Rushdie talks about “…the Islamic moral universe, whose polarities are honour and shame” (F 11). The question of ‘honour’ and ‘shame’ is indeed one that needs to be investigated in the course of this study as it is a very important factor in contributing to aggressive acts, especially in the contexts of the novels that are being dealt with.

The term ‘honour’ is described as ‘high respect, a feeling of pride and pleasure from being shown respect, a person or thing that brings credit, a clear sense of what is morally right, (or) a woman’s chastity.’ The word ‘shame’ is defined as “a feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behaviour, dishonour, a person or thing bringing dishonour, a regrettable or unfortunate thing, cause to feel ashamed.” In the Indian context however, both terms go further than that, even becoming a death-and-life issue, for a man’s very life depends on his honour, and without it he is reduced to nothing – a matter of ‘shame’. Rushdie, well aware of its implications, expresses it thus:

“Sharam, that’s the word. For which this paltry ‘shame’ is a wholly inadequate translation.” (S 38-39)

On Shakil’s twelfth birthday, his three mothers made the mistake of asking him what he wanted as a gift, and received the sullen answer that there was no point in asking as they would never give him what he wanted. On being assured that he would be granted his wish, he howled out two wishes: to be let out of the “horrible house” (S 37) and to be told his father’s name. The shocked trio after a heated debate decided to grant him at least one of his wishes and told him that he would attend a school. It was then that his mothers gave him the advice that was to shape the entire course of his life – the advice that he was never, ever to
feel the emotion called ‘shame’. Mother Munnee told him about the barbs that would be thrown at him out on the streets which were bound to hurt him. Mother Chhunni told him that he was not to hit anyone at school because hitting out would mean that people had succeeded in lowering his pride through causing him to feel the forbidden emotion of shame. The boy that had been living such a sheltered and spoilt life was completely at a loss at his mothers’ instructions and wanted to know what ‘shame’ felt like. Inadequate responses were given, mother Bunny talking about blushes and a shivering heart, and mother Chunni about women wanting to cry and die and men going wild. They themselves had lived all their lives shut up in their mansion without ever having to feel this emotion, so the object of their ‘shame’ that was about to be exposed to the outside world caused them to become quarrelsome for the first time in their lives. In being forbidden to feel shame, Shakil was therefore forbidden to feel accompanying human emotions like “embarrassment, discomfiture, decency, modesty, shyness, the sense of having an ordained place in the world, and other dialects of emotions for which English has no counterparts” (S 39). That accounted for his debauched life and complete lack of conscience as when he hypnotized his classmate Farah and impregnated her, he justified his actions by saying that she had been willing to be hypnotized. He had become the epitome of shamelessness because:

“What’s left when sharam is abstracted? That’s obvious: shamelessness.” (S 39)

At the one and only party hosted by the Shakil sisters after the death of their father, gilt-edged invitations were sent to mostly the officers of the ‘Angrez Cantonment’. Musicians and suppliers of food and alcohol filled the shamiana tent which the sisters had erected in their compound and when the guests finally came, the few zamindars who had been invited were shocked at the sight of the uniformed sahibs and their dolled up wives filling up the ball-room. Standing in a “tight clump of rage, gazing balefully at the cavorting sahibs” (S 16), they left in a huff, refusing to even partake of the mountains of food that were being served for the purpose. The Shakil sisters then ordered the musicians to play Western-style music, and the party ensued all night, the sisters pairing up with the officers of their
individual choices. The party was the biggest scandal of the town of Q because the three young Indian girls who had chosen to engage themselves with the British ‘sahibs’ in an all-night party were considered shameless and contemptible.

Rani Harrappa described her playboy husband Iskander Harappa as:

“…world champion of shamelessness; he was international rogue and bastard number One.” (S 108)

and in six years she embroidered eighteen shawls depicting his shamelessness. The first shawl was the ‘badminton shawl’ depicting him lying in the nude amidst white concubines playing badminton with some of them caught in the act of flinging off their clothes. Those whom he had impregnated had been sent regular ‘donations’ and some of them had even come to her for help. The second shawl was the ‘slapping shawl’ where he was shown arrogantly slapping anyone and everyone around him on their cheeks. There was the ‘kicking shawl’ where he kicked people and made them hate him for it and the ‘hissing shawl’ where he was depicted in his Prime Minister’s office as a spider at the head of his web, listening intently to the reports sent in by his spies. There was the ‘torture shawl’ where prisoners were tortured in all manner of ways in his prisons and the ‘white shawl’ where he turned a blind eye to the illegal activities of the police because he wanted the police force to be stronger than the Army. The ‘swearing shawl’ depicted all manner of creatures crawling out of his wide-open foul mouth, the ‘shawls of international shame’ showing him groveling and conspiring. The ‘election shawls’ depicted all the elections from the time that he was elected Prime Minister till the election of his downfall, all of them depicting his cruelty in not resting satisfied until all his opponents had been annihilated. The ‘allegorical shawls’ were shawls like the ‘Death of Democracy’ where he was shown strangling a woman to death in the presence of the Army, and as him as the ‘assassin of possibility’ where he strangled the young, damaged Sufiya Zinobia. The ‘autobiographical shawl’ depicted herself as old and composed of the same materials as the house itself, for like the house itself, she had been a silent spectator to all his shameless activities. The ‘shawl of the fifteenth century’ showed
him pointing to an empty horizon, and ‘Pinkie’s shawl’ showed Pinkie committing suicide after he abandoned her to her fate when she stopped interesting him. The ‘shawl of hell’ depicted the slain bodies in the war between the east and the west, and the ‘Little Mir Harappa’ shawl was the last, showing him dragging Iskander down to hell with him, with Little Mir himself disemboweled and hanging under the eaves of his home. She packed them all in a trunk and gave them to her daughter Arjumand in her attempts to reveal to her the father whose side she refused to see, and hence worshipped.

Ramani was a good-looking young boy whose parents had died, leaving him a brand new rickshaw with which he could make his living. However, he happened to fall in love with a thief’s widow who was ten years his senior. She had five children which she looked after by selling her body. She once used his rickshaw and ever since they were seen together everywhere:

“…shamelessly, in public places, and I was glad his mother was dead because if she had lived to see this her face would have fallen off from shame.” (The free radio: EW 20)

A common cause for causing deep shame is mental illness as in the case of Sufiya Zinobia who blushed from birth, tore her hair and had the mentality of a three year old at twelve. Her violence began at twelve which increased as she grew in stature and strength, and the emotion of shame being a source of aggression, the author suggests that the same could hold true even of an idiot, who perchance may have:

“…discovered in the labyrinths of her unconscious self the hidden path that links sharam to violence, and that, awakening, she was as surprised as anyone by the force of what had been unleashed.” (S 139)

Then we have physical abnormality which was:

“….only one notch lower than mental illness on the scale of family shame.” (MLS 146)

The Moor was born with a club-like right fist, the fingers a chunk with the thumb stunted. His
mother Aurora was at first revulsed at the sight and it made his father Abraham Zogoiby miserable, which caused them after the first shock to outdo each other at trying to see the bright side of the deformity. His father predicted that he would become a boxing champion and his artist mother comforted herself by saying that it was like a smudge on a masterpiece.

The Scottish milord George Louis Hauksbank also talks about a “wild silent shame” (TEF 17) as he confides to the stowaway-turned-conjuror Uccello di Firenze. He tells Uccello of the cravings within man which he said the eminent philosophers of Florence wouldn’t know anything about. He was of the opinion that inasmuch as human beings took pains to appear ‘royal’ they were only dolling up a ‘pauper’ which could not be permanently satiated with external wonders and wealth. The human soul remained impoverished like a king at insurgents’ mercy, namely fear, anxiety, isolation, bewilderment, pride and shame. He then revealed to his guest Uccello his greatest secret which so besotted him, which was his ‘mottled’ organ which would never allow him to marry and beget heirs.

When Ormus Cama left for England with his mother Lady Spenta and damaged brother Virus, he was taken under the wings of the prostitute turned ‘real estate portfolio’ turned radio-pirate John Mullens Standish XII who had watched his performance at the Cosmic Dancer in Bombay during one of his visits to India. Since Ormus with his rock music was beginning to draw a huge audience, drug-squad raids in Mull Standish’s boat were becoming frequent, and the human cargo were stripped and searched thoroughly. Two entirely different reactions to this humiliating process was that whereas the American Hawthorne Crossley elder son of Mull Standish could make light of the situation by joking that his rectum was almost beginning to like the feel of rubber-gloved hands probing it, the Indian Ormus shook “with rage and shame” (GBF 278). Hawthorne’s indifference to the strippings could be attributed to what the author in ‘Shame’ said that in a shameful environment, one could get used to it. He says that wherever one looks, there is always:

“…something of which to be ashamed. But shame is like everything else; live with it for long enough and it becomes part of the furniture...nobody notices it anymore. And
everyone is civilized.” (S 28)

It can be likened to the general attitude that has been adopted towards politics that it is a dirty game, thus giving politicians a certain amount of license to go about their corrupt ways. Ormus’ sense of shame on the other hand, is deeply ingrained and is a matter of culture. It is said that in the U.S.:

“the higher rate of homicide in the south seems to be due to a culture of honour that advocates violent responses to perceived insults.” (APM 494)

Whereas a man in the western world can live with ‘shame’ and start over by putting the past behind him, the eastern sphere of the hemisphere has a different story to tell:

“…in the East End of London, a Pakistani father murdered his only child, a daughter, because by making love to a white boy she had brought such dishonour upon her family that only her blood could wash away her stain. The tragedy was intensified by the father’s enormous and obvious love for his butchered child….men will sacrifice their dearest love on the implacable alters of their pride.” (S 115)

That father had to do what had to be done, due to the dictates of his culture. He could never put the love of his child above the necessity of preserving his ‘honour’. Hence, human emotions were washed aside by this monstrous concept of ‘honour’ brought about by the word ‘sharam’, which has rightfully been termed: “shame: the roots of violence” (S 116). A Hindu girl was paraded in the nude by the village panchayat through village after village for daring to continue her relationship with a Muslim after being warned of the dire cosequences of her behaviour. Her family members could do nothing about it as it was a ‘just punishment’ for their wayward child. Her crime? – she had dared to cross boundaries – the boundaries that preserved the honour of her clan, which gave rise to: “Rage, fuelled by shame” (S 180). The

1It was media news some years back and it is regretted that the date cannot be recalled.
girl’s family took it for granted that she got what she deserved, but the question remains: did the girl herself think that she got what she asked for? In Shalimar the Clown, the answer is “yes” and Boonyi, a Hindu, was angry with her Muslim husband’s apparent show of passiveness at her unfaithfulness:

“What kind of a husband was he anyway, this clown? … He was a weakling, a strutting turkey-cock, a fool. In his place she would have hunted herself down and murdered herself in a gutter, like a dog, so that the shame of it would outlive her.”

(SC 196)

Even by the womenfolk, a man who wouldn’t preserve his honour by doing what was expected of him by society (even if it meant that they had to pay for it with their very lives) was “a weakling, a strutting turkey-cock, a fool”. No wonder then that Boonyi waited out her death at the hands of her husband as a thing that needed to be done, a thing that her daughter India Ophuls, brought up in Western values, would never understand. Shalimar Noman had to preserve his honour by murdering those who had stained it, namely his unfaithful wife Boonyi, her paramour Max Ophuls and their illegal offspring India Ophuls. Even when he was engaged in guerilla warfare, he spent the cold nights in the mountains searching out Boonyi in his mind, and when he did, adrenalin coursed through him keeping him warm. He had to cling to this anger inside him because he needed it in order to kill those who had wronged him which had become for him a sacred duty. To him, killing off only his wife would be an incomplete business in the process of avenging his honour, so he was determined to finish off the American Ambassador as well. It did not matter if he was imprisoned for life after the murders:

“What happened after that was unimportant. Honour ranked above everything else, above the sacred vows of matrimony, above the divine injunction against cold-blooded murder, above decency, above culture, above life itself.” (SC 258)

What he did not know was that Boonyi had a daughter who according to his logic needed to be killed as well.
Leaving this personal code of honour aside, Psychology also tells us that: People do not have to be angered or emotionally aroused to behave aggressively. A culture can produce highly aggressive people, while keeping frustrations at a low level, by valuing aggressive accomplishments, furnishing successful aggressive models, and ensuring that aggressive actions secure rewarding effects.” (Bandura 1973,59) (APM628)

Subcultural influences have been found to have a profound impact on individuals such as those raised in a neighbourhood where it pays to be aggressive. If an individual is able to acquire status through aggressiveness or is encouraged to be so, he is bound to adopt that stance throughout his life. This is aggression as ‘learned coping behavior’ as in the case of terrorists which is also known as ‘Instrumental aggression’ which makes use of learned aggressive responses in ways calculated to remove obstacles from goals. It is task oriented and coordinated and:

“In a religious or ideological war, one has a great feeling of self-righteousness, of preserving the truth and right against the forces of evil.” (APM 629)

A case in point is the 9/11 terrorists who were called ‘evil’ by President George Bush, where both sides considered the other evil and being possessed by the devil, which is analogous to Shakil (Shame), who after having seduced Farah Zoroaster through hypnotism, was also described as being:

“...possessed by a demon which made him shake in the middle of breakfast and go hot in the night and cold in the day and sometimes cry for no reason in the street.” (S 53)

However, Psychology looks for more rational, scientific explanations other than that of possession. It states that the capacity for ‘evil’ arises out of our evolutionary history, which can cause a person to become violent and aggressive. Terrorist attacks are not ‘mindless’ or ‘insane’ as its leaders are most often found to be well educated, intelligent, and having
specific goals in mind. A seminal report on “The Homegrown Threat 2007” by the NYPD’s intelligence division discovered three myths about terrorists: that they usually began as radical or devout Muslims, came from economically destitute backgrounds and were poorly educated. But in reality, they were found to be sufficiently educated, some even boasting of a posh background, and well-grounded in liberal western democracies. The Jihadi-Salafi Ideology on the Radicalisation road is said to be composed of four stages. Stage 1 is the Pre-Radicalisation, Stage 2 the Self-identification, Stage 3 the Indoctrination, and Stage 4 Jihadisation and attack. It is said that although this model is sequential, individuals do not always follow a linear progression, though individuals who do pass through the entire process are most likely to be involved in a terrorist act. The 9/11 attackers were profiled as:

“unremarkable – they have unremarkable jobs, lead unremarkable lives and had little, if any, criminal history.” (IT 41)

However, they may have been alienated and depressed in some way though this is not enough to explain away their behaviour. There should be some other plausible explanation as to how these boys-next-door suddenly became ruthless killers overnight. Psychology states that there is a supporting emotional ideology behind their ruthlessness. First, terrorists are devoted to a complex religious and cultural ideology that sees others as the enemy. Second, this ideology helps them to dehumanize their victims, causing them to refuse to believe that they are killing innocent people but rather devils and enemies, thus making the task easy. In short, they become nothing more than killing machines, with few or no traces of normal human characteristics. After Shalimar became a Taliban and returned for a brief spell to Pachigam, Hasina Yambarzal was shocked at the change she saw in him and told her husband:

“...That’s not the look of a man shocked by his family’s death, but the expression of a man accustomed to killing. God alone knows where he’s been or what he’s become, to come back wearing a face like that.” (SC 314)
He had ‘come back wearing a face like that’ which was the result of traumatic reactions to combat. Coleman gives us the clinical picture of soldiers of World War II and the Korean War thus:

“The irritability is manifested externally by snappiness, over-reaction to minor irritants, angry reactions to innocuous questions or incidents, flare-ups with profanity and even tears at relatively slight frustrations. The degree of these reactions may vary from angry looks or a few sharp words to acts of violence.” (APM 187)

Thirdly, this ideology is accompanied with a strong sense of solidarity built up in terrorist training camps where they lose all sense of individual identity or ego. This in turn helps them to have a sense of brotherhood and duty and they become submerged in a common cause. It says:

“…although it is true that certain individuals are more likely to become terrorists, it is the interaction of such personalities with the appropriate eliciting circumstances that actually creates a terrorist.” (APM 493)

This statement is illustrated by the life of the late Osama bin Laden who without giving it a second thought left the comforts of his home for the dangers of the Afghan holy war, emerging from primarily a donor of money into a Taliban, a holy warrior. He received a degree in economics and public administration in 1981 at At King Abdul-Aziz University and among the odd fifty siblings was the only son to show signs of religiousity, leaving all the affairs of his family business to his elder brother Salem. The inspiration behind his holy rage was his father as he proudly told a Pakistani journalist:

“My father was very keen that one of his sons should fight against the enemies of Islam. So I am the one son who is acting according to the wishes of his father.” (HW I52)

After his initial association with an Islamist group, the Muslim Brotherhood, his two mentors were Abdullah Azzam and Muhammad Qutb, prominent teachers of Islamic studies. He was
taught that *Jahiliyyah* prevailed in our modern societies, which was a state of ignorance of the revelations of the Koran, rendering them *jahili* societies. The only way for a true Muslim to be free of such a society was through *Jihad* or holy war. The lesson that was permanently ingrained in him by Qutb was that *Jihad* which had so far been an inner struggle to purify oneself should be offensive rather than defensive. He implied that an Islamic order had to be established against the enemies of Islam, including Muslims themselves who flouted the precepts of Koran. What emerged out of the Afghan war was The international Islamist movement that saw Benazir Bhutto’s party as a liberal threat. (In *Shame* Arjumand Harappa is used as a caricature of Benazir and she was given the moniker ‘Virgin Ironpants’). For according to Qutb, any society that did not obey the dictates of Islam was ‘*kufr*’ – an infidel.

His other mentor, Azzam’s dream was to bring about a unification of all Muslims under one ruler – a restoration of the *Khalifa*. So not surprisingly, his motto was:

“*Jihad* and the rifle alone: no negotiations, no conferences and no dialogues.”

(HW I53)

According to Azzam, every true Muslim should work towards this end, and he distributed a pamphlet entitled “Defending Muslim Territory Is The Most Important Duty” (HW I53). It was his dream to expell all ‘infidels’ from Islamic soil and he saw the war in Afghanistan as only the beginning. The other ‘infidel’ occupied lands that needed to be saved were Palestine, Bokhara, Lebanon, Chad, Eritrea, Somalia, the Phillipines, Burma, Southern Yemen, Tashkent and Andulusia. In the Phillipines where approximately 5% of its population are Muslims, many have died for the cause since 1972. Islamic groups have been waging guerilla warfare against the central government demanding an independent state. And due to America’s support for Israel, Americans living in Saudi Arabia are also looked upon as infidels trespassing on the holy land of the Arabian Peninsula. Laden so absorbed the teachings of Qutb and Azzam that in a videotaped statement aired on Oct 7,
2001, he addressed America thus:

“As to America, I say to it and its people a few words: I swear to God that America will not live in peace before peace reigns in Palestine, and before all the army of infidels depart the land of Muhammad, peace be upon him.”

(HW I221)

According to Qutb, Jihad was to be considered as the instrument “to establish the reign of God on earth and eliminate the reign of man”. (HW 200). Azzam was at the forefront in recruiting holy warriors for the Afghan war, extolling the Jihad and preaching that “to stand one hour in the battle line in the cause of Allah is better than sixty years of night prayer” (HW I53). For Osama bin Laden, the Afghan war turned out to be an “extraordinary spiritual experience” (HW I58) for did not the Quran 3:169 state that:

“Never think that those who were slain in the name of God are dead. They are alive and well provided for by the Lord.”

Though Laden claimed that he was not involved in the Riyadh bombing in 1995 that killed five Americans and two Indians, he proudly admitted that he was among those who had consigned the fatwa that pleaded for Jihad. He stated that he was happy that Muslims were responding to the fatwa and that he regarded the dead as martyrs. He also stated that he did not consider it a crime to use weapons of mass destruction like nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons as long as it was in self-defense. He most probably convinced himself that no attack on their part could really be offensive as he had been taught that they were the offended in the first place and not the offending party. In a conference entitled “Osama bin Laden and Terrorism” April 2000 held in London, a speech given by an Islamist militant Sheikh Omar Bakri clearly states that terrorists do not consider themselves so:

“Who is a terrorist? Who defines what is wrong and what is right?” (HW I207)

For the slogan of the brotherhood was:
“The Koran is our constitution, the Prophet is our Guide. Death for the Glory of Allah is our greatest ambition.” (HW I99)

Another influence in bin Laden’s embrace of violence was a man obsessed with the overthrow of the Egyptian state, intent on bringing about the destruction of government officials and buildings. He was Ayman al-Zawahiri, a medical student and founder of the Jihad group. Al-Qaeda which has gone global has altogether shed all traces of scruples which they first retained as in 1993, when they abandoned the proposal to bomb the U.S. embassy in Saudi Arabia due to the risk of killing civilians. The proposal had been made due to the arrest of Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, the spiritual leader of its Egyptian members in New York. Such mentoring caused the Sept 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York. However, even without external manipulation, an ideology like this can have dangerous repercussions as found in the Saturday, Sept 13, 2008 series of bomb blasts that ripped through crowded shopping centres in Delhi which killed twenty five people and injured two hundred. Six days later, a police raid was conducted on a flat in Zakir Nagar occupied by many students of Jamia Millia Islamia. Two occupants of the flat, including Atif the mastermind behind the blasts and a police official were killed, an occupant Mohammed Saif arrested, while two members of the terror module escaped. Three of the culprits Zia-ur Rehman, Saquib Nisar and Mohammed Shakeel were arrested on Sept 21 who were all educated and in their early 20s. They were found to be a major operational arm of the Indian Mujahideen and also responsible for serial bombings in Ahmedabad and Jaipur. Principal correspondent Mihir Srivastavas in the India Today September 2008 issue describes them as:

“...malevolent, walking bombs who perform their act of mass slaughter in the name of Allah and without the slightest suggestion of remorse. Behind their endearing looks hides an endearing sense of being wronged. This has clouded every faculty of their
intellect and reduced them to willing instruments of the invisible puppeteers of
terror.” (IT 34)

He gives details about their attitude and motivation, which he found chilling:

“...in terms of the twisted ideology as well as the hatred and desire for revenge that
underlines everything they say.” (IT 34)

They quoted from the Quran to justify their acts as revenge on perceived wrongs on the
Muslim community – the demolition of the Babri Masjid, communal riots in Gujarat and the
non-implementation of the Sri Krishna Commission Report. Twenty four year old Zia-ur
Rehman proudly stated that what they were doing was *Jihad* which could be carried out only
by the privileged. However he was evasive in his replies to the query as to what his *Jihad* was
about and in his case it seemed that he was simply hitting back at the deep-rooted sense of
insult he felt for being a Muslim. He stated that his father didn’t understand *Jihad* and had
disowned him for his actions but to him nothing else mattered. Twenty three year old Saquib
Nisar talked about regular meetings with friends and their discussions about the nature and
need for *Jihad* for atrocities and insults heaped on Muslims as being a Muslim in India was
‘difficult’. He added that his passion for *Jihad* had been infused in him by their late leader
Atif who also told him that blood had to be shed and evil adopted in order to prevent a bigger
one, and that it was all for Allah. The oldest of the trio, twenty six year old Mohammed
Shakeel plainly stated that for Muslims in India, there were only two options:

“...live a life full of contempt, get insulted and abused, or protest in the name of
Allah.” (IT 34)

Hence it is to be seen that hostile aggression can result from pent-up frustration over unjust
treatment which is best illustrated in the form of communal riots. Bandura states that insults,
threats, the presence of enemies and the need for the protection of status serve as instigators
of aggression when the aggressive instincts of the individual thus exposed to the situation is
reinforced. Shakeel stated that out of the two options open to him, he had decided to opt for
the latter as he felt that it went beyond personal insult, and besmirching the name of Allah
was not to be accepted calmly. He said that Muslims were not welcomed anywhere, neither
in India nor elsewhere, and they were simply returning the kind of treatment meted out to
them. He talked about experiencing a spiritual awakening after committing his life to Allah,
and that the thought of death did not scare him. He didn’t flinch an inch from saying the
things he said, calmly stating that they were not thieves and had nothing to hide. Referring to
Atif’s death and their own imprisonment, he said that there was nothing to be regretted about
it as their fortitude was in the process of being tested by Allah. He proudly stated:

“A handful of Allah ke bande were able to paralyse the economic life of such a big
country.” (IT 39)

However, the younger ones were a bit puzzled that they had been arrested so soon after the
bombings because their leader Atif also seemed to have taught them that no harm would
come to them as Allah would look out for them. Nisar even talked about the book Moodan
Pukarte Hai which is about the struggle of Afghanistan’s Muslims against the Soviet
occupation of the 1980s which said that Allah never failed a true Jihadi. He said that he
believed it and narrated an episode from the book about Russian tanks surrounding an
unarmed jihadi in the middle of a desert in Afghanistan. The desperate Jihadi had thrown a
fistful of desert sand at the tanks, which exploded as if hit by powerful explosives. Nisar truly
believed in divine intervention where a Jihadi was concerned. Behind the bravery of terrorists
are such inspiring stories which makes them embrace death joyfully. Such a story on an
Islamist Website is about Mansoor al-Barakati, a Saudi from Mecca who in 1987 undertook
a journey to Afganistan to fetch home his Jihadi brother. However, on crossing the border
between Pakistan and Afghanistan, he started feeling spiritual stirrings within him, which
made him change the course of his travels and go instead to bin Laden’s training camp at
Jalalabad where he trained for two months. He eventually became the leader of the Arab Mujahideen in the deserts around Kandahar but suffered from fatal wounds in 1990. As he died, a ‘shaheed’ (a martyr), a beautiful ethereal scent was said to have emanated from his body. The reward motive is what drives an individual to commit suicidal acts, be it for country or for his faith. This emotional arousal is very strong especially in the religious context and people down the ages in whatever religion have happily laid down their lives for a place in the next world. And this instructional control has been termed the ‘teacher-learner’ method by Bandura who says:

“Individuals who otherwise would not aggress may do so in response to perceived Demands.” (AIC147)

He states that many aggressive individuals are not psychopathic or emotionally disturbed, and their antisocial behaviour is the result of growing up in “a delinquent subculture or in an environment that fosters and rewards such behavior” (PTR8). He also adds a disconcerting element:

“This is especially true when they have a past history of reinforcement for obedience and also when they cannot see the suffering caused by their acts.” (AIC147)

Thus, it is an accepted view that aggressive behavior patterns can be learnt, and society plays a very important role as social expectations, norms and reinforcements mould the individual’s personality. Hence, anthropologists and social psychologists have uncovered differences in aggressive behavior among different societies. In Shalimar’s trial, the Attorney for Defence William Tillerman also pleaded the case in a like manner, stating that his client had been manipulated at terrorist training camps where he had undergone such thorough brainwashing that he had “ceased to be in command of his actions” (SC 383) when he murdered Ambassador Maximilian Ophuls. Tillerman was assisted by a therapist called E. Prentiss Shaw who was armed with a checklist regarding psychological profiling which the Hamas
chiefs in the Mideast used in selecting candidates for suicide-bombers. The “Shaw profiling tool” first established the fact that he was the type of person who was malleable to such external manipulations. The defence stated that Shalimar had been receiving over five hundred of hateful letters from India Ophuls who was known to associate with a Soviet potato witch, as a result of which he had become unbalanced and was beginning to scream in his sleep. So Shalimar was made out to be a missile, without any free will of his own, due to mind-control techniques: “A Manchurian Candidate, if you will, a death zombie, programmed to kill” (SC383), concluding that he was not responsible for his actions. However, the truth in Shalimar’s case was that he killed not due to external manipulations but to cultural influences that held honour above everything else.

When Flapping Eagle first landed on Calf Island, he was taken by Virgil Jones to a Wood and they sat beside a deep empty well where he tried his best to steer clear of matters related to the town of K, Bird Dog and Sispy. He started talking about the the existence of the supernatural, such as immortal life, which was the least that Flapping Eagle wanted to hear. Then he talked about Chanakya a philosopher-king who said that the world was neither what it seemed or didn’t seem to be. So, according to this philosophy, the empty well could be perceived as full and he himself as empty, as the spaces between the particles of matter which composed him as also the air in the empty well were equal. Then when Flapping Eagle became irritated at the irrelevance of his philosophical ramblings to the whereabouts of his sister, he arrived at what he was trying to tell him, which was the location of the island in the world map. He talked about the possibility of palimpsestic dimensions in even four different parts of the Mediterranean. The dimensions could all exist simultaneously without being aware of each other such as the simultaneous existence of the normal world and Calf island, which notion would be unacceptable to a person confined to only one dimension. He explained this narrowness of perception as being caused by:

“…the limitations we place upon the world (which) are imposed by ourselves
rather than the world. And, should we meet things which do not conform to our structure of reality, we place them outside it.” (G 52)

He illustrated his point by saying that as ghosts, UFOs and visions lay outside it, anyone claiming to have seen them was looked at askance by others. As such, “a man is sane only to the extent that he subscribe to a previously-agreed construction of reality” (G 52) in that he is considered insane or aggressive the moment he steps out of the accepted norms of the society he moves in. This in turn is in keeping with Ruth Benedict’s statement that: “Normality is a culturally defined concept” (APM 78), so that what is normal in one culture can be classified abnormal in another.
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