in Indian English of Bombay
variety keeps his readers, especially in the Indian sub-continent, perpetually amused. 70

IV. Conclusion: (i) The above study reveals that the narrative subverts three notions that are prevalent now. The narrative incorporates the theme of the Ideal Mother India image and dislodges the same by the post-modernist device of parody. After having projected Aurora as a mother figure, she is shown as immoral in the subsequent depictions. Except Isabella, all women have been depicted as wicked in one way or the other. The narrative also includes the theme of realistic art and ridicules the same by espousing the palimpsest art. Thus the notion of realistic also subverted. Lastly, the narrative chooses the issue of punishment to artists for using their freedom of expression and raises a strong objection to the practice of curtailing the freedom of artists.

In the technique part, attempts have been made to show how it helps the narrative to subvert the received notions, how the technique distorts the notion of structure, characters and diction with the use of post modernist devices. In all, *The Moor's Last Sigh* typifies post-modernist subversion in themes and technique. R.S. Pathak judiciously points out, "He is painfully aware of the fact that an invisible reality moved phantom wise beneath a visible fiction, subverting all its meanings". 71

Among the three subversive themes, the last two are general in nature and universal in application. It typifies post-modernism in general. But the first subversive theme in *The Moor's Last Sigh* is related to the native notion. It subverts the notion of Mother India image. The devices like Hindi film 'Mother India', the favourite prayer song of Gandhiji 'Raghu ...' Indian political history, allusions to Indian politicians and others indicate that the process of nativizing post-modernism has been gaining momentum.

Conclusion: (ii) In this part, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* has been analyzed in chapter V. Two subversive themes have been discussed. While the first theme is about the notion of Indian Nationalism, the second is about the notion of history. The first theme is completely related to our country. Though the second theme upholds the post-modernist contention that historiography is a human construction, not a transparent rendering of incontrovertibly retrievable facts in
general, it also has some native elements. Several events with which we find faults are related to Indian history. While the novel conforms to post-modernism in general in its subversive attitude, the gesture of post-modernism going native is observable in its relying on Indian notions and in its offering positive message. The technique has been manipulated to support its subversive themes on the one hand and has been systematically employed to distort the traditional notion of the novel form.

Though Rushdie takes up the political situation of Pakistan in *Midnight's Children*, he has not developed it comprehensively. It indicates that there is so much about India itself to write about in *Midnight's Children* that he needs a separate novel to deal with the other half of *Midnight's Children* - Pakistan. To put in the words of Dr. Naik and Ms. Narayan: "If the political allegory in *Midnight's Children* concerns India, its sister nation, Pakistan, born at the same time, is the subject matter of *Shame*?" His incomplete project becomes complete in the narrative of his next novel *Shame* which is woven around the affairs of Pakistan exclusively. The examination of *Shame* in Chapter VI has revealed that the narrative subverts the notion of Pakistan as a land of the Pure, God and Holiness. The study has shown that the image of Pakistan has been spoiled by the politicians, government and military officials and common people by their immoral, ungodly and unholy deeds. The technique supports this subversive tendency of the narrative on one hand and emerges as a subversion of the notion of the novel itself by incorporating the mixture of several other genres and intertextuality on the other hand.

Rushdie made us wait for twelve years to return to India as a subject for his novel - *The Moor's Last Sigh*. In this novel, Rushdie's focus is on the post-Emergency India. The analysis of *The Moor's Last Sigh*, in Chapter VII, has exposed that the narrative subverts such notions as the Mother India image, the Realistic Art and the Punishment to Artists. The technique is also subversive in its stance. Since the narrative subverts the native tradition of Mother India image in its first theme, post-modernism is found to be going native.
NOTES


20 Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, 149.

21 Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, 158.


33 Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, 60.


36 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 102.

37 Jim Powell, Post-modernism for Beginners (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Limited, 1988),

38 Kirpal, The Moor's Last Sigh and the Writer's Freedom, Postmodern Indian Novel Interrogating the 1980s and 1990s, 346.

39 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 102.

40 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 103.

41 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 220.

42 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 224.

43 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 225.

44 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 229-30.

45 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 231.

46 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 148-49.

47 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 150.

48 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 158.


50 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 261-262.

51 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 262.

52 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 260.

57 Kirpal, The Moor's Last Sigh and the Writer's Freedom, Postmodern Indian Novel Interrogating the 1980s and 1990s, 341.
58 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 421.
59 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 424.
60 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 432.
61 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 03.
62 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 419.
63 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 32.
64 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 55.
65 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 313-14.
66 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 382.
67 Cundy, Salman Rushdie "The Moor's Last Sigh: a postscript"
69 Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, 151.
71 Pathak, Modern Indian Novel, Creative Literatures series-28, 128.
PART THREE

POST-MODERNISM CONTINUES
Post-modernism has undertaken a tough journey in Indian Fiction in English. Though the first post-modernist novel was born in India with Desani’s *All About H.Hatterr* only, it did not have a smooth sail. The novel, which was published in 1948, did not have any immediate successor. It had to wait for a long period of twenty six years to see its next-in-line with the publication of Trishakü’s *Onion Peel* in 1943 and a period of another couple of years to *Cowasjee’s Goodbye to Elsa* in 1945. The publication of the latter novels made no difference to the condition of post-modernist novel as they could not popularize this new novel.

Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* appeared as a silver line in the dark cloud of Indian Fiction in English. Rushdie’s novel awoke in the readers a new sensibility (post-modernism) popularizing the post-modernist novel among Indian readers and writers and he also became a victim of persecution for the articulation of his protest against man made tradition, be it political, religious or social. His novels were banned for his irreverence to the autocracy. Perhaps, for fear of persecution few dared to continue the trend and there was a hill after Rushdie’s. But the post-modernist novel did continue with the bold attempts by some more writers. The phase of the evolution of post-modernist novel from Rushdie onwards may be called ‘Post-modernism Continues’ in Indian Fiction in English. Three major novelists from among the recent children of *Midnight’s Children* and three novels i.e, one novel of each novelist, have been selected for the study in this part. Thus Amitav Ghosh’s *The Circle of Reason* (1986) in Chapter VIII, Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) in Chapter IX and Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997) are undertaken for a detailed study of their Subversive Themes and Technique.