

SALMAN RUSHDIE'S SHANE: AN ANALYSIS

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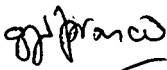
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled 'Salman Rushdie's Shame : An Analysis', submitted by Anuredha Marwah in partial fulfilment of eight credits out of the total requirement of twenty-four credits for the Degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) of the University, is her original work according to the best of my knowledge and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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To
my mother who understands feminism
and
my husband who won't discuss it.

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(ANURADHA MARWAH)

THE PROBLEM OF THE TEXT AND THE SEARCH FOR A METHOD

1.1. Salman Rushdie's third novel 'Shame' came close on the heels of his second 'Midnight's Children'. It dealt with a parallel subject. 'Midnight's Children' was a story about India and Indians. 'Shame' can be described as a tale about Pakistan. Like its famed predecessor, 'Shame' too was nominated for the Booker Mc Connell prize but here the analogy ends. 'Shame' could make it to the stands with only the distinction of being a novel 'from the author of 'Midnight's Children'.

Reviewed as the history of Omer Khayyam Shakil and that of two families, 'Shame' is ostensibly a pot-pourri of events. There is political coup, scandal, murder and revenge in its pages. Thinly disguised the post-independence political personages of Pakistan form its personae. Zia-ul-Haq lurks behind Raza Hyder, Bhutto behind Iskander Harappa, Benazir behind Arjumand Harappa. The events in the novel are also reminiscent of the political saga of Pakistan. Raza Hyder, the political creation of Harappa, becomes the latter's Nemesis. Thus, the allegation of mere topicality can be made in no uncertain terms against Rushdie. Critics and journalists have gone further

adding to topicality the charge of scurrilous writing. Arjumund's pet name Virgin Ironpants and the retarded meandering of Raza Hyder's daughter do provide material for a scandal sheet. If the novel is accepted as a Roman a clef, perhaps Rushdie's deviations from the truth and his over emphasis on the sexual lives of his protagonists do become unacceptable. But there is no justification for reading the novel in this manner.

I.2. Rushdie has presented a socio-political thesis by way of fiction though his characters, are far from being totally fictional. To say that Raza Hyder has no similarities with the flesh and blood reality of Zia-ul-Haq would be to depart from the truth in a big way. But to say that Rushdie is imputing frigidity to Benazir by the name Virgin Ironpants is to depart further. To take an isolated example, Arjumand Harappa the Virgin Ironpants of the novel and the Benazir of Pakistani politics is much more than an individual. Rushdie builds her up as a product of certain processes that are unfolding in Pakistani society. The repression of women, the sexual dominance of men and the favourable social status accorded to men, to enumerate a few. As an individual, Benazir has as much to do with our

Arjumand as a catalyst with the resultant chemical reaction (To suit T.S. Eliot's famous analogy to one's own purposes). The catalyst is present in the reaction to the degree that there would have been no reaction without it. But, and this is the important point, under no circumstances is the catalyst interchangeable with the end product. To drive the point home further, the actual personages serve as points of departure for characterization.

The novelist's art in 'Shame' is akin to that of the caricaturist's. One or two dominant characteristics are exaggerated to dominate the portrait. To go back to our example the fact of being Iskender's daughter becomes the all important 'sine' in Arjumand's character. Her use of his 'martyrdom' as a political tool is exaggerated and she is painted as his veritable devotee. In the same vein Rushdie exaggerates for all his characters.

Aristotle in his 'Poetics' was talking of tragedy when he made an excellent point regarding the relationship of art with reality. He held that art has to be more 'perfect' than reality. The turn of events has to be much more credible in art than what it is in day to day life. Applying the same to Rushdie's

novel we can get another clue as to why while using tangible raw material, he found it necessary to depart from mundane reality. Zia-ul-Haq's lawfully wedded spouse may be the happiest of wives but her fictional counterpart is condemned to eccentricity. Reza Hyder the agent of repression for women, the upholder of an archaic social system cannot be instrumental for any woman's happiness in the novel. The concern of the artist is not 'what is' but 'what should be'. Rushdie makes his intention clear when he juggles around with the name of the country he is writing about calling it Peccaviestan. He even calls it a country of his own creation. The method is clearly far from that of yellow journalism.

Another feature of the novel that exonerates it from the aforementioned charges is its completeness. The touch of fantasy carries the novel beyond reality. The political events rush to their logical climax - the logic being that of the novel, not of reality.

More than anything else the novel is a socio-political text. Rushdie has put forward a thesis - the repression of women in society leads to the overthrow of the whole system by a woman. How the social

affects and generates the political is discussed with the perception of a theorist and communicated with the consummate skill of an artist of words.

1.3. 'Shame' is admittedly a 'strange' piece of writing with fantastic characters and situations and an intruder who intrudes in the first person. The infinite possibility of interpretations that his style generates necessitates the use of a definite methodology. A system is needed that can investigate the rationale of the haphazard chronology and explicate the total effect achieved by the novel. A trustworthy tool can be found in a three stage approach that takes its inspiration from structuralist and post-structuralist writings.,

As a first step in exploring the mystery of the text its metonymic order is discussed. The rigour of the method lies here. It is a realistic way of analysis relying on verisimilitude, on the analogy of an actual first reading of the text. There is no escaping the text. The first impression of the reader is governed by the order prescribed by the novelist. Similarly, here the critic finds himself checked in his exuberance. He is gripped and held captive by the text.

'Shame' is subdivided into five sections and the author has provided a sub-title for each section. In the first section of the dissertation (II.0) each section of the novel is discussed separately. The themes postulated in each are isolated and explored. For example the house discussed as a metaphor in the first section is at first established only in the context of the first section. In the second section two more houses are postulated and the metaphor expands with the parallel. Only with the burning down of the house in the last section is the metaphor completely established. Thus the gradual development and elaboration of imagery is provided its due importance.

The second section of the dissertation (III.0) investigates the metaphoric order of the novel where similarity and association become much more important than contiguity. Again, it is based on verisimilitude in this case on an actual second reading. The innuendoes of the author become comprehensible as the reader has the advantage of foreknowledge of events. Here the critic answers the text classifying and explaining it.

In this section of the dissertation themes running

through the text are discussed. For the first time the text is branded as a socio-political text. Various factors that make it so are studied. The surrogate author - the problematic intruder for instance is established as a deliberate character, a kind of chorus that comments on the fantastic story situation giving it a realistic context. The characters and their respective birth places are seen to connote a circular structure of society where the concentration of values is most dense at the centre gradually thinning out towards the periphery; the theme of destruction is seen in context of a socio-political destruction where society deliberately stifles the individual; last but not the least the association of women with the word 'shame' is discussed.

The third and the last stage (IV.0) focusses on the pragmatics of the situation. The text is situated in context of its theme, its period and its author. The verisimilitude is self-explanatory. In context of the actual reading it denotes a stage of reflection on the part of the reader where he thinks about the novel in context of his other readings.

In this section of the dissertation, 'Shame'

is discussed first of all in relationship with *Midnight's Children*. The discussion focusses on how the author's view of the two countries differs and in turn how his point of view governs the difference of approach in the two novels.

Secondly, the novel is situated in context of apocalyptic literature that uses the beast as an instrument of bringing about change.

Thirdly, the novel is compared with Milan Kundera's novel, '*The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*' in which the all powerful state is able to crush the individual.

Fourthly, the novel is discussed in context of Tariq Ali's non-fiction '*Can Pakistan Survive*'. The difference between a work of fiction and an ideologically coloured analysis is highlighted.

THE CLAIM OF THEMES AND THE CAPTIVE TEXT

II.0. The second chapter as said above is a section wise scrutiny of the text. So imitating the text it is divided into five sections. Sub-section 'a' of every section summarises the story and the predominant theme, maintaining the textual order of the section very strictly. The following subsections (b and onwards) discuss other themes in the section.

II.1.a.1. The first section entitled "Escape From the Mother Country", deals with a variety of escapes from ones native circumstances. In the first chapter entitled 'The Dumb Waiter' the elder Mr Shakil gives up the ghost migrating to the land of the devil, at least, according to the conviction of those he leaves behind. His three daughters brought up with the aid of Parsee and Christian wet nurses and an iron morality then decide to migrate from the restricted life he had imposed on them. Disregarding their rather precarious financial condition, they throw a party. Their high bred snobbery makes them exclude many of their peers. However, insult is added to injury when they extend their hospitality to creatures from the other world of Q - 'angrez sahibs'. There remains no eye-witness

to the 'orgies' of that night because the native Q. gentry shocked to the core by the shameless doings of Chunni, Munnee and Bunny, walks out before the party is under way. But rumours of what transpires after the waltzing and carousing, wining and dining, rocks and town. It is whispered that one of the sisters has been put in the family way.

The scandalous incident signals a double escape for the three sisters. They not only escape from the prying, censoring eyes of the town but also from individual identity. The gate of the house is barred and padlocked, a dumb-waiter is installed to whittle down contact with the society to the barest minimum - in this case nothing besides fulfillment of needs like food and clothing. On the other hand, the three sisters merge in a triunity. They decide to share the illegitimate pregnancy. Not a soul besides the three knows whose ~~whom~~ carries the unlawful burden. Omar Khayyam Shakil is thus born to three mothers.

II.1.e.ii. The author in his own person (henceforth to be referred to as the 'surrogate author') inserts an aside at the beginning of the second chapter entitled 'Necklace of Shoes'. It comprises a few anecdotes about Pakistan. For instance, Defence, one of the

posh areas of Karachi, is almost wholly colonised by non-defence people. The reason being that none of the military men could afford to build on the land that had been made available to them at subsidized rates. They had sold it off taking advantage of a loophole in the law. The second anecdote deals with repression in post-Bhutto Pakistan. The surrogate author's friend, the poet, is arrested on a very slight suspicion and is maltreated in the jail. So much so that he is forced to escape his identity by not being a poet any more. The third anecdote is about the international image of Pakistan. The outsiders especially the westerners have a cruel view of the country. A British diplomat who the author meets at a dinner considers western support to Zia-ul-Haq justified. His wife in turn enquires as to why the Pakistanis do not assassinate Zia.

Omar grows up within the precincts of the house which is now called 'Nisapur' to provide a fit habitat for the great poet's namesake. Nothing is denied to him except freedom to get out of the house. He spends twelve years in Nisapur, gleaning knowledge from his grandfather's library. Not only does he teach himself many languages but also becomes an adept

at hypnotism. He spies on the outer world with the help of a telescope. Its lenses lead him to his first love Farah the Parsee, the daughter of a custom officer. Spurred on by this love and his own growing restlessness Omar Khayyam demands release from the limited world of Nishapur as a present for his thirteenth birthday. Armed with a satchel full of books and advice from his mothers never to feel 'shame', Omar makes his initial escape to the Cantonment School.

The author's confession deals with his attitude towards the country he is writing about. He admits to being a translated man as he no longer belongs to the country of his birth. He also despairs of expressing himself in English because translated words do not carry the same connotations. It is with the concept of 'sharam' that he is dealing, 'shame' being only an inadequate translation.

The inhabitants of Q getting wind of the emergence of the bastard child into society, plan to greet him with a garland of shoes, the ultimate of insults. An accident makes this garland miss its target and land around a local divine's neck.

II.1.a.iii. The third chapter 'Melting Ice' introduces the reader to the Cantonment School. Omar comes into

contact with Mr. Rodrigues a schoolmaster who makes it his business to encourage bright students - in this case, Farah and Omar. He motivates Omar to become a doctor. One day Omar gathers enough courage to declare his long-standing love to Farah. Her indignant refusal incenses him and he offers to hypnotize her. She yields to him while under the trance. The result is the second illegitimate pregnancy in the novel. Farah's escape is forced upon her. She is expelled from the school and thrown out from her home. She finds an unwelcome saviour in Mr. Rodrigues who forcibly marries her, claiming responsibility for the baby. Both leave Q. The ~~action~~ ~~action~~ concludes with two escapes - Omar leaves for Karachi and Farah returns to Q escaping from both husband and baby.

II.1.b.i.

THE HOUSE AS METAPHOR

In the first section of the novel, the house of old Mr. Shakil is the locus of action. The reader is confined within its many walls for some time. The long labyrinthine corridors of its mystery make one empathize with the insomniac Omar as he flits around all night. The house appears to be the inexorable, limited world that destiny has decreed for Omar as

a punishment for certain irregularities that attended his birth. The vision of childhood however transforms this limitation into infinitude and the house becomes vast and unmanageable for the child:

Believe me when I tell you that he stumbled down corridors so long untrodden that his sandalled feet sank into the dust right up to his ankles; that he discovered ruined staircases made impassable by long ago earthquakes which had caused them to heave up into tooth-sharp mountains and also to fall away to reveal dark abysses of fear...in the silence of the night and the first sounds of dawn he explored beyond history into what seemed the positively archaeological antiquity of 'Nishapur'...!

The past and the present are all jostling each other in the house. So much so that the child loses his way - like a time traveller who has lost his magic capsule and fears that he will never emerge from the disintegrating history of his race. The old world and the reaction to its values have been embalmed together to make a world for Omar.

The house is a world the characters are born to. It is the inevitable circumstance. Their actions and their vision modifies it to a large extent. But still the old memories remain:

Sometimes I found skeletons, 'he swore to disbelieving Farah, 'human as well as animal. And even where bones were absent, the house's long-dead occupants dogged his steps. Not in the way you think - No howls, no clanking chain, - But disembodied feelings, the choking fumes of ancient hopes, fears, loves.
(p.32)

No one inherits an unbiased world. The world is a process that confronts us at the beginning of life. The process has to be carried forward.

II.1.b.iii. The history of the house begins with repression that is both sexual and sexist. Just because they are women Chunni, Munnee and Bunny are brought up virtually uneducated. They are confined to the zenana wing where they weave fantasies about that forbidden, though infinitely attractive race "MEN". Their father is their jailer. There is no love lost between the progenitor and the progeny. The daughters wait for his removal from the world he had created for them. This world is unfair - full of unfulfilled desires, teeming with impossible fantasies. There is no scope for redressal, there is no possibility of revolt. Freedom is an unknown concept. The jailer dies an unhappy death - invoking the devil. His three prisoners have only one question to ask him - whether or not he is leaving them money. Their only legacy

that he does leave them - Muslim morality - is rejected outright by the three sisters.

They inherit a world which in the first flush of freedom they feel capable of building anew. Isolation gives way to experimentation. They open themselves to experience hoping to achieve everything that years of anchoristic existence had denied them. But such is the onslaught of the forbidden that they find themselves thrown back into the prison from where they had emerged. But now the retreat is voluntary.

Is it a pessimistic vision that the author is offering us in this novel? Is there no legitimate fulfillment possible? None in a world where there has been such repression. Processes unleashed here must find their logical conclusions. Repression has to be defeated on its own grounds. There has to be a rebellion. Change entails violence. The sisters had taken the easy way out. Instead of rebellion they had adopted the course of defiance. So, their prison is restored to them.

What happens to the progeny of this brief sojourn in liberty or shall one call it liberality? He inherits a dichotomized world. On the one hand there is a vacuum

where Muslim morality was. Omar is uncircumcized, his hair is not shaved off, the name of God is not whispered into his ear. Triple absences to which the biggest fourth may be added - the absence of a father. On the other hand there is the type of exclusion even the most orthodox mullah would have approved. There is a comic inversion here. Muslim tradition prescribes seclusion for women. However, it is a man who is being hidden behind the purdah. Thus, values in the house comprise absences that imply presence of antitrawesty of traditional values.

Omar Khayyam perceives the inversion the moment he is born. The world appears to be topsy-turvy to his infant eyes. He grows up with the sense of living on the periphery. He is indeed on the edge - at least as far as the usefulness of the world he is living in is concerned. It will not serve his purposes, but first he has to exhaust its resources. This world provides him with the knowledge of hypnotism - a weapon for the outcaste from society to assert his identity in it. Empty of values, the house also bestows a doubtful gift of absence on him - the gift of shamelessness. This gift is like a black-hole in the sky - almost positive in it's overbearing absence. Thus it is

a dual inheritance: Shamelessness - the rejection of boundaries, and hypnotism - the capacity to break other peoples boundaries.

II.1.b.iv. The house is a microcosm. It expands, contracts, becomes a fortress and a prison - in short behaves very much as the world behaves. It has an objective and a subjective reality just as the world does for each one of us. But why is it the world? The clue to the intention of the author can be found in the first chapter itself.

So it was in those half-formed years that Omar Khayyam took the never-to-be-reversed decision to cut down on his sleeping time, a lifelong endeavour which had brought him, by the end, by the time his wife went up in smoke; but no, ends must not be permitted to precede beginning and middles, even if recent scientific experiments have shown us that within certain types of closed systems, under intense pressures, time can be persuaded to run backwards, so that effects precede their causes.(p.22). (italics mine)

Two reversals of natural procedures are depicted here. The first is a flight against sleep. The second, more general, is that of ends preceding beginnings. The reason for both is given explicitly - 'closed system'. The purpose of initiating group life in the world was security. Extreme dependence of man

on it results in obliteration of individuality. Houses were initially built for protection against angry elements. The perversion of man converts them into prisons. The closed world in the book is best depicted by the metaphor of the house. It is ^a world whose windows and doors can be shut on the outside. Like evasion of sleep, life in such a world is unnatural. The extreme dependence of the inmates on each other is also unnatural and a result of seclusion from the rest of the world. In this closed world illusions can be maintained while the boundless outside waits complacently.

II.1.c.1. THE SELF AND THE OTHER: THE
CRISES OF IDENTITY

The problem in the novel seems to be the existential one of choice. Time and again the characters in the novel find themselves faced with problems whose resolution would enable them to determine their situation in society. Though told in a whimsical way, 'Shame' is expounding a truth about society - the choice of identity on the part of a single individual affects his immediate neighbours in life and the circumstances generated by their choice (which we may call 'society') affect him. The mutual tension of this relationship may be thought of as being more concentrated in a closed, orthodox society.

II.1.c.ii. The first character that confronts us is old Mr. Shakil. He has been, we are told, a widower for eighteen years. Does that necessarily entail the development of a negative personality? His caustic tongue is singled out for comment. He refers to Q as a hell hole. Even his delirium comprises long passages of obscenities. For his own self he has nothing but curses. 'Your fatherji is sending himself to the devil', says Hashmat Bibi and it may be that she isn't too far wrong. Having chosen a hell hole for an abode Mr. Shakil may have found his choices somewhat restricted when the final reckoning was at hand. His earlier hell was unwillingly shared by his three daughters. 'Then he will have died as miserably as he made us live', they say gleefully to each other after his death.

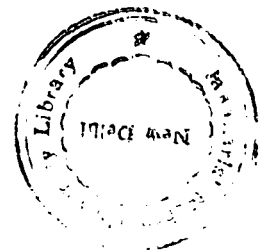
Indeed, he had fashioned a restricted, constricted existence for them. He has extended to them his own hell, he had tried to impose his will on them. He had perceived himself as and assumed the role of an autocratic Muslim father and his daughters had been compelled to assume suitable complementary roles. The three sisters quaff under this imposition right from the beginning. Initially their discontentment

takes the form of covert disobedience. Forbidden to communicate with me they spend their time fantasizing about them and (at least according to rumours) praying for their father's hasty demise. When it finally does occur, they are quick to throw off the mask they had worn for his benefit. Their new identity is in diametric opposition to what they had been before.

II.i.c.iii. It is the wild party that marks the beginning of a new life for them. So alien is their new idea of themselves to themselves that they invite the 'angrez' to be their companions. The new identity finds no sympathizers in the local Q gentry nor do they expect to find any. Perhaps the links had been severed before they could be formed. They are undoubtedly given a chance to forge some kind of relationship with the society. After their father's death the ball is in their court. But the values sacred to that society are flaunted in its face. Its being is negated. Though despising the town, their father had remained a stickler for conventions. Victims of extreme conformism the sisters take the course of extreme non-conformism. The result of drastic action boomerangs on them. The new identity is achieved with a vengeance. It

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is a totally unfamiliar life that offers itself to them. At this crucial juncture they retreat to the surroundings they had always known. They assume the too familiar roles they had earlier despised - women behind the purdah hidden from the denuding eyes of men. There is an element of obstinacy, an extremism bordering on the comic in this retreat. They hang a padlock on the gate and the house is shut to the world.

Their forced captivity forges an unbreakable bond of intimacy between them. The shame of an illegitimate conception brings them closer, too close as some would say!

Although some five years separated Chunni from Bunny, it was at this time that the sisters, by virtue of dressing identically and through the incomprehensible effects of their unusual, chosen life, began to resemble each other so closely that even the servants made mistakes. I have described them as beauties; but they were not the moon-faced almond-eyed types so beloved of poets in that neck of the woods, but rather strong-chinned, powerfully built, purposefully striding women of an almost oppressively charismatic force. Now the three of them began, simultaneously, to thicken at the waist and in the breast; when once was sick in the morning, the other two began to puke in such perfectly synchronized sympathy that it was impossible to tell which stomach had heaved first. (pp 19-20).

They begin to complete each other's sentences, they begin to think alike. Later this triunity seems

almost obscene to the eyes of their child. Indeed, the amalgamation of three in one is an abnormal occurrence. The fusion of individuals takes place only in the exact and only temporarily. It was rumoured that the sisters had indulged in a kind of lesbianism before. But now this triunity is a kind of spiritual indulgence - unprecedented, unparalleled. Their confederate complacency is broken only when the threat of the others faces them again. Their child wants to venture out of their sphere of influence. Their identity as close mysterious beings is in danger. So this three-in-one is in turmoil and the ambiguous being splits in three. The redivision is far from smooth.

And there is an even stranger matter to report. It is this: when they were divided by Omar Khayyam's birthday wishes, they had been indistinguishable too long to retain any exact sense of their former selves - and, well, to come right out with it, the result was that they divided up in the wrong way, they got all mixed up, so that Bunny, the youngest, sprouted the premature grey hairs and took on the queenly airs that ought to have been the prerogative of the senior sibling; while big Chunni seemed to become a torn, uncertain soul, a sister of middles and vacillations; and Munnee developed the histrionic gadfly petulance that is the traditional characteristic of the baby's right, no matter how old she gets. (p.40)

There is no escaping the triunity of identity. They have accepted themselves as three sisters and

they remain three sisters whichever way one looks at them. When they are not three sisters united, they are three sisters disunited. They regain their united selves, we are told, when they decide to relive the bygone days - that is when they repeat the experiment of the joint birth successfully. The physicality of this occurrence needs to be stressed. The objective justification for separate identities for individuals lies in the incontrovertible fact of their having different bodies. But here are three bodies acting as one. Not only do the sisters dress and look alike but the intimate function of giving birth is also done together. So the case of individuality is lost even before it is begun.

II.1.c.iv. The three name their child 'Omar Khayyam Shakil' imposing an identity on him. The act of naming is the prerogative of the parents - an act smacking of possession. It is also a gift that is made to the child, in this case a hopeful gift of poetry. But no 'rubaiyat' ever emerges from his lips. Omar Khayyam rejects the imposition of his first name easily. It is the second that he finds difficult to shake off. He has received his mothers name 'Shakil'. This makes him a bastard. So he grows up without the benefit of religion or society. In short, he is an outcast from birth.

But he is not complacent. 'Nishapur' becomes redundant for him as soon as he glimpses the seemingly unfettered outside. Managing to escape from the place of his birth he confronts the others of Q.

His relationship with his three mothers could only have been strange. The triunity had stirred disgust in him. He was a spoiled and vulpine brat having his way in most things. Regarding the servants we are only told that he used them as objects - for practice of hypnotism.

He regards himself as a wolf-child like Mowgli. At least this is what he tells Farah. Uneducated in social or religious values Omar is as good or as bad as any wolf-child. But he has made a choice - not to stay on any more in his jungle. The reasons for emergence are partly the same as those of Mowgli - an attractive girl.

II.1.c.v. His first brush with society is far from pleasant. The orthodox community of Q welcomes him with a necklace of shoes. That this does not literally or otherwise affect him, is a case in point. To understand the language of society, one needs to know at least their alphabets. Omar has training neither in love,

nor in shame. The society finds itself defeated on this score. The others cannot yet communicate with Omar. Another character - one of the most lovable in the novel - is Mr. Eduardo Rodrigues. He comes in contact with Omar and recognizes his unusual intelligence. Perhaps he recognizes something more:

What Eduardo saw in Omar (in my opinion): the possibilities of his true, peripheral nature. What's a doctor, after all? - A legitimized voyeur, a stranger, whom we permit to poke fingers and even hands into places where we would not permit most people to insert so much as a finger-tip, who gazes on what we take most trouble to hide; a sitter-at-bedside an outsider admitted to our most intimate moments (birthdeath etc.), anonymous, a minor character, yet also, paradoxically central, especially at the crisis...yes, yes. (p.49)

Omar accepts him as his father. This is the first relationship that Omar tries to establish. The second is that of amorous love. He sees Farah as his lady-love. He thinks it fit to make pretty speeches to her. But her rejection stirs his animosity and he avenges himself by making an object of her body. Rodrigues's act of claiming the baby destroys the sympathy between Omar and him. There can be no further communication between the two and thus the fledgling relationship dies an early death.

Omar's skill of hypnosis deserves a special

mention here. The purpose of the art is to impose one's will over the other. Omar learns it in captivity when another's will is prevailing over his (probably as a measure of self-defence). Later it becomes a weapon when he chooses to impose his will over Farah. This choice makes him unfit for the society of Q. He realizes, even after only a limited exposure to this society, that his act is unacceptable socially. Thereafter begin his efforts to escape from his surroundings.

We see that there is a continuous tension of assumption of identities and their rejection or acceptance by the society. Self-concept in every case stems from the others and the feeling of shame is rooted in the others. Even the shameless Omar Khayyam experiences a tinge of the forbidden:

I say, Omar Khayyam Shakil was 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 out for no reason in the street or while ascending in the dumb-waiter. Its fingers reached outwards from his stomach to clutch, without warning, various interior parts of himself, from adam's-apple to large (and also small) intestine, so that he suffered from moments of near-strangulation and spent long unproductive hours on the pot. It made his limbs mysteriously heavy in the mornings so that sometimes he was unable to get out of bed. It made his tongue dry and his knees knock. It led his teenage feet into cheap brandy shops. (p.53).

This demon unnamed by the sufferer cannot be branded by the reader. It is undoubtedly an awareness of the others. May be Omar Khayyam has had a taste of shame.

II. b. d. i. THE PERVERSION OF SEX

A distorting mirror has been held up to human relationships in general but specially to the sexual aspect of life. What is Shame? The author explains

Sharam, that's the word. For which this paltry 'shame' is a wholly inadequate translation. Three letters, Shin remim (written, naturally, from right to left); plus zabar accents indicating the short vowel sounds. A short word, but one containing encyclopaedias of nuance. It was not only shame that his mother forbade Omar Khayyam to feel, but also embarrassment, discomfiture, decency, modesty, shyness, the sense of having an ordained place in the world, and other dialects of emotion for which English has no counterparts. (pp 38 ~~and~~ 39).

This ordained place in the world, what can it mean? It surely means a hierarchical society. It also means the fixation of roles or at least the propagation of the myth of ideal roles in society. There is a distinct separation between men and women. It is a physical one and we find that the Shakil sisters had been tucked away from the eyes of men by their

father. The father, thus has propriety rights over the sexuality of his daughter. The same motif reappears in the case of Farah the Parsee:

..... when she was thrown out by her father, who had suddenly found that his empty customs house was too full to accommodate a daughter whose belly revealed her adherence to other, unacceptable customs. (p.52).

II.1.d.ii. The father's job is to contain the daughter because women in general need a lot of containing. The three Shakil sisters hidden as they were from society could not escape rumours circulating about their sexual cravings. Not only did they indulge in lesbianism but also wove Occult spells to hasten their fathers death so that they could emerge from their prison, it was whispered.

Farah Zoroaster had her share of rumour. First, the gossips tried to link her with Rodrigues as his illegitimate child - the only basis for the rumour being that Zoroaster and Rodrigues had arrived in the town simultaneously and were both sans wives. This did not prove either credible or juicy enough, so other avenues were explored. At last the rumours worked down to the so called scandalous sexual relationship between the adult Rodrigues and the ~~eighty~~ year old child Farah:

God preserve us, he follows his little flozzy up here to the backyard of the universe, and who knows what encouragement she gives, because a women knows how to tell a man if he is wanted or not wanted of course, even at eight years old, these things are in the blood. (p.48).

It did not matter that neither Farah nor Rodrigues gave the slightest hint in their behaviour of being attracted to each other. It did not matter than Farah as she grew up acquired the appellation 'ice-block' due to her cold behaviour towards all her admirers. All these proofs could not silence the gossipe tongues that wagged and censured indiscriminately. Such was the hunger of the society to impose fictional sexual deviations on others.

There is a tradition of men distrusting women - as far as sexual relations are concerned - in the novel. After confining his daughters for eighteen years of their lives, old Mr. Shakil dies calling them 'whores'. Later after the scandal no one wonders much about the identity of the mysterious 'angrez' responsible for the shame of the Shakil sisters. Not a single gossip's tongue contemplates what manner of man he must be. The 'blame' or the 'shame' sits squarely on the woman's shoulders.

Farah's plight at the hands of the others^{of} has already been described. But even Omar consoles himself by blaming her for the conception. If she had been 'ready' with him, she must have agreed to other men also. Even Rodrigues might be responsible for the baby.

II.1.d.iii. Omar Khayyam's voyeurism is a sexual deviation in tune with the other symptoms of sickness in the society. He watches the forbidden through ineffectual chick blinds, through the telescope and derives a vicarious pleasure from the exercise. And when opportunity knocks in the shape of a hypnotised Farah, he does not hesitate to indulge in what had been vicarious till then.

Thus the society is characterised by a certain sexual opportunism. Sexual relationships are described without a shred of emotion. Sex is physical, sex is shameful. The sexuality of women is a force that scares men. So, they build high imprisoning walls to dam it. Sex becomes a dirty word, a foul unworthy deed. Neither of the two segments of the population (the men or the women) can be comfortable in any sexual relationship under the existing circumstances.

II.2.a.1. The second section entitled 'The Duellists' comprises three chapters like the preceding one. In the first of these (the fourth chapter of the novel) entitled 'Behind the Screen' the author introduces the subject of this novel - Sufiya Zinobia. Tongue in cheek he admits that in the society he is dealing with an adequate impression of a person can only be formed once his family background is dissected. So the story of Sufiya begins far back with Mahmoud the Woman, the flashy dresser who had sired her mother Bilquis. He is perhaps the first of the duellists. The scene shifts to Indraprastha where Mahmoud owns a cinema. During the days when communal feelings run high he attempts to bring Hindus and Muslims together with the totally ineffectual measure of tolerance. He loses his life and his means of livelihood in the fire that results due to the friction between the two communities. His daughter who had been brought up to comport herself like a princess - so much so that the street urchins mockingly call her 'Khansi Ki Rani' - finds herself on the streets, her clothes and eyebrows burnt off in the fire (that also consumes her youth). Only the 'dupatta' of womanly honour is left clinging to her.

She is rescued from this plight by Raza Hyder the second knight in her life, who dresses her gradually from top to toe with clothes and accessories looted in the riots. Besides being an honourable rescuer of the damsel in distress, Raza is a devout Muslim. His forehead carries the mark of the 'gatta'. Due to the misery undergone by his co-religionists during those hard times he is unable to sleep for days. Thereby he has acquired strange pouches under his eyes. Such is the appearance of this knight in armour who wooed lady Bilquis. Proximity sows the seeds of romance, love blossoms and the two are knit in wedlock. After the partition of India and Pakistan, Raza naturally opts for the land of God. Bilquis sets off to the new land with unbounded faith in her husband's capacity of overcoming all odds.

We are reminded, however, that this is not a realistic novel about Pakistan. Realism would mean the telling of his own life-story, the surrogate author notes. He would probably then talk about his own younger sister whose love for Coca Cola and imported cars embodies the urges of the country 'Pakistan' for him. Realism would enjoin upon him the necessity of mentioning the unmentionable - the inefficient, semitrained

educational system or the petty corruption rife in civil life. He would much rather talk about how the knight errant's wife Bilquis came to be neurotically afraid of the herah, hot wind call the Loo.

II.2a.ii. The chapter 'The Wrong Miracle' drags us into a house again. Reza the rescuer brings Bilquis to a huge family, his relations on the maternal side. The family is lorded over by the matriach 'Bariamma'. Sex is a dirty word in this household. To absolve the women of the shame of physical relations, the matriach had devised a fool-proof system. All the women slept together in a large cavernous bedroom. The men entered quietly at the death of night. Thus the hairless, toothless, blind Bariamma is the defender of the undefiled purity of womankind - a female knight. The family is knit together by the telling and retelling of family tales. Poor Bilquis's story becomes one of these. Here in such a household, is conceived Reza's and Bilquis's first baby.

Rani, one of Reza's many cousins, is to be married to Iskander Harappa - a foreign educated millionaire. Reza is sent away to war where he wins laurels by capturing Aansu-Ki-wadi. This place is later commercially exploited by Harappa to fill his own coffers. It is at the wedding of Rani and Harappa that we come across Omar Khayyam,

our forgotten peripheral hero from Q. He is Harappa's friend. His obscene obesity draws comment from Rani herself. She marvels at his shamelessness.

Bilquis gives birth to a still-born son. Raza is beside himself with grief. Both wait desperately for the reincarnation of their dead son. Squirming under the taunts of other women Bilquis holds the dormitory system responsible for her inability to conceive again. So both she and Raza become emigrants. They leave the honourable house of Bariamma.

The surrogate author draws parallels between their situation, his personal situation and the genesis of the country called Pakistan. They are all 'mohajiro' - immigrants. The primary urge of immigrants is to redefine themselves. This necessarily includes a break with the past.

Making a break with the past that comprises a father who was a woman and a son who was dead, Bilquis tries to rectify her life. She conceives again in order to provide Raza with the son he so desperately desires. But the reincarnation of their dead son doesn't take place. The miracle is 'wrong'. Fate gives a lie to their aspirations - the second baby

is a female. ~~of~~. Once again the knight in armour is beside himself. Perhaps it is this rejection that makes our heroine Sufiya blush at birth.

II.2.a.iii. After meeting Omer Khayyam again at the wedding reception the reader is taken back to the locale of the first section. In Needle valley in the district of Q, gas fields are discovered. The tribals do not allow the administration to start construction there. So, Raza the conqueror of Aansu is sent to tame the brigands. On the way to Q, in the train Bilquis and Reza come across people from the 'bioscope company' who later play an important role in their life.

Rani who has by now given birth to a daughter is abandoned in Mohenjo in Harappa's family house where she is treated with scant respect by the servants. Iskander, himself, as the suffering Rani is informed by Bilquis over the phone, is indulging in orgies and revelry with his corrupt friend Omer Khayyam. His womanising crosses the path of little Mir. Squabble over a French tart leads Mir to ransack Harappa's Daro house as revenge. Rani is a mute spectator to all this. She passively spends her time in embroidering shawls, in no way party to her husband's doings.

Raza Hyder's soldiers unleash an orgy of rape and murder in Needle Valley. He on his part comes in contact with Maulana Dawood - the local divine of the first section. The twosome forge a unity based on shared orthodox beliefs. Raza can now comfortably assume the role of the defender of Islam. While he is dealing with the tribals his daughter contracts brain fever that leaves her mentally defective. The chief minister on the other hand orders the recall of forces from Q. Boiling with rage Raza argues unsuccessfully with the minister. Thereupon, after the meeting, he is told by Dawood that his wife has been having an affair with the son of the owner of the bioscope company that had travelled with them in the train. Sindbad Mengal the offending party, is murdered, presumably, by our irreproachable hero.

Raza's and Harappa's paths cross again and the duel commences between the protagonist of Muslim honour and the embodiment of western permissiveness. At Marshal Aurangzeb's party both vie for his beautiful wife. Raza's clumsy attempts are of course laughed of by Harappa the master of myriads of such exploits. This attempt is recounted in Darg by Omar Khayyam

within the ear shot of Bilquis. Bilquis accuses her husband. Reza the honourable, ties himself to the stake to expunge his honour from this spot of shame.

An uneasy calm exists between the two duellists. Another daughter is born to Bilquis sealing off all communication between the wife and the husband because with this child she loses her capacity of bearing children. This marks the end of identification of Bilquis with her husband's exploits. Reza's career receives a boost with the declaration of martial law in the country. He is appointed administrator of the area after arresting the former chief minister Gichki. The section concludes with the surrogate author speaking in his own person. He narrates a joke about the political instability in Pakistan.

II.2.b.1. FIXATION OF IDENTITY BY THE OTHER : SHAME

At any rate, it is not possible even to begin to know a person without first gaining some knowledge of her family background, so I must proceed in this way, by explaining how it was that Bilquis grew frightened of the hot afternoon wind called the Loo. (p.59).

The admittance of the importance of the family as being more than what is generally accepted is not merely a whimsical exaggeration though it is also

that. Bilquis is designated princess by her father who is a vendor of cheap fantasies. He himself has earned the appellation 'woman' by playing a role considered inappropriate for the man in a family. He has nursed a baby. The family circumstance is generalised to a larger context and the name acquires a darker nuance when Mahmoud refuses to commit himself to his community's communalism.

Bilquis who couldn't have known better, gladly assumes the identity her father offers her. The inappropriateness of her surroundings regarding her persona, is immediately perceived by the society. "Oh Khansi Ki Rani", the street - urchins yell after her. Thus, like her father, her family circumstance - that of being a princess - is inverted by the 'others'.

The milieu of Empire Talkies is built on fictional identities. Films too are appearances that don't take stock of reality. Bilquis's world is analogous to films. To maintain these appearances she misperceives the cat-calls and interprets them as compliments. Her father's misperception is more lethal. He is unable to gauge the extent of the schism between Hindus and Muslims. Ironically both Bilquis and Mahmoud

retain their judgement about each other. He warns her that times are changing and she in turn warns him that he is heading for trouble.

True to his nature he continues playing his role - in this context it is the heroic one of giving a lie to his name. Tolerance in face of extreme separatism, is the cue. So, for two consecutive weeks, movies unacceptable to both communities are shown to an empty auditorium. Reality blazes in the form of an arsonist's bomb. The fiction is destroyed. The princess daughter is shorn of her dignity and slapped onto the street like a beggar woman sans clothes and eyebrows.

II.2.b.ii. Bilquis, of course, is unable to define herself without her trappings. She is found in her elemental nature by Reza who plans to shape it as he pleases. He works on her on the principle of propriety. It is proper for a blushing bride to be dressed from head to toe. An unclothed, identitiless woman has to be converted into a wife. The wife in turn has to be metamorphised into a mother of sons. Reza perceives her in relation to himself, certainly not as a princess. Bilquis eagerly accepts her complementary role. The dream of being a princess changes into aspirations for her husband:

What things won't you do there, Reza she cried. 'What greatness no? What fame. Reza's ears went red under the eyes (hot with amusement) of his companions in that bumping, rickety Dakota; but he looked pleased all the same. And Bilquis's prophecy came true, after all. She, whose life had blown up, emptying her of history and leaving in its place only that dark dream of majesty, that illusion so powerful that it demanded to enter the sphere of what was real - she, rootless Bilquis, who now longed for stability, for no-more-explosions, had discerned in Reza a boulder-like quality on which she would build her life. (p.67).

The starry eyed Bilquis accepts Reza's indeflectible sense of himself. She responds to him as a lady would to her romantic saviour, to a knight errant. Where a new identity is being forged for Bilquis an extension, a reaffirmation of identity has been granted to Reza.

II.2.b.iii. In Reza's house Bilquis is not treated like a knight's lady at all. Due to his position a little grudging respect is extended to her. But otherwise she is the officially designated poor-thing, child and doormat. Her failure to produce a son at the first instance does nothing to improve her situation. Taunts come her way pretty often. This is one imposition that Bilquis does rebel against. Hearkening back to her queenliness and looking forward to motherhood she crosses the portals of the house forever.

II.2.b.iv. But Bilquis ends up by being neurotically afraid of the Loo. She is weary of the flux that is life. The tenuous shred of self flutters helplessly not finding any support to cling to. She is no longer the princess of appearances because her castle in the air has blown off. Perhaps there is a reaching out to that forgotten period of her life when she has an affair with Sindbad Mengal. On the other hand, she can't be the mother of sons because her body has betrayed her:

She has always wanted to be a queen, but now that Reza Hyder is at least a sort of prince the ambition has gone sour on her lips. A second baby has been born, six weeks early, but Reza has uttered no word of suspicion. Another daughter, but he hasn't complained about that either, saying only that it is quite proper that the first should be a boy and the second a girl, so one must not blame the new arrival for her elder sister's mistake. The girl has been named Naveed, that is Good News, and she is a model baby. But the mother has been damaged by this birth. (p.111).

Communication between husband & wife breaks off.

II.2.b.v. The thesis of the novel is not a division of the world between those who act and those who are acted upon. Does Bilquis not act at all? Is she just a passive recipient at the hand of the other. She does act. She gives an identity to her unwanted first

daughter ~~Shame~~. That identity is the unfortunate one of being 'one born with the wrong sex'. It is one of feeling shame for ones very being.

Secondly she highlights the discrepancy between Raza's self-concept and his actions. The knight-in-armor Old Razor Guts is also a leaky water reservoir. When fate decides to tease him through the person of his wife he breaks down helplessly before her. Though coveting another man's wife he stakes himself to the ground to prove his fidelity to his own. Thus the readers perception of his identity is determined by his family circumstances, primarily.

The careers of Raza and Bilquis follow opposite courses. Bilquis's disintegration is a result of her overemphasis on 'the others' and Raza's rise to power is determined by a carefully calculated subversion of 'the others'. This opposition is less due to inherent traits and more due to social circumstances as the following sections will explicate.

II..2.c.i. THE PERVERSION OF MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS

We see the hopeful beginning of marriages and the whittling down of personality that they result in. The author is turning a cynical eye towards this

most crucial adult relationship to show how interpersonal happiness can be marred in the social context.

Raza the crusader is an Islamic Knight in the fashion of medieval Christian knights. He embodies in his self, the conservative urges of the people who cannot dare to blaspheme religion in whatever way it may be offered to them. Around this boulder of faith, Bilquis sets to build a new life.

There are two role-expectations that erode Bilquis. The first stereotype for 'a woman' is offered by her father - 'a queen'. There is something beautifully superfluous about this concept. In Islamic history at least, there have been very few female rulers. It is the king who makes a queen. A queen is basically a beautiful, graceful and perhaps bountiful back drop for the ruler. Without a king Bilquis fails to hold an empire. It must be remembered that even her father was a 'woman'. The second stereotype is offered by Raza - 'a mother of sons'. When misery comes to Bilquis in shape of a girl-child, she breaks down:

Rani, a judgement, what what else? He wanted a hero of a son; I gave him an idiot female instead. That's the truth, excuse me, I can't help it, Rani, a simpleton, a goof. Nothing upstairs, Straw instead of cabbage between the ears. Empty in the breadbin. To be done?

But darling, there is nothing. That birdbrain, that mouse. I must accept it; she is my shame. (p.101).

She construes the birth of a girl-child from her husband's point of view, as a defeat of wifeliness. Unconsciously she accepts his value-judgement - that the role of the wife is justified only as a producer of sons. In fact 'woman' is treated as a vehicle for bringing more male population in the world.

After the debacle of the first living child who should have been a son Bilquis is too overwrought for solitude. She probably pines for the days of her youth. Adultery enters the relationship in the shape of a cinema owners son:

In the clutches of a guilt so extreme that even the affliction of her only child seemed insufficient to explain it, a guilt in which, were I possessed of a scandalously wagging tongue, I would say that something mengalian, something to do with visits to the cinema and fat-mouthed youths, was also present, Bilquis Hyder spent the night before Raza's return, pacing sleeplessly around the honeymoon suite of Flashman's Hotel..... (p.100).

Though, there is a rebellion on her part, it is largely unconscious. She is not ready to accept the consequence of her action. She is still unprepared to be anything else except what expectations of her husband demand.

II.2.c.ii. Perhaps it is his wife's infidelity or the consciousness of prolonging a defunct relationship that makes Raza covet Pinkie Aurangzeb. But he too cannot accept his urges. The society demands that an honourable man be true to his wife. Raza's displacement of his guilt is on a more conscious plane than Bilquis. He relates personal fidelity to affairs of honour. No one can dare to challenge that. So, by tying himself to a stake he is able to wriggle out of the responsibility of interpersonal relationships. In the society that places honour before happiness, Bilquis's husband stands vindicated in the eyes of the people.

II.2.c.iii. The second marriage that of Rani and Iskander Harappa follows a similar but a more morbid course. At first Rani is smugly complacent for having landed the best catch in season - the handsome millionaire seems to be God's gift to womankind. The fortune of women in this society seems to be securely tied to the men they marry. Rani is considered fortunate because her name will change to the illustrious one of Harappa.

The first words that Iskander utters to her are of course far from romantic:

Get one thing clear', she heard him say, 'you don't pick and choose my friends. (p.80).

Rani who marries a millionaire finds herself the poorest of women. There are many things that she has to get clear in her mind - that the servants of the Hareppa household will treat her with scant respect, that her husband will abandon her to the parched hungry land of Dero for days on end. She will merely exist, a grass widow at best:

She rocks in her verandah chair, the needle moving unhurriedly, and feels the youth and gaiety being crushed out of her, drop by the pressure of the passing hours..... (p.95).

The society relates fidelity to honour not to emotion. When Iskender deprives Mir of his whore, Mir sacks his Dero house to pay him back. His voice can be heard as the chorus of social comment on the action of the novel:

Tell him to be afraid and to think himself lucky I am a mild-mannered man. I could have regained my honour by depriving him of his lady, I could do anything, anything, and who would dare say no? Here it is my law, Mir's law that runs. Salaam aleikum. (p.97).

The sexuality of a women is treated as a fragile possession. The motif is the same as the story of Bilquis and Hyder. Rani herself is conscious of having been used and then discarded. She knows of the philanderings

of her husband but social convention seals her lips. She cannot remonstrate, cannot assert her rights. She is just an honoured possession on whom the best of material goods are showered.

After suffering comes acceptance and with acceptance strength. Rani withdraws into the silent heart of her suffering dissociating herself totally with her surroundings. This silence, this passivity is the lot of women in this society. Ultimately there is inaction in marriage on the part of women.

II.2.d.i.

THE HOUSES OF GUILT

The houses contain most of the action in the section. Raza takes Bilquis to his ancestral home. This world lorded over by 'Bariamma' is huge and confusing for her. It teems with a variety of uncles, aunts and cousins. In the exaggeration of the joint family system the author develops a comic situation. The household has a strange set of values:

They still live in the old village way, Raza warned Bilquis before depositing her in that house in which it was believed that the mere fact of being married did not absolve a woman of the shame and dishonour that results from the knowledge that she sleeps regularly with a man; which was why Bariamma had devised, without once discussing it, the idea of the ~~thieves~~ thieves. (p.74).

11.2.d.ii. The sprawling family is held together by the telling and retelling of family history. Bilquis grudgingly accepts this world when she agrees to tell the story of her own life. Her life becomes a part of the family pantheon. Thus the integration is symbolically complete. The telling of tales is a denial of privacy. It is as if every one has a right to another's life. Secondly, 'life as story' heightens the sense of unreality of existence. It is as if one were living in a novel or playing on stage. The fictionality of oneself makes it easier to accept the 'fictional' relations - of cousins thrice removed and uncles who are related only by an assiduous scrutiny of the family tree.

The joint family system effectively subsumes the individuality of every person. Everything exists communally, every individual is camouflaged in role-playing. So much so that even 'shame' is shared:

One night, after Bilquis had retired to bed, having washed the eyebrows off her face and regained her appearance of a startled rabbit, she was staring jealously at the empty bed which had once been occupied by Rani Harappa when, from her other flank, a particularly vicious cousin named Duniyazed Begum hissed, night-dark insults: 'The disgrace of your barrenness, Madam, is not yours alone. Don't you know that shame is collective? The shame of any one of us sits on us all and bends our backs. See what you're doing to your husband's people, how you repay the ones who took you in when you came penniless and a fugitive from that godless country over there. (p.84).

II.2.d.iii. Sex-a-reality is rejected as fiction. The tangibility of experience has to be denied to perpetuate appearances. Fleeshly relations are too real, too intimate. They bring two people dangerously close. This house can only admit unity. Besides this, a certain guilt has to be engendered in everyone. It is an unconscious fear of reproach that holds all sinners together. They are all sinners against the impossible ideal embodied in Bariamma. Thus morality too becomes a fiction, an appearance.

In the Daro house of course morality is dispensed with. If the house of the forty thieves symbolises the conservative side of society, the Daro house represents dissipated morality, sick sophistication:

Verandahs run along all four walls; a long covered mosquito-netted walkway joins the house to the kitchen bungalow. It is one of the miracles of the place that chapatis do not cool down on their journey along this wood-floored avenue to the dining hall; nor do souffles ever fall. And oil paintings and chandeliers and high ceilings and a flat tar-macadamed roof upon which, once, before he abandoned her there, she knelt giggling through a morning skylight at her husband still in bed. Iskander Harappa's family home. At least I have this piece of him, this soil, his first place. Bilquis, what a shameless person I must be, to settle for such a small part of my man. (p.95).

Whereas Bilquis has to face an alarming set of values, Rani is confronted by a vacuum. Isky's ayah chuckles approvingly at his exploits especially at his pilfering of Mir's whore. Iskander Harappa is exempt from conventional morality just because he is an aristocrat. Thus the law of the jungle is institutionalized. With material plenitude comes the lowest level of adjustment. Rani being weak is of course unable to get her rightful share of the loot. Iskander's wife as she is abandoned by him cannot assume an equal stature. So the servants cheekily inform Rani - "Never mind all that, lady, in this house it's still what Isky's ayah says."

Instead of Bariamma, here is a usurper who has no claims whatsoever to be the head of the house. Her authority is probably based on past practice and Isky's tacit approval. The wife becomes a chattel and the mother - surrogate, the mistress. Thus, sophistication is a veneer that hides the ancient jungle law 'might is right'.

This point is reinforced by the action of Mir. He ransacks the house of Isky's void, of his criminal neglect. The ransacking deepens the void highlighting

the precariousness of Reni's position. In this society a woman without a husband is as vulnerable to attack as a house without guards.

Reni can fend off the danger only by rising above herself. She makes herself stronger by integrating all her faculties within herself and by creating. To fill the void she is placed in, she embroiders.

II.3.a.i. The third section entitled 'Shame Good News and the Virgin' comprises two chapters. The first of these 'Blushing' begins with anecdotes about the expatriate Asians in London. These are stories about an alien emotion recognisable only to the east. There is a father, for instance, who murders his daughter because she has made love to a white boy. There is an Asian girl who tries to live down the incident of molestation at the hands of white teenage boys by keeping quiet about it. And there is a boy who incinerates himself without using fuel. The author builds fictional contexts for all of them as their ghosts haunt our heroine Shamīl. Shame's idiocy, he hints may not have been accidental but generated by the maltreatment the girl suffers at the hands of Bilquis (which in turn has its basis in the feeling of 'Shame' she experienced

at Sufiya's birth). The father has his share of shame. Raza Hyder is dogged by two scandals-the murder of Sindbad Mengal and the disappearance of Chief Minister Gichki. His political career undergoes a sudden fall as a result.

The embodiment of this feeling meanwhile is suffering from a psychosomatic disorder. She blushes not only in embarrassment but also for the world. The author situates her in a symbolic context. Shame absorbs the world's embarrassments or rather the world's shamelessness.

Arjumand Herappa the Virgin Ironpants, achieves her heart's fondest desire when her father decides to notice history. Spurred on by the political successes of Raza and little Mir, Isky renounces all his socially designated 'shameful' activities to forge a place in the hearts of the people. Omar Khayyam is thrown out of his life. He doesn't notice the change for some time because at the time of Isky's conversion he is away at Q. His brother Babur a budding poet, because of his alliance with the tribal guerillas of Q has been shot dead on the order of Raza Hyder.

Pinkie Aurangzeb the second reject fills in

her loneliness with turkey-raising. Shame crosses her way when the demented girl in a fit of rage twists the necks of two hundred and eighteen birds in her turkey-farm. Shame crosses the path of Omer Khayyam too, when after this incident she is brought as a patient to him. Nemises seems to be round the corner because our notoriously shameless hero begins to fall in love with Shame.

II.3.a.ii. Good News or Naveed is placed in diametric opposition to the Virgin Ironpants. The former is as determined to be beautiful as the latter is to deny her good looks.

Naveed is disenchanted with her fiance when she meets him at the polo match. Her determined eyes catch the fancy of Talvar-ul-Haq. A rendezvous with him that night makes up her mind. She refuses to marry Haroun. Shame and scandal follow. Ultimately the lady achieves what she desires. But 'Shame' affects her life too. At the wedding reception which coincides with the coup that raises Shaggy Dog to power, the bride's sister attacks the groom.

Another wedding a much quieter affair follows: knitting Shame and Omer Khayyam Shakil irrevocably.

The section ends with the author wondering how the female characters have managed to overrun the novel making it their story.

11.3.b.1. TWO FACETS OF ARCHETYPAL IDENTITY - THE UNATTRACTIVE COQUETTE AND THE BEAUTIFUL ICE-MAIDEN:

It seems as if Rushdie were discussing women in a perpetual dichotomy. The first opposition of role-types is built up between Bilquis and Rani. Nowhere are their physical attributes discussed but Bilquis is shorn of her eyebrows in the very first section of the novel. The description deprives her of claims to unalloyed beauty bringing in its stead a hint of the comic. Rani, on the other hand, though not described in rapturous terms, manages to retain the impression of classical perfection throughout the novel. The common canvas in their character-painting is a marriage that comes to naught:

This was a great difference between her and Bilquis Hyder: both women had husbands who retreated from them into the enigmatic palaces of their destinies, but while Bilquis sank into eccentricity, not to say craziness, Rani had subsided into a sanity which made her a powerful, and later on a dangerous, human being. (p.152)

The thesis that is being worked out is almost cruel in its clarity. Bilquis as has already been

discussed leant rather heavily on Raza Hyder's honourable shoulder. She gave up her identity as a woman to be a wife and a mother. When both these roles are denied to her she is left as defenceless as she had been once before (shorn of her eyebrows). She reverts to her former self but there is no going back on the road of life. Three men in her life let her down - her father by dying on her, Raza by abandoning her, and her lover by getting killed at the hands of her husband.

There is only one man in Rani's life - the man ill-fate presents to her on a golden platter as a husband. She gets to love him but is unable to inspire the same emotion in his orgy-hardened heart. But the integration that results in her personality as a result of this realisation is truly amazing. She becomes a formidable, quiet figure of strength:

Rani Harappa at forty had defeated Iskander's formidable ayah by the simple method of outliving her. The days of irreverently giggling village girls rummaging through her underwear were long past; she had become the true mistress of Mohenjo by dint of the unassailable calm with which she embroidered shawl after shawl on the verandah of the house, persuading

the villagers that she was composing the tapestry of their lives by choosing to sew a bad future into the magical shawls. (p.151-152)

Rani adds to her own resources as a person. In this case as an artist, a creator. The thesis is brilliantly worked out. The woman who makes man her sole purpose in life is heading towards disaster in this society.

II.3.b.ii. The daughters seem to be clearer 'photocopies' of their respective mothers. Bilquis's darling daughter Naveed misunderstands the society as completely as her mother had:

Marriage is power, Naveed Hyder said. It is freedom. You stop being someone's daughter and become someone's mother instead, ek dumfut-a-fut, pronto. Then who can tell you what to do? (p.155).

She makes groom-hooking her main object in life. To that end she sharpens her only bait or rather builds up a fictional bait - 'good looks'. This unattractive coquette is determined to be beautiful. She makes her ayah Shahbanou pull her hair till she can sit on them because men are traditionally supposed to be attracted to long hair. Her efforts are rewarded. Though she

is 'plain faced as a chapti' she manages to ensnare Haroun Harappa. By sheer dint of obstinacy she lands not one but two prize-catches ultimately marrying the man of her choice.

Arjumand Harappa on the other hand is tired of rejecting suitors:

Loathing her sex, Arjumand went to great lengths to disguise her looks. She cut her hair short, wore no cosmetics or perfume, dressed in her father's old shirts and the baggiest trousers she could find, developed a stooped and slouching walk. But the harder she tried, the more insistently her blossoming body outshone her disguises. (p.156).

With a wisdom inherited from a statesman father Arjumand realizes that physical attributes are traps. She does not wish to lop off her wings for a mere man. She is saved from love by a hair's breadth. After that there is no looking back. She decides to stand beside her father on the podium of success.

II.3.b.iii. In this society a woman can either be a coquette or an ice-maiden. A healthy approach to life that can make her accept herself both as a woman and an individual is denied to the second sex. Every woman, it seems is presented with a choice where she has either to write off her womanliness or her individuality

Where she doesn't the consequences are disastrous. Arjumand brings to mind the Farah of the first section. Both are beautiful, intelligent, with the same brusque way of warding off admirers. Farah however had made no effort to cloak her sex-appeal. Her subsequent treatment at the hands of Omar Khayyam is almost a punishment for her unapproachability. It is perhaps an unconscious fear of Farah like treatment that makes Arjumand reject her looks.

Both Naveed and Arjumand are seeking conquest. There is a tragi-comedy in their situation because they are employing weapons ill-suited to their capabilities, who comes out the winner remains to be seen.

II.3.c.i.

THE GENESIS OF SHAME:

78.9.6.1, It was a strange christening ceremony indeed for Sufiya Zinobia. Names are the legacy that the poorest of parents find themselves capable of leaving behind. What paupers they must have been who called her 'shame'. Sufiya achieved that name due to an accident of sex and due to a fever that took in its toll her mind. Perhaps it wasn't only fever that was responsible for her aberrance:

Why did I do that to her? - Or may be the fever was a lie, a figment of Bilquis Hyder's imagination, intended to cover up the damage done by repeated blows to the head: hate can turn a miracle-gone-wrong into a basket case. And that hakimi potion sounds pretty unconvincing. How hard to pin down the truth, especially when one is obliged to see the world in sliceest snapshots conceal as much as they make plain. (p.116).

The author suggests other not so convenient causes. Sufiya becomes an embodiment of sexist wrongs. She is a creature on whom humiliation is heaped in multi-layers. There is a negation of her personality as soon as she is born because her father refuses to accept her sex. The mother the traditional nurturer, converts her into a gibbering idiot. It is no accident that the shame of being a female is brought home to Sufiya by a woman. It is only by means of a son that Bilquis could have aspired for an upward socio-personal mobility. Her disappointment is thus two edged - she has been denied a higher status and secondly she is ashamed of producing something 'inferior'. Her frustration reflects on her own womanhood and obliquely on women in general in such a society.

II.3.c.ii. By this act of naming, Sufiya becomes a social phenomenon possible only due to the presence of the others. She glows when she hears loving words even though they may be meant for someone else. Similarly

she blushes for the world. Why does she blush? The ghosts of Asian phenomena is within her. The author employs the perspective of an immigrant to investigate the society. Two points of view struggle within every immigrant. The author places the feeling of 'shame' at the cross-roads.

It occurs due to different moral yardsticks for one. Even the father who killed his daughter must have been conscious of other standards besides his own. Secondly, it is a social pusillanimity. The girl molested by white boys must have been conscious of her own innocence. Shame is social conditioning and a social fear. What is present in all its nuances is an overbearing, awful consciousness of the other. The blush of shame reddening the cheeks of our heroine is the consciousness of being objectified by the other.

II.3.c.iii. Shame is equally the result of disequilibrium in the fabric of the society. The society has its share of non-conformists and its share of evil doers. As it is an organic whole, the 'wrongs' must manifest themselves. The author chooses a whimsical analogy to illustrate his point:

Shameful things are done: lies, loose living, disrespect for one's elders, failure to love one's national flag, incorrect voting at elections, over-eating, extramarital sex, autobiographical novels, cheating at cards, maltreatment of womenfolk, examination failures, smuggling, throwing one's wicket away at the crucial point of a Test Match; and they are done shamelessly. Then what happens to all that unfelt shame? What of the unqualified cups of pop? Think again of the vending machine. The button is pushed; but then in comes the shameless hand and jerks away the cup. The button-pusher does not drink what was ordered and the fluid of shame spills, spreading in a frothy lake across the floor. (p.122).

The failure to respond appropriately is a foreboding of imminent change. As though to project its unexpressed guilt the society chooses a plausible victim. What better object can there be than the weaker half of its composition? The burden of the uncomfortable emotion is on their fragile shoulders. It is no mere accident that shame in the novel is a woman. It is a study of group psychology at an intellectual level. It is mainly failure to live up to their exalted moral standards that makes the menfolk turn on the women with a vengeance. We have seen at least two men slip up - Raza Hyder and Iskander Marappa. The former is more 'honourable'. So Shame chooses the right parent.

II.3.c.iv. But a whole story awaits the reader in the marriage of Omar Khayyam to Shame. The inexplicable

fascination he feels for her can only be discussed symbolically. At a superficial level it is of course a marriage of opposites based on a too familiar cliché. Omar Khayyam has grown up without the benefits of social education. The only time when the reader feels that his surroundings are beginning to affect him is when Omar experiences a twinge of shame after the Farah episode. His attraction to Shame is the culmination of his education.

It is not only to fill the void in his being that he seeks her hand. It is also to investigate a social mystery. It is an effort to familiarize the alien or to be familiarized by it. It is a social gesture on the part of our social hero.

The marriage is incompatible for more reasons than one. The following sections will show what storms brew as a result.

II.4.a.1. The fourth section is a reminder that as time races on Pakistan by the sheer obstinacy of following the Hijri era is still 'In the Fifteenth Century'. In this bygone age lives Alexander the Great' - the chapter deals with the rise and fall of Iskander Harappa whose election campaign promotes him as 'a new man for a new century'.

The division of the country into two parts puts Iskander at the topmost position. He indulges in whimsical excesses often misusing his power whereas his daughter Arjumand grooms herself as the second in command.

But she displays her true colours only when under the severest of crises. When Rani and she are put under house arrest under the watchful eye of captain Ijazz a young unsophisticated soldier, both women wreak revenges on him. Rani with a life-time of fortitude after her, makes him love her like a mother, but Virgin Ironparts suddenly turns seductive. She makes him mad with desire.

During six years of imprisonment, Rani embroiders eighteen shawls whose motifs tell the story of Isky. These are sent to Arjumand when she assumes power.

II.4.a.ii. There is another man who belongs to the fifteenth century, whose eyes are fixed somewhere in the oblivious past - Raza Hyder the father of Sufiya Zinobia or Shame. In the chapter entitled 'The Woman in the Veil' we are told the story of Shame.

The whole Hyder family that has now been increased by two - Talwar-ul-Haq and Omar Khayyam, moves to Islamabad. Raza is appointed the C-in-C and is set the self-defeating task of restoring the morale of the legions. The strategy he employs is that of wrestling with and losing to his own men.

Meanwhile, his family associates are going through hard times. Maulana Dawood dies with a senile vision of Mecca in the capital. Naveed is being eroded with continuous child - birth. Bilquis is gradually sinking into eccentricity. Reza Hyder is not particularly comfortable in his new position. When he goes to Iskander Harappa to discuss the defence budget he is slapped across his face.

Shabbanou Sufiya's ayah, guards her ward jealously from her husband, offering him her own body as a substitute. A beast begins to stir in Sufiya. Her tryst with four men is seen by Talwar-ul-Haq due to his clairvoyancy. He tells Raza about it and both agree to bury it in oblivion.

II.4.a.iii. The chapter 'Monologue of a Hanged Man]' begins with the coup that deposes the new man for the new century. He is tried on the charge of being instrumental

in murdering little Mir. On the night of the judgement when he is convicted for the offence, Naveed the younger daughter of his accuser commits suicide, being unable to cope with her numerous progeny.

Sufiya, his elder daughter, is almost dead too. Much against the dictates of his heart, Raza had asked Omar Khayyam to put the beast that lived in her stead, to sleep. Sufiya attacks the doctor almost fatally. But the wife prevails over the beast at the crucial hour. Weighed by gratitude he refuses to give her the fatal injection. She is kept chained and padlocked in the attic.

The Supreme Court upholds the death sentence by a slim majority. Shuja visits the convict Iskander in jail to make him sign a confession. Isky's abuses, however, sign his death warrant instead. He is shot dead by Shuja. That very night his dead body is hanged. And at the same time Raza's daughter, Omar Khayyam's wife and the novel's Shame escapes from captivity.

II.4.a.iv. The concept of 'Stability' is perhaps new to the fifteenth century. The chapter begins with a play that pits Robespierre against Danton, the puritan against the Epicure. The opposition though

not analogous in isomorphic terms, approximates the difference in Raza's and Harappa's personalities.

Omar Khayyam has retired from service. He spends his life shelling pine-kernels and waiting for his wife. Raza Hyder too is waiting for his daughter, all the while Islamizing the country. The surrogate author makes an important point here saying that fundamentalism is not a way of life in Pakistan. It has merely been imposed by the wily politicians.

Tales of a white panther are making their rounds in the countryside. The mythical monster who murders men and animals with its bare hands terrifies the people. Omar Khayyam knows that this myth had its genesis in his own hearth and home. It is his wife. This secret is disclosed to Raza the day Russian troops enter A an adjoining country.

Gradually Raza finds his power dwindling. Rumours about his daughter are spreading. It is only when his triumverate of generals refuses to comply with his orders, that Raza hears the warning bells clearly.

The Hyder family ^{takes} recourse to the only measure left open to them. They flee from the capital shrouded in 'burques' that Bilquis had stitched in her lunacy.

II.4.b.i. THE TAPESTRIES OF JUDGEMENT AND THE VIRGIN CONQUEROR

II.4.b.i. 'Woman as sufferer', 'Woman as creator' and 'Woman as avenger'. In the fifteenth century begins an era of retaliation.

Rani the passive beast of burden of Hareppe's wrongs is metaphorised into the figure of Nemesis. From an object she rises to the status of an avenger. In six years of imprisonment, she recreates the life of Isky in a totally new dimension - that of art. It is her consummate artistry that arrests a life - charging it, convicting it. A judgement is declared - 'Hypocrisy' and punishment is stasis - process of demythologizing presented in its entirety that inverts the earlier myth. Nothing can be added or taken away from this conception.

The artist distances herself adequately from her subject. This process had begun earlier with Rani when abandoned by Isky she had begun to conserve her energies within herself. She had exerted the power of her personality on the villagers, instead, convincing them that it was their future that she was weaving in the shawls. For her husband there was

only silence and an inscrutability which he did not bother to penetrate. This objectivity of vision reaches its climax when she signs her work using her old forgotten maiden name - Rani Humayun. This was Rani untouched, un-affected by her husband.

11.4.b.ii. Certain, primitive tribes are reported to believe that getting a photograph taken is akin to signing ones own death warrant. The moment of capture is indeed the moment of death - the climax of art. Iskander becomes a passive figure as the fingers of the artist take over - interpreting his actions and situating them by giving them a context. Art is indelible and immortal in its perfection. The mastery of conception and the skill of execution 'objectify' Harappa's life in a way that mere every day events or lived 'life' could never have. He himself had made an object of Rani but she refused to be cast in this mould. Her revenge is terrible. She objectifies him for all times to come. And she sends this 'truth' protected by mothballs to his greatest admirer - their daughter. It is entitled 'The Shamelessness of Iskander the Great'.

II.4.b.iii. Yes, I know, you have made a saint of him my daughter, you swallowed everything he dished out, his abstinence, his celibacy of an Oriental Pope, but he could not do without it for long, that man of pleasure masquerading as a servant of Duty, that aristocrat who insisted on his seigneurial rights, no man better at hiding his sins, but I knew him, he hid nothing from me, I saw the white girls in the village swell and pop, I knew about the small but regular donations he sent them, Harappa children must not starve, and after he fell they came to me. (p.192)

In his imagination, Harappa had dehumanized Rani to such an extent that he does not even bother to pay her the common courtesy of deception. It is not honesty that makes him reveal himself to his wife. Rani turns on him with revenge in her stride and brands him a 'hypocrite'. He emerges from the art no longer a myth but as a clever, dissipated nobleman.

II.4.b.iv. There is a type of poetic justice in the model Rani chooses for one of her motifs:

Iskander the assassin of possibility immortalized on a cloth, on which she, the artist, had depicted his victim as a young girl, small, physically frail, internally damaged; she had taken for her model her memory of an idiot, and consequently innocent, child, Sufiya Zinobia Hyder (now Shakil), gasping and empurpled in Iskander's unyielding fist. (p.194).

Sheme was not only tortured by the likes of Raza Hyder, her tormentors included the sophisticated

Iskya as well. 'Shame' can be taken to symbolize that particular pusillanimity of the society, that makes its members susceptible to being objectified. It is as though every action is evaluated on the basis of inviolable standards. It is this timidity that is being over-powered by Iskander, but instead of canalizing it, he is deflecting it to suit his own purposes. Not willing to be objectified by anyone he is simply reducing his surroundings to possessions:

And the autobiographical shawl, the portrait of the artist as an old crone, that self-portrait in which Rani had depicted herself as being composed of the same materials as the house, wood, brick, tin, her body merging into the fabric of Mohenjo, she was earth and cracks and spiders, and a fine mist of oblivion clouded the scene. (p.194).

The theme reappears in many shawls - Isky slapping people, murdering people, exploiting women.

II.4.b.3v. The virgin conqueror's revenge is directed at her captors. She is mythologizing her father condemning his opponent Raza, dividing the world in black and white. To attack the 'black' she employs the one weapon she knows to be most dangerous - her sex appeal. She dangles herself in front of Captain Ijazz, seductively out of reach:

By the end of the period of house arrest, when Arjumand had Captain Ijezz imprisoned and tortured slowly to death, he was twentyfour years old; but his hair, like that of the late Iskander Harappa, had gone prematurely white as snow. When they took him to the torture chambers he said just three words before he started screaming: 'So, what's new. (p.190).

In the hands of a woman, who is conscious of the contradictions of society, men realize the precariousness of their situation. The sophistication that Arjumand has acquired by conservation is analogous to that of her mother. She too is a force to be reckoned with.

Her seduction can be juxtaposed with that of Sufiya's. After experiencing the final humiliation at the hands of men, Sufiya kills the four youths. Arjumand on the other hand dares the men on, tantalizing them, secure in the knowledge of their impotence. The first is an elemental reaction - horror and revenge. The second is a sophisticated version of the same urge - to find the weakest spot of the enemy and hit lethally.

II..4.c.i. WOMEN IN LOVE - A STUDY OF SHAME

§§. 0. 0. 0. The section is not only a saga of triumphant women. It is also a story of their travail:

If a great man touches you, you age too quickly, you live, too much and are used up. (p.181)

It seems to hold true not only for Pinkie to whom it refers but also for Bilquis, Naveed and to some extent for Rani. The men they love penetrate deep into their personalities picking permanent holes. The women emerge, if they do at all, either tattered and ragged or with new unfamiliar personalities. There are at least two suicides - Pinkie Aurangzeb and Naveed. The other two, Rani and Bilquis, kill their former selves in more subtle ways.

II.4.c.ii. Rani reacts to two stereotypes - woman as earth and woman as mother. Through her husband's eyes she finds herself resembling the parched, inanimate soil of Daro. Earth is exploited for purposes other than spiritual or mental - thereby it becomes a fit metaphor for women. Duty towards the earth according to social norms comprises little more than symbolic action. Not one censoring tongue could call to account Iskander's treatment of his estate. Perhaps not many could criticize his treatment of his wife. Because she was showered with material goods (like the earth), she had no right to demand any thing different:

It's my fate, Rani thought, to get mistaken for people's mothers. She remembered that even Iskander had started making that mistake by the end. The last time he visited Mohenjo he bent down and kissed her feet. (p.189).

Woman as mother is a more lethal stereotype to dissect. The myth - laden maternal figure suggests a welcome escape from the stress of marital relationships. Man can cleave to her bosom, find a haven of comfort in her lap. The only emotional responsibility this enjoins upon him is again symbolic - kissing her feet.

Screening his irresponsibility behind these masks Harappa coverts his loving wife into the avenging figure of Nemesis. Rani's personality shows a logical progression starting from a hopeful newly-wed to a weeping, neglected wife, to a strong, embittered avenger who judges dispassionately.

II.4.c.iii. Raza Hyder was a busy man in those years, with little time for what remained of his family life. He ignored his twenty-seven grandchildren, leaving them to their father and ayahs; but his devotion to the concept of family was well-known, he made much of it, and that was why he saw Bilquis regularly, once a week. He had her brought to the television studios in time for his broadcast to the nation. (p.248).

His wife buries the princess of her dreams. The new personality that emerges is that of an undertaker.

She is not only burying her youthful dreams and ambitions but is also planning for future burials. To that end she stitches shrouds. Unlike her counterpart Rani, who sublimates her repressed desires through creative activity, Bilquis's dreams are whittled down to repetitive activity. She is never without some price of stitching and it is always the task of making 'burquas' which she herself calls shrouds.

Her mumbles were full of curtains and oceans and rockets, and soon everybody got used to it, and to that veil of her solipsism, because everyone had their own problems. Bilquis Hyder became, in those years, almost invisible, a shadow hunting the corridors for something it has lost, the body, perhaps, from which it had come unstuck. Raza Hyder made sure she stayed indoors, and the house ran itself, there were servants for everything, and the mistress of the C-in-C's residence became less than a character, a mirage, almost, a mumble in the corners of the palace, a rumour in a veil. (pp. 208-209).

Besides the oft-repeated morbid connotation, the burqa had other meanings. Bilquis is hiding herself. She draws the curtains to shut out a world that had made her accept 'shame', that had hammered at her personality chipping away all that was queenlike and leaving instead a neurotic woman afraid of the Loo. To hide behind a veil signifies a rejection of oneself rooted in the fear that the world inspires.

Bilquis cannot bear to be objectified any more by 'the others', so she shuts herself in, blocking out the world.

She had always been afraid of instability. She had spent her life holding on to furniture and other articles afraid that they would blow away in the loo. But in the reign of stability that her husband ushered in, she was powerless to save what blew away. Her knight in shining armour let her down.

From the depths of her shame, Bilquis still manages to pronounce a judgement on her husband in the fashion of Rani.

The door creaks; a woman's feet crush scattered empty shells, approaching across the pine-kernel droppings is - is the forgotten figure of Bilquis Hyder. Who is carrying a heap of shapeless garments, a selection from the work of her isolated years. Burqas, Omar Khayyam realizes, as hope bursts inside him, head-to-toe cloaks of invisibility - veils. The living wear shrouds as well as the dead. Bilquis Hyder says simply, 'Put these on.' Shakil seizes, rushes into his womanly disguise; Bilquis pulls the black fabric over her husband's unresisting head. 'Your son became a daughter, she tells him, so now you must change shape also. I knew I was sewing these for a reason. (p.262).

Though the veil of her insanity she realizes the true worth of her husband. She strips away his

carefully draped manliness to reveal him as he stands in her imagination - the father of a girl who should have been a boy. The complication of sexes confounds Bilquis as she redrapes her husband in the shroud of women. It is indeed poetic justice that Raza - the defender of Islam - who had imposed the strictest of moralities on women is made to hide literally behind their petticoats. For Raza it would be the ultimate of insults akin to biting the dust. It is this defeat of the self that she imposes on him.

Thus in a way, Bilquis scores a victory like Rani.

II.4.c.iv. Pinkie Aurangzeb the beautiful wife of the Marshal is renounced like a bad habit by Iskander. The love that he had bestowed on her is directed onto the people:

His diverted love (because he never saw Pinkie again, never lifted a telephone or wrote a letter, her name never passed his lips; he saw the photographs and after that nothing) splashed over the people, until one day Hyder choked off the spring. (p.182).

She commits suicide and even her ghost does not arise to comfort the destroyer - so potent is her

exile from his love. Pinkie is used up. Is it just a coincidence that the author finishes her irrevocably? Her love neither converts into eccentricity nor into revenge. It must be remembered that she was a mistress not a wife. In this particular social system her happiness encroached upon another woman's life. Her love had its roots in guilt. It is not mere conventional morality that denounces her but a much bigger social mystery. She is not even a legal possession of Iaky's, she is just a pick up.

II.4.c.v. Naveed is full of good news till the plethore kills her. Her dream of exercising power through her children boomerangs terribly on her. The doubtful love of a man does not bring her anything besides a geometric progression of children:

But her husband was relentless, insatiable, his dream of children had expanded to fill up the place in his life previously occupied by polo, and owing to his clairvoyant talents he always knew which nights were best for conception. He came to her once a year and ordered her to get ready, because it was time to plant the seed, until she felt like a vegetable patch whose naturally fertile soil was being worn out by an over-zealous gardener, and understood that there was no hope for women in the world, because whether you were respectable or not

the men got you anyway, no matter how hard you tried to be the most proper of ladies the men would come and stuff you full of alien unwanted life. (p.207).

The motif of woman as earth and woman as mother reappears. Her own mother lost her husband because of her inability to do what Naveed is doing so effectively. But in either capacity a woman is a lost cause. Talver loves her as a gardener would love a fertile patch in his garden. Through her he foresees an extension of himself - a proud multiplication. Her suicide is an escape from the trap of motherhood. It signifies the failure of determination - formerly the cardinal trait in her character.

II.4.d.1. A NEW IDENTITY - AROUSAL OF SHAME

The character of Sufiya Zinobia will have to be discussed on two levels - one as a story of a girl on whom society wreaks its worst revenge, the other as a beast of Nemesis. The two do not mingle into each other. Their stories are different. But the total interpretation will take cognizance of both, the way it does in Omar Khayyam's imagination:

Can it be possible, he wondered, that human beings are capable of discovering their nobility

in their savagery? Then he was angry with himself, remembering that she was no longer Sufiya Zinobia, that nothing was left in her which could be recognized as the daughter of Bilquis Hyder, that the Beast within had changed her for all time. I should stop calling her by her name, he thought; but found that he could not. Hyder's daughter, my wife, Sufiya Zinobia Shakil. (pp 254-255).

II.4.d.ii. Though the beast had reared its head earlier, the genesis of the fury of the beast begins to take place only after Sufiya marries Omar Khayyam. The ocean-motif is important in this context:

You must think of yourself as the ocean, she told Sufiya Zinobia. Yes, and he, the man, imagine him a sea creature, because that is what men are like, to live they must drown in you, in the tides of your secret flesh. Her eyes roamed ~~loosely~~ around her face. Sufiya Zinobia pulled a face at these incomprehensible maternal abstractions and replied obstinately in her voice of a seven-year old girl, which was also the eerily disguised voice of the latent monster. I hate fish. (p.199).

The mysterious sea of personality begets the strangest of creatures. The girl as a human being is analogous to the vast, illimitable expanse of the ocean. The creature it begets is not a constituent of it, but is a product of the turmoil it suffers. The turmoil results from Sufiya's instinctive feeling that she is being denied her marital rights. Her husband

has a shadow-wife in the shape of her ayah Shahbanou. The retarded girl knows that there is something wrong socially and morally in this situation.

In this context her mental abnormality becomes important. The feeling of shame is largely irrational. Sufiya by the handicap the author has imposed on her is unable to sift the situation intellectually. It is enough for her to feel the flush of shame. Thus the feeling of shame is objectification at the hands of the other without really understanding the context:

Then the bad shapes again, because if she has a husband, and a husband is for babies, but babies-aren't-for-you, then something must be wrong. This gives her a feeling, just like a blush alllover, hot hot. But although her skin tingles and her cheeks burn it is only happening on the inside; nobody notices these new internal blushes. (p.215).

II.4.d.iii. Cheated in marriage, Sufiya decides to experience some of married life. She voluntarily offers herself to four slum youth. Then rearing up in anger she kills them all. She is sentencing those who at her own invitation, treated her body like an object.

Relationship between unequals can only be that of ^{the} dominator and the dominated. The sex act thus becomes an expression of superiority on the part of men. It is employed by men, the women are the passive recipients. Men are able to treat sex with a happy irresponsibility. Any woman who is game is good enough as is adequately depicted in the incident of the four slum youths. Women's sexuality on the other hand, (as has been discussed before) is a fragile possession. Perhaps it is this incompatibility of views that angers Shame.

II.4.d.iv. The shackling of shame has many symbolic connotations. For one, it can be related to the metaphor of the sea. Marriage is a dispersion - an expansion of personality into limitlessness. But the beast of shame is nothing if not specific. It is an embodiment of an emotion. It is the fury that takes birth in sufferings. So it cannot be tolerated in marriage. It is thereby chained and padlocked.

The beast escapes on the night of Raza's most shameful doing - the hanging of the corpse of Harappa.

With the escape there is a reversal of certain traditional stereotypes. Both Omar Khayyam and Raza are scared of Shame. She is closing in an arch around them stalking her prey. The woman-beast has become the hunter and man, the traditional gamester is now the game. Perhaps it is a suggestion on the part of the author - a suggestion to effect a socio-political change in society.

II.4.e.1

MEN IN POWER

The author juxtaposes another pair of characters in the novel Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder. Both are ambitious, both capture power. The easiest way to analyse them would be to put them against each other as Danton and Robespierre - the epicure against the puritan. But the author warns us:

Iskander Harappa was not just Danton; Raza Hyder wasn't Robespierre pure and simple. Isky certainly lived it up, perhaps he was something of an epicure, but he also believed that he was always, unarguably, right, and eighteen shawls have shown us that he wasn't averse to Terror, either. What befell him in his death-cell befell others because of

him. That is important. (But if we mind about the other, we must also, unfortunately, mind about Iskander.) And Reza Hyder? Is it possible to believe that he took no pleasure in what he did, that the pleasure principle was not in operation, even though he claimed to act in the name of God? I don't think so. (p.242).

Steering the reader away from simplistic generalizations, the author leaves him in deep waters. To keep afloat one would have to realize that there is indeed a common basis for both of them. Men in power plan their personalities to capture the emotions of the multitude. Harappa assumes the guise of democracy and western sophistication whereas the more indigenous Reza lurks behind Islam. Both are characterized by an unmistakable hypocrisy.

11.4.e.ii. Harappa had to effect a sea change in his life to be able to capture the imagination of the multitude. He even dug up his wife from the ruins of his neglect to present an ideal. He remains the same dissipated nobleman behind his mask. Under the cover of democracy, repression of the worst kind is let loose on the people. But the reader's reaction is confused by dialogues like the following:

I am making this country Iskender told her quietly, making it as a man would build a marriage. (p.183).

The debauch does have a dream. In his own way he is carrying the country forward:

But such was the impact of his coming that the actual change, thirteen hundred into fourteen hundred, felt like an anticlimax when it finally occurred. His greatness overpowered Time itself. A NEW MAN FOR A NEW CENTURY., yes, he ushered it in, ahead of Time. But it did the dirty on him. Time's revenge-it hung him out to dry. (p.186).

The conception of such character is a stroke of genius. He appears to change countenance with every angle that one views him from. Every aspect is correct. The delineation leaves one wondering about the rigour of 'power'.

II.4.e.iii. An equally brilliant analysis is that of Raza Hyder. He presumes to deliver the country from corruption. But in one of his ears whispers Harappa himself, in the other Maulana Dawood. His actions are an amalgamation of both. On the one hand he tries to clear the

mess that Harappa's government had created. In the process he finds himself following the same beaten track. On the other hand his preoccupation with Islam becomes an agent of repression. He becomes a much more obnoxious ruler than Harappa because even his ideal 'Islamization' is unacceptable to the people:

Two years after the death of Iskander Harappa the women of the country began marching against God. These processions were tricky things, Raza decided, they needed careful handling. So he tried cautiously, even though Maulana Dawood screamed in his ear that he was a weakling, he should strip the whores naked and hang them from all available trees. But Raza was circumspect, he told the police to avoid hitting the ladies on the breasts when they broke up the demonstrations. (p.249).

Devoid of the sophistication of Harappa, Raza is a tough nut to crack. Our response to him is confused by the way he comes into power. One is left doubting whether it was shrewd scheming or accidents of history that did the trick. Perhaps the author wants to convey a combination of both. This thesis is strengthened by the terpidation with which the downfall of the dictator is approached. Raza is too strong a force in

society to be done away only with the synthetic means of a coup. It must not be forgotten that he has sired Shame. His character delineates a very dangerous, subversive element in society that engenders Shame:

Well, well, I mustn't forget I'm only telling a fairy-story. My dictator will be toppled by goblinish, fairy means. Makes it pretty easy for you, is the obvious criticism, and I agree, I agree. But add, even if it does sound a little peevish; you try and get rid of a dictator some time. (p.257).

II.5.a.1. At last the 'Judgment Day' arrives. The chapter begins with the fleeing of Raza, Bilquis and Omar Khayyam disguised in burghes. They are being hunted by the new regime presumably that of Arjumand and Haroun.

The wheel comes full circle when this last scene in the novel approximates the first. The three escapees reach Nishapur. The aged crones welcome them with stale cake and tea served in an ancient tea service. Omar Khayyam realizes that his mothers are plotting revenge. He is unable to take any action because the following morning Bilquis, Hyder and he himself are taken ill.

He has fantastic hallucinations in his fever. In between deleriums he realizes, that his mothers are not administering any medication probably wishing the fever to do their dirty work for them. They accuse him of not honouring the memory of his dead brother.

Raza wakes up from fever feeling a resurgence of tenderness for his wife to whom he owes his life. The three crones have not looked after him at all. Fearing the same of Bilquis he sets out to look for her. The odour of death guides him to her corpse. The three sisters surprise him with a gun. With the dead body of Bilquis in his arms he is made to walk into the contraption Belloch had designed which does its work killing him instantly.

The next scene opens with Talvar-ul-Haq interrogating Omar Khayyam who is accused of murdering Raza and shooting him dead in exasperation. Perhaps, this is just a piece of delerium because in the following paragraph we find him alive.

The three crones disappear leaving the gate of Nishapur open, after years. People of Q flood in looting and marauding the house. Seeing Omar Khayyam the crowd flees in fear. Omar hearing strange screams patiently awaits the disaster which has been haunting him subconsciously. His wife Shame enters the house and wrings the neck of her husband.

The flame that is in her bursts through her body setting fire to the house. The last we see of it is a column of smoke rising out of it shaped like a headless man.

II.S.b.1.THE SENTENCE AND THE EXECUTION

In the last chapter the thesis of the novel unfolds itself. The men are made passive while the women become the actors. After donning the garbs Bilquis had stitched for them, they come symbolically under the woman's tutelage. More so because the garb is that of Shame. For the first time after their marriage, Bilquis is in a position to impose an identity on her husband; moreover to declare it to the world. In the crowded bus she yells out to the passengers:

Shame should come to you, she cries in her unquestionably female voice, have the men in this region sunk so low that ladies must be treated like whores. (p.269).

She has become their protector - their guardian angel. Raza feels a resurgence of love for her but of course he ^{is} too late. Bilquis had already crossed the frontier when he goes to reclaim her:

For God's sake, Biloo, what are you up to? I hope you are not acting or something what is the meaning of this, you're not supposed to die? (p.280).

The emotion is that of a man cheated of his prize possession. Paradoxically, it is also that of a man who has not been able to have his say. The judgment has been sounded already. There is no hope of redemption. The judge has quit the court.

Seeking refuge with the three crones the two escapees place themselves completely in their hands. A quick sympathy develops between the sisters and Bilquis. Bilquis falls in with the mood partaking in her eccentric way in the

charade that follows their welcome. A tea party is laid out. Bilquis makes schizophrenic small talk:

The laws of takallouf had forced her to make conversation, but it had been too long since Bilquis had indulged in chit-chat; she had lost the knack of it, and there was the tension and debilitation of the long escape to consider besides, to say nothing of the eccentricity of her latter years. Sipping tea as she spoke, smiling brightly in response to the triple smile of her hostesses, she seemed to imagine herself to be recounting some tiny, amusing anecdote, or expatiating wittily upon a sophisticated point of fashion. Once giants walked the earth, she repeated emphatically. Yes titans absolutely, it's a fact. (pp.270-271).

Perhaps Bilquis is referring to the days of the cinema when things were blown out of proportion. Perhaps her husband is the pygmy she refers to. She is trying to forge a communication between the sisters and herself. Her efforts succeed to a certain degree. Next day in a fit of madness, when she is banging shut doors and windows, the cronies sympathise: "She has suffered". Yes, she had and so had they. Her endeavour to shut herself from the world is one they can appreciate and understand.

II.5.b.ii. But Bilquis has to be punished for her weakness regarding their common enemy - men. She has identified herself to a certain extent with Reza and she has saved her man from the jaws of death - she has played the role of a traditional wife. After their neglect kills her, the old crones say a line of condolence. They tell Reza "You should be dead instead of her". They too realize the tragedy of her situation.

The target of their revenge is Reza. The pretext is the murder of their son. But the reason can be sought deeper than this. It must be remembered that Reza embodies the values of an orthodox repressive Islamic society. It is a society that the three sisters had rejected when they decided to have a child out of the wedlock. The lash of Reza's Islamization had been felt mainly by the women of Pakistan. So it is no accident that his death is effected by women who had transgressed the laws of the society, by women who had forbidden their ward to feel shame.

II.5.c.i. THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL

1. Omar Khayyam our peripheral hero returns to the roots of his shamelessness - like a prodigal son who finds the outside world too difficult to manage and comes back to the arms of a loving family. There is an inevitability to his return. It is as if a peculiar heredity makes Nishapur the only resting place for him. Throughout his life abroad he had been conscious of invisible ties with his birth place. There is a return of even the same malady of vertigo for him when he turns towards home:

The vertigo carries him back to his childhood and shows him once again the worst of all his nightmares, the gaping mouth of the void. The deepest parts of Omar Khayyam are stirring once more, the dizziness is churning them up, they are warning him that whatever anyone says he ought to know that the border is the edge of his world, the rim of things, and that the real dreams are these far-fetched notions of getting across that supernatural frontier into some wild hallucination of a promised land. Get back into 'Nishapur', the inner voices whisper, because that's where you've been heading all your life, ever since the day you left. (p.260).

His birthplace had stood somewhere outside the society. This distance makes it impossible for him to forge permanent links with both. One of the two had to be chosen.

11.5.c.ii. Reaching Nisapur he finds that it has rejected him. He is no longer the beloved, spoilt son. There had been a usurper who had taken more than his mothers' affections. He had also usurped Omar's identity as a poet. The house that Omar had left, has abandoned him in turn. He is superfluous to the atmosphere of revenge that prevails there. He stands in his mother's eyes as a veritable Frankenstein, a creature they had composed but whose development has belied their plans. They throw at him, the accusation of 'Shamelessness', though they themselves had engendered it in him. They hang around his neck the too familiar necklace of shoes. Omar had missed the first one because at that particular time he had belonged to Nisapur. Now when the house doesn't accept him, he becomes an outsider in every way, an outsider to life itself for whom the necklace is a befitting

ornament. The tension is between the 'in' and 'out' of society. Omar Khayyam has been 'in' too long to return intact to the 'out'.

II.5.c.iii. His hallucinations in his delirium are an effort to colonize this now alien world. The house contracts and expands in his fevered imagination. Either way it is becoming unfit for him:

The place is shrinking, middle-Munnee fumed. Honestly, too bad, like a cheap shirt. We should have had it Sanforized. Soon the whole house will be smaller than a matchbox and we will be out on the street. And Chunni-ma had the last word. In that sunlight, without walls, the phantasm of his eldest mother prophesied, we will not be able to survive. We will turn to dust and be blown away by the wind. (p.275).

In comparison with the outside world, the house is indeed too small to hold them. It is too insignificant to generate an opposing value system and keep it alive. But in itself it is too huge a place for comfort. Its' values are mazes in which Omar Khayyam keeps losing himself. He sees his whole life in context of the house:

The sum of all his possibilities; he opened one cobwebbed door and shrank back from the little brightly-lit group of white-masked figures stooping over a body. It was an operating room at the Mount Mira Hospital. The figures were beckoning to him in a friendly way, they wanted him to help with the operation but he was afraid to see the patient's face. He turned abruptly and felt pine-kernel shells crunching beneath his heels as the rooms of the Commander-in-Chief's official residence began to form around him. (p.275)

The sum total of his actions has been influenced by the house. The house contains his whole life. His delirium is a desperate effort to assert his proprietary rights.

II.5.c.iv. His efforts at colonization are vain. The history of the house is steeped in the opposite of what he has taken for a life partner. The proprietary rights are still held by the three ancient, creaking crones who had banished shame from their hearth and home, but who nevertheless invoked the feeling to punish their erring son. With their murder of Raza - an honourable act as it avenged the murder of their own son - they become superfluous to the house. No longer do they require the barred and padlocked gates. Symbolically by

doing away with the former dictator, they return to the bosom of the society. But as soon as the opposition between them and the society disappears they become superfluous. They simply disappear.

II.5.c.v. At last Omar inherits his birthplace.
He confesses in his delirium:

I am a peripheral man, Omar Khayyam answered. Other persons have been the principal actors in my life-story. Hyder and Herappa, my leading men. Immigrant and native, Godly and profane, military and civilian. And several leading ladies. I watched from the wings, not knowing how to act. I confess to social climbing, to only-doing-my-job, to being cornerman in other people's wrestling matches. I confess to fearing sleep. (p.283).

He is invoking the heritage of the house. His inheritance of shamelessness had qualified him for this much and no more. But the price of confusion of values still has to be paid. A long love-affair with shame has to be requited. He had married her without having the courage to possess her entirely. She grew too big, too terrible for him to contain.

Shame is the product of the 'others' of Nishapur. She is the wrath of the society that Nishapur had shut itself against. She enters the house of her husband. He is waiting for her like a bridegroom on his wedding night. She has to deliver him from the contradictions of his being. His oscillations are at last over. But the collision is too great. It can only shatter the house:

And then the explosion comes, a shock-wave that demolishes the house, and after it the fireball of her burning, rolling outwards to the horizon like the sea, and last of all the cloud, which rises and spreads and hangs over the nothingness of the scene, until I can no longer see what is no longer there; the silent cloud, in the shape of a giant, grey and headless man, a figure of dreams, a phantom with one arm lifted in a gesture of farewell. (p.286).

Shame and the house of shamelessness collide and are destroyed. The society is shorn of its values. Only the spectre of its contradictions rises out of the void to bid farewell.

1. Salman Rushdie, Shame (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1983), p.31. All the quotations that follow are from the same book. Henceforth only the page numbers are indicated.
2. The Author's italics.
3. The author's italics.

III. ASPECTS OF A SOCIO-POLITICAL TEXT

The text reveals itself gradually. Its predominant themes deal with the socio-political situation of the land.

THE SURROGATE AUTHOR

III.a.i. A discussion of the novel that doesn't take the authorial asides into cognizance would not only be incomplete but misleading. The tone of these asides is lackadaisical and almost invites misinterpretation. One is tempted to dismiss them as the multiloquence of Salman Rushdie 'the man.' The man a myth in himself, is again a controversial figure by volition. His political views though indispensable for the genesis of the novel will not concern us here as these asides are far too frequent and deliberate in the novel to be treated as 'indulgences in personal vanity by a successful man'. They can only be interpreted as a part of the novel.

The 'I' of the story is as much a conscious creation as any other character in the novel.

This surrogate author reaches out to the reader directly. Lolling in his armchair, perhaps flicking ash from his cigarillo he tells us about himself. He is an immigrant living in London. His parental house is still in Pakistan though the family originated from India. His sister belongs to the westernized jet set of Pakistan (as inferred from her love of Coca-Cola and imported cars). He himself associates with the *crémé de la crémé*. His circle of acquaintances includes a poet of repute and an ambassador with whom he can lose his temper. He may spice his revelations with personal reminiscences telling the reader about a son, a sister and a father. He may even tell us that he was angry when his father decided to sell off their house in Bombay. But he will not enter the story to have a *tete' a tete'* with Omar Khayyam. The story is fiction, he tells us - he is not writing a realistic novel. He even toys with our reactions a bit - we may find the ending a *'deus ex machina'* kind of simplification but then so what.

III.a.ii. The first effect of the intrusion of an objective 'I' is obviously estrangement

from the story. Fiction of this kind does not demand a traditional identification with its personae. To guard against a sentimental concern with Rani's exile or Naveed's suicide the author has effected an unrealistic exaggeration of facts. The creation of a surrogate author aids the estrangement effect, at the same time it saves us from the pitfall of symbolization. Rani's exile, for instance, is in tune with the status of woman as 'object' in the society and Naveed's fate arises from the effects of the stereotype of woman as producer. The social process is delineated by the surrogate author. The story of these women has to be foregrounded (we shall come to this concept later) against the background of low status accorded to women in general. Gathering up in a symbol would make Naveed and Rani embodiments of maltreatment accorded to women which they clearly aren't:

I had thought, before I began, that what I had on my hands was an almost excessively masculine tale, a saga of sexual rivalry, ambition, power, patronage, betrayal, death, revenge. But the women seem to have taken over, they marched in from the peripheries of the story to demand the inclusion

of their own tragedies, histories and comedies, obliging me to couch my narrative in all manner of sinuous complexities to see my male plot refracted, so to speak, through the prisms of its reverse and 'female' side. It occurs to me that the women knew precisely what they were up to - that their stories explain and even subsume, the men's.¹ (Sabaan Rashedy, *Shame Rape & Co.*, 1982, p.173)

The surrogate author goes on to point out that it goes without saying that not all women are crushed by any system, no matter how oppressive.

They (Rani and Naveed) are part of the social process. We have to view them not as individuals, nor as symbols, but as inevitable creations of certain social urges. They can be viewed only in context of the society. The voice of the surrogate author jerks us back to what is reality in the society he is portraying.

III.a.iii. A predominance of the female over the male has psychoanalytic connotations. As quoted by Eagleton Julia Kristeva distinguishes between 'the symbolic' and 'the semiotic'. The latter is feminine and revolutionary whereas the former is a guardian of concepts like God,

father, state order, property and is predictably masculine.² In the novel political power and religion are clearly the domain of male characters. According to the surrogate author the female plot 'subsumes' and 'explains' the male. Thus, the story of Harappa's rise and fall becomes relevant by the story of Rani's exile and revenge. The story of Raza's Islamization is understood only in context of Bilquis's disintegration. The popular social myths of religion and chaste love are questioned by the story of these women. If Harappa's love was so overpowering why did his wife become his Nemesis? If Raza's Islamization was pious, why did his wife don the veil of insanity? If the social processes are aimed at stability and propriety, from where came 'Shame' the avenger? The female plot questions all the established fictions of society. It slaughters the holy cows of religion, decorum, propriety. As depicted by the chart given below we see that in every sub-plot the male point of view is exploded by the female. Chart - I.

Chart - I

<u>Male Plot</u>		<u>Female Plot</u>	<u>End Result</u>
Iekander Harappa's rise to power	:	Rani's Exile	Execution of Harappa Rani's judgement
Reza Hyder's rise to power	:	Bilquis's insanity	Murder of Hyder Shrouds are stitched by Bilquis
Life of Omar Khayyam The Outsider	:	Life of Sufiya Zinobia or Shame	Murder of Omar at Sufiya's hands

So much so that the plot turns on itself
and even questions its own viability:

It is the true desire of every artist
to impose his or her vision on the
world... (p.87)

and

as for me: I, too like all migrants,
am a fantasist. I build imaginary
countries and try to impose them on
the ones that exist. (p.87)

The surrogate author recognises an
ambiguity in his perception of Pakistan. A
touch of the indeterminate is indispensable
to his intention: it is a revolutionary text
that he is writing - a text that questions the
existing norms in the society. But while doing
that, it should not establish some equally unshakeable
ones of its own. It has to be fluid and dynamic.
It has to subsume. The voice of the surrogate
author dissolves the solidity of the text again
and again. The author of the novel is working
at two levels. On the one he is creating a creator
and on the second this creator's' creation.

The liberties taken with fiction are juxtaposed with flesh and blood reality. Three mothers give birth to a single baby, the blush of a child scalds the kissing lips of Bariamma - these exaggerations and flights of imagination are controlled by an assured confident speaker who asserts that he is not telling a realistic tale at all. Who can symbolize blatant fiction? Who can question a statement made with the assertion that it is a lie? We have to satisfy ourselves with the reminder that it is the surrogate author's point of view that we are dealing with. And we know what manner of man he is.

III.e.iv. The creation of a surrogate author deals effectively with the prosaic problem of credibility. At the time of perusal Pakistan as an objective reality is bound to loom up on every reader's horizon. By which authority one may ask does Rushdie make the following statement:

Pakistan is not Iran. This may sound like a strange thing to say about the country which was until Khomeini, one of the only two theocracies on earth (Israel being the other one) but it is my opinion that Pakistan has never been a mullah - dominated society. (p.251).

But of course, these sentences will be attributed to the surrogate author and not to Rushdie at all. The author is not writing a Roman a' clef. It is not political pamphleteering for the PPP that he is indulging in. He is investigating a situation and positing an outcome. Thus the surrogate author is not made as one of those who are likely to lay down their lives for liberty, equality, fraternity. He is an armchair theorist who is analysing the political aspect of the country taking a psycho-social point of view.

The person of the speaker makes it convenient for the author to ignore the lower strata - the common people almost totally. He believes that the destiny of the country is in the hands of the two families his fiction deals with and that may well be the case. The reader loses the right of ideological difference of opinion because the point of view is within the novel and to question it would be an oblique criticism of the very existence of the sophisti-

cated author. It must be noted however that his inclusion in the novel is not an apology but an assertion of a particular point of view.

III.e.v. The point of view of the surrogate author, it must be clarified, does not spring to the eye. It provides a background to the events of the story. Thereby it fulfills the necessity of foregrounding them - highlighting them. The canvas of the novel is too big. It starts with pre-independence India and extends to Pakistan beyond today. Regarding social processes it stretches from repression of women to the possible outcome of repression. The characters on the other hand are too sparse, too brightly coloured to stand on the canvas by themselves. They have to be provided a background to give them their proper perspective which is at times the result of processes already under way in society. A good example would be Bilquis's treatment of her daughter Sufiya. An appropriate reference to this would be the aside:

And would I also have to describe the Sind Club in Karachi, where there is still a sign reading 'Women and Dogs Not Allowed Beyond This Point.' (p.69).

Sufiya's maltreatment at the hands of her mother is not a result of devil's machinations but the culmination of a social malady. Similarly Arjumand's denial of femininity is not a congenital defect but the correct perception of the social status of women. Thus the amusing eccentricities of the characters have a *raison d'etre*. The fairy tale has a meaning.

III.a.vi. Let us investigate the theme of the novel as postulated by the *asides*:

Repression is a seamless garment; a society which is authoritarian in its social and sexual codes, which crushes women beneath the intolerable burdens of honour and propriety breeds repressions of other kinds as well. (p.173).

This *aside* makes a direct connection between the social and the political as it goes on to suggest dictatorship to be the result of such repression. Let us study the phenomena. The *asides* create a picture of a country where

irregularities in the civic sphere make subversion of the law a way of life as depicted by the anecdote about the illegal sale of 'Defence' land and the greenness of the lawns there. 'Government' is accepted as a repressive body as depicted by the anecdote about the government spy. We do not have to go far from fiction to investigate their repercussions. Juxtapose them with the rumours about the affair between Farah and Rodrigues and we come to the thesis - a basic loss of faith in man with evil as his natural tendency, has been accepted by the people. There, the swashbuckling honour of men has in its heart a massive guilt complex due to unexpressed, unacceptable cravings. This leads to a masochistic urge and results in the acceptance of repression. And here, basic loss of faith in ones own self leads to minor tinkering with the law of the land.

The opposition delineated between Robespierre and Danton - the puritan and the epicure, lends further support to the thesis. Repression under the guise of puritanism goes down well with the public. Even Harappa has

to hide behind a puritan's mask to stay in power. Atrocities committed for such impossible ideals as embodied say in Islam answer to the basic masochistic urge in people.

Another expression of this urge is of course repression of women. It is not merely an expression but also a result of it - repression in public life leads to, as well as is a result of inequalities in social life. Thus a circular reasoning can be posited as the author himself admits that in certain closed systems effects may precede causes. Frustration of a closed society can generate (a) maltreatment of women which in turn generates (b) a guilt feeling that makes dictatorship the only plausible government (because democracy its obverse stems from a belief in 'good'). On the other hand dictatorship itself which is based on puritan ideals gives rise to further guilt - feelings and leads to repression of women. Question arises as to why this kind of unrealistic standards are acceptable to the people. The answer is

is provided by one of the asides in which Pakistan the country is compared to a palimpsest. This new country breaking away from the main land had no history of its own. So, a new tradition had to be forged for what the author whimsically calls Peccavistan. Even in the term Peccavi' there are connotations of guilt, of unlawful conquest:

There is an apocryphal story that Napier, after a successful campaign in what is now the south of Pakistan, sent back to England the guilty, one-word message, 'Peccavi'. I have Sind. (p.88).

The forging of history is no easy task. The choice of the people alights first on love (Mehappa) and then on Islam (Raza Hyder). Both are fictional. Love is based on a vulgar playing to the gallery. And to use a contradictory metaphor religion in Pakistan is a sort of 'holy cow'. Deep down the people are convinced of its impracticability but a type of social conditioning makes them pay lip-service to the concept.

It is this social pusillanimity of which Raza takes such blatant advantage. Similarly

his unfairness to Bilquis is well within social bounds. She breaks the marital bond by her affair with Sindbad Mengal. But what of Raza's efforts to cast her in a preconceived mould? What about his insane ranting at the birth of a female child? His wrongs to Bilquis are too subtle - almost impossible to pin-point unless the story is read and understood in context of the asides. His treatment of her is analogous to his exercise of political power - of repression under the guise of Islamization. Thus, the story of Raza's and Iskander's reigns of power is also the story of their family lives, it is also a story of Bilquis and Rani. In this context the speaker's comments about male and female plots become relevant. He wonders how a story that presumed to deal with a struggle for political power was sidetracked into feminine issues. The social and the political cannot be separated at any juncture not even at the highest seat of power in the land.

III. b. i. THE IN AND THE OUT OF SOCIETY

III. b. i The story of the novel begins from the outer - most periphery of the society - in the mountaneous region of Q and rushes towards the flat plain of the centre. The mountains form the rim of this universe but already there is a confusion in the values:

Hell above, paradise below: I have lingered on this account of Omar Khayyam's original unstable wilderness to underline the propositions that he grew up between twin eternities; whose conventional order was in his experience, precisely inverted...(p.23).

Omar Khayyam would not have been perceived as the hero at all if the author had not specifically pointed him out as being one. With the reiteration of his centrality to the novel the paradoxes of his peripheral birth become more glaring:

Dizzy, peripheral, inverted, infatuated insomniac, stargazing, fat; what manner of hero is this? (p.25).

The painstaking effort with which the author places the hero in an unfavourable social position is remarkable. With every stroke of character painting he draws attention to

his inadequacy. The accident of the venue of his birth fits in with the general values. The structure of the society is that of concentration in the centre with thinning out in the periphery. To illustrate this point one may take the parallel case of Farah Rodrigues and Shahbanou the ayah. In Q the illegitimate conception of Farah does raise a hue and cry. She leaves the place but is able to return sans husband, child and explanation. The swelling womb of Shahbanou on the other hand, forces her to disappear from the scene of her 'crime' irrevocably. In the capital the hypocrisy of social honour is at the climactic point. All eyes are fixed on the personae. Thus the reaction in the shape of shame is generated there whereas in the periphery an 'outsider' is born (who is the focal interest of the narrative).

The circumstances of his birth put him beyond the pale of society. His inheritance as ~~soon~~ discussed in the second chapter is a strange vacuum. An important point to be noted here is the difference between a social and anti-social. Omar Khayyam is not a reaction, he is an evasion. He is not a tragic but a negative

character. He is unhaved, fatherless and and probably Godless. He has no positive attributes. His personality is made of absences. His only gift is the power of hypnotism which is a subversive skill to loosen other people's inhibitions.

Another point very important in his character development is his consciousness of the situation. Regarding his world, he is almost an absurd hero who free from social conditioning perceives the situation through his individual vision. He recognises reality right from the beginning. Almost from birth he is afflicted by a sense of inversion because his first sight is of a range of topsy - turvy mountains. He recognizes the peripheral nature of his birthplace. He is also troubled by vertigo. Symbolically, he has perceived his 'life-style.'

He wakes up in between sleep troubled by nightmares of worthlessness. So, he begins conquering himself by cutting down on his sleeping time. Subduing dilemmas of the self, he can become an ideal onlooker:

You see before you, he confided (to Iskander Harappa) 'a fellow who is not even the hero of his own life; a man born and raised in the condition of being out of things. Heredity counts, don't you think so?' (p.24)

The ideal is Camus's absurd man who can view life objectively, recognize its absurdity and his own and yet live on. This vision does not abandon Omar Khayyam even when he is threatened by his wife. Though in danger of imminent death he thinks sympathetically of her - that for the first time in her unfortunate life she is free to act according to her will.

III.b.ii. Let us investigate the development of Omar Khayyam in the novel - how the onlooker came to wed the leading character. His first action in the story is his escape into Cantonment school from the cloying intimacy of Nishepur. It can be interpreted as ~~as~~ asocial. The realization of the misdeed is his first brush with shame. The onlooker becomes a participant in the social drama. His escape from Q itself is an extension of the feeling. His hobnobbing with Isky falls clearly in the realm of the asocial but guilt has entered his psyche. His marriage with shame

makes him more of a participant in the working of the society. The Shahbanou-episode is thus marked with greater social censure than the earlier one with Farah.

Thus we see that the onlooker graduates to the stage through the agency of shame. The final character that emerges is that of a man oscillating between the asocial and the sentiment of shame.

III.b.iii. Enough has been said about the circumstances of the genesis of shame. Only a few points need to be emphasized here.

Firstly, that these circumstances provide a perfect anti-thesis to those of Omar Khayyam's. Where Shame is begot in the thick of society, Omar Khayyam is begot in its famine. Two pairs of anxious eyes await the birth of Bilquis's baby - the maternal eyes have a gleam of hope for the perfection of an assumed identity. Social status of two adults is in the hands of this baby. On the other hand, Omar Khayyam from the moment of conception breaks the bond between his mothers and the society. Of course,

Bilquis's hopes too boomerang on her. The point that is being made is that one birth is in social void while the other is a social catastrophe.

Reaction is bred at the place of maximum repression. Social catastrophe leads to social change. Sufiya experiences the worst of what a female child can - rejection at birth, neglect and maltreatment at the hands of the mother, cruelty at the hands of her sibling. She becomes a scapegoat for the resentment that is rising within Bilquis or within society itself. The genesis of a beast within her is an embodiment of this unconscious reaction - a canalization of the destructive aspect of the sentiment of shame. It has been directed at ones own self (masochistic urge) for a long time, now it turns outward to destroy the others. This leads us to an important question.

III.b.iv. Why does Shame kill? The wrath of the beast at first glance may be interpreted merely as acts of revenge - the avenging of the wrongs heaped on her. But a close study may confuse the reader because her targets are

neither Raza nor Bilquis, nor even her sharp-tongued sister Naveed. Her target is the one man who nursed her through her illness - married her for love and did not even impose himself on her. The problem seems unsurmountable unless ofcourse Shame and Sufiya are split in analysis. Though the schism may be achieved arbitrarily by the reader, it must be remembered that they have been confounded in one frame by the author. The reason has to be sought in the unity of the being, not in its schizophrenic manifestations.

Omar Khayyam unwittingly or otherwise married both Sufiya - the ocean, and Shame - the beast that lurked in her depths. Till then he had been an onlooker converting every human being to an object for analysis. Ofcourse, Sufiya becomes much more than an object - she becomes the only relationship that Omar establishes successfully in the novel (The first with Rodriguee had been nipped in the bud, the second with Harappa was renounced by the latter). The concept of marriage as we have seen legalizes the objectificatio



of the wife (with reference to Rani, Bilquis and Naveed). But Omar Khayyam loves his wife. Even if one does not put too much store by the word love, and the author sees to it that one doesn't, one will have to admit that he is actually considerate towards her. Thus, he relinquishes the role of the peripheral observer to become a participant in a relationship.

The feeling of shame as has been discussed by the author is related to a fixed place in the world. Shame's anger at Omar Khayyam is directed at his immigration activity. (The concept of the 'mohajir' is relevant here). He has slunk into the society without shedding his asocial skin. He has forged^a relationship with the society without inhering its values. He carries within himself the heart of an asocial observer (as depicted by the Shahbanou affair) but his bearings are now social.

Shame's execution of Omar is perhaps also a reproof for his 'consciousness'. He alone among all others really understands her. Yet, by his conscious choice of a life-style,

he is powerless to protect her from being hunted. He had earlier proved powerless to kill her. She reproves his weakness, his ineffectuality and ofcourse his worthlessness. From a purely utilitarian view he has become dispensable. The play has ended. All characters are dead. What need is there for the audience. The whole social order has collapsed perhaps the new will have better stuff at the periphery.

SOCIO-POLITICAL DESTRUCTION IN THE NOVEL

III.c.i. It is not accidental that the story of 'Shame' begins with the death of an individual and ends with the collapse of a whole structure. On the very first page are words full of foreboding: "And one day their father died." On the last page is the awful murder of Omar at the hands of his wife. The narrative has progressed from the naturally morbid death to the unnatural murder. The message is clearly destruction but the way of telling the story has changed subtly.

The preoccupation of the novel is right from the beginning clearly far from the

'individual'. The reader knows that weightier social and political issues are being discussed. Though the three sisters, Omar Khayyam and the eccentric Rodrigues command a whole lot of individual attention and interest, their fates are left suspended in mid-air while the author picks up another strand - the story of the two families. With the knitting of these separate yarns, the story interest slackens. By the fourth section of the novel the individuals have been effectively subsumed by socio-political concerns. Harappa the epicure has transcended into an agent to inspire confidence in his country. Raza Hyder the Leaky-water reservoir, the contender for Pinkie's affections is now the defender of Islam, Arjumand the rejector of myriads of suitors is transformed overnight into a voluptuous Nemesis and then catapulted into the highest office of the land. Naveed the former determined, plain faced Jane has become the embodiment of the subtle exploitation of women. Rani the abandoned wife has become the commentator, the receptor of a political life. Bilquis who had lost her youth, her eyebrows and her capacity

to bear children and had then faded into the back-ground emerges again as the imposer of a social identity. Sufiya's transformation into a beast is more explicit. Even Omar Khayyam the onlooker has modified his role to complement the arousal of Shame.

The cause for social upheaval has been built effectively. All the ingredients are present. The individual has merged into the superstructure of the social. A destruction of the superstructure thus would destroy both the individual and the society.

III.c.ii. Destruction by Shame : The images of fire and ice have more than stylistic connotations in the novel. Intense emotion of any kind has been juxtaposed with heat or burning. The air boils violently around the death bed of old Mr. Shakil. Farah's father in his lunacy begs the sun to come down and purify the earth with its cleansing fires. Bilquis's youth and her father and his dream shop are consumed by the fires of communalism. She gradually becomes neurotically afraid of the fire wind too. The Mohenjo-earth - the scene of Rani's exile is

obstinately hot. Last but not the least the house 'Nishapur' is destroyed by fire.

Ice on the other hand is related to conservation. Farah's attitude towards her admirers is described as sub-zero coldness. She is nicknamed ice-block. Symbolically, Omer Khayyam after melting that ice travels to Karachi with his feet on a block of ice to defeat the scorching sun. These examples can be multiplied but the common thread in these imageries remains - 'Shame'. The three mothers explain the emotion in the following words. "Your face gets hot", said Bunny - the youngest, "but your heart starts shivering." The emotion is both destruction and conservation in its pure form but in its perversion it becomes something else.

Blushing a slow burning, is described as a psychosomatic event by the author. Then it is taken from the realm of the physical to the mental. The rubescent Sufiye blushes uncontrollably and to add to it blushes for the world. Thus shame in her case loses its conservative aspect and becomes an agent of destruction.

It becomes a metaphor for the society itself. It stems out, as has already been discussed elsewhere out of a hyper-sensitivity to the presence of the others and a resultant objectification. It implies an imposition of social values not their inherence. Thereby, it eats into social discourse replacing the timber of spontaneity with the ash of 'takkelouf.' Actions are shorn of their humane meanings. Raza stakes himself to the ground not out of love for Bilquis but to counteract the 'Shame' that Omar's pronouncement had made for her. Mir threatens Rani not out of belief in Harappa's love for her but because of his conditioning regarding the position of the wife (the encroachment of another man on the wife's person is the ultimate shame). Raza, when faced with the situation of Bilquis's infidelity prefers to kill the offender rather than remonstrate with the wife. Thus shame - the obverse of honour, the result of dishonour eats into marital love, fidelity and nurturance. It seems to go against the whole theory of instincts.

The transformation of Shame into a veritable fireball is a logical progression.

Her fits of rage are like a fire ignited into her. The beast triumphs over the wife in the final tussle when she struggles to reinstate a humane emotion. The fire of shame has consumed the wife totally.

The act of shame in this context is the culmination of the process that had begun in the partial triumphs of Bilquis and Rani over their husbands. In them too the wife (a humane relationship) was consumed to a certain extent by the fire of shame.

II.c.iii. The Destruction of Individuality: There is a deliberate creation of dichotomies in characterization. The author posits at least three pairs of characters. Bilquis and Rani, Raza and Iskander and Arjumand and Naveed. Either their metiér or their situations are startlingly like their counter parts. Though Bilquis and Rani may be very different in individual characteristics, their ultimate fate is similar - both have husbands who retreat from them. The choices that are open to them are amazingly meagre - they can either accept or not accept

the situation. We have discussed that Rani chooses the former and Bilquis the latter. There is no third alternative. If there is, it is beyond their ken. It is not discussed in the novel. Thus one may presume that it is beyond the society we are concerned with. Raza and Iskander the type of powerful ambitious men can employ either of the two personae - of a democrat or a defender of the faith. But in actual depiction of character they approximate each other. Thus the basic stuff they are made of is distressingly similar. A readiness to perpetuate and impose fictions suitable to themselves is their cardinal trait. Arjumand and Naveed are almost simplistic creations. They are both brusque, determined and callously young. They are both power-hungry. Their individual choices steer one on to success, the other to perdition.

Question arises as to why these dichotomies have been created. The methodology is akin to deconstruction. At a crucial moment in the story these dichotomies split and fall apart revealing their fictionality. Why does abandonment

come to both Rani and Bilquis and death to Naveed. The answer is simple - because they get married within the society. These circumstances are not created by their character. They happen to them because of their very existence in a social structure. The characters reveal themselves as puppets of fate. But fate is not a goddess in this case, she is 'society'. The social processes become much more powerful than the individual. Thus, the destruction of the existing structure is achieved by the process of 'Shame'.

Chart - II

Rani : Bilquis :: Raza : Iskander :: Arjumand : Naveed					
Partial victory due to stren- gth	Partial defeat due to weak- ness	Longer time in power due to percep- tivity	Shorter time in power due to non- percep- tivity	Complete victory due to strength and percep- tivity	Complete defeat due to strength combined with non- percep- tivity

Regarding minor characters too the methodology remains the same. Old Mr. Shakil has his mirror image in Maulana Dawood. There is a sea of difference separating the social station of the two but regarding women their conversation is inter-changeable. Farah and Shahbanou separated

not only by age but also education meet the same fate in the person of Omar Khayyam Shakil. The triunity of the three sisters is an extreme example of social typing. Exposed to the same atmosphere, their individuality is totally swallowed and they become just what they are to the society - the three Shakil sisters.

Even in characters that make their appearance just once or twice in the novel there is a reciprocity. Bariamma the matriach, has Iskander's ayah as her travesty. Their characters reflect onto each other - the traditional versus the deprived. Similarly Talvar-ul-Haq the victorious in love, can be discussed with reference to the case of Haroun Harappa the loser. Little Mir who is hanged was fore-shadowed by Raza's first son born with the noose of the umbilical cord round the neck. Mahmud the woman who lost his life in a fire has a repetition of his history when his grand daughter Sufiya who should have been a boy sets fire to the society. Thus imposed identities always wreak havoc.

Such a style of characterization may give rise to the allegation of limitation on

the part of the author. But here the purpose is clear in itself. In a society where the members do not get the space of liberty, the processes become more important than the individuals that give rise to them. Roles become so rigid that most choices just have two alternatives which are the positive and the negative. In absence of others even very different people find themselves in similar situations. Thus life becomes exaggerated in its repetitiveness. Indeed exaggeration in a word sums up the technique of the author.

SEX AND THE SOCIETY

III.d.i. The word 'sharam' is laden with strange sexual connotations. It is as if the very business of living and procreating is a cross that every man has to bear. Man, no, ofcourse not, it is the beautiful and sinful body of the woman that is the repository of evil. The 'purdah' of shame: it has to hide the swelling womb and the burgeoning breasts - evidences of the original sin.

The society that the author is dealing with, is like a closed chamber heavy with the

incense of sensual wrongs. The wicked pleasure of rumour, the rigid incarceration of women speak of a delicious dabbling in the forbidden. It is a society that denies the instinctive urges of its members.

III.d.ii. From the very beginning the word 'shame' is juxtaposed with the female characters of the book. Shame of an illicit birth that ostracises the three Shakil sisters also unites them. The underdogs recognizing each other. Cocooned in shame, they withdraw from social life. The butterfly of course has nothing in common with ^{the} chrysalis. The product is shamelessness - Omar Khayyam.

Thus shame in this case comes very close to being physical. The stamp of social legitimacy has to be put on all bodily occurrences to escape the label of perversion. Sexual relations become unreasonably important in this context. So much so that even to describe Omar's vocation, the author uses a language heavy with sexual overtones:

What's a doctor after all? - A legitimised voyeur, a stranger whom we permit to poke fingers and even hands into places where we would not permit most people to insert so much as a finger tip. (p.49).

III..d.iii. Begun like this, it is not surprising that the female plot takes over the male in the book. Shame is not only juxtaposed with women again and again, 'Shame' is a woman. Shame is the fact of being born a woman. It is the fact of possessing a woman's body. Bilquis Hyder names her daughter 'Shame' lamenting the absence of a son from her hearth and home.

Juxtaposing this occurrence with the episode of the house of the forty thieves, clarifies the thesis further. The joint family system becomes a metaphor for the society and the house becomes the focal point in the cage of shame. In the sexual act the 'shame' is that of the woman. This act of closest intimacy is branded as immoral. The fascinating point is that a schism between common sense and morality is achieved without threat to sanity. The perpetrators of this point of view e.g. Bariamma surely realise the fictionality of their morals. The author

gives indication that they do, yet, a full quota of guilt has been engendered in the inmates. This duality on the part of the society becomes its hallmark in other aspects of life as well, sex, robbed of all light and air and innocence becomes a deed to be performed in the cover of darkness. Worst of all, guilt transforms it from a relationship to a weapon. Sex becomes a gas chamber for the female victims. It impregnates women with shame. All sexual relationship described in the book act as corrosive agents on the personality of the woman.

Both Rani and Bilquis share a situation that brings about crucial changes in their personalities. The beautiful Rani is converted from a breathless bride to a cruel avenger. Bilquis with her ambitions of queenliness sinks into eccentricity.

Another parallel is Naveed and Arjumand. Both girls are in their own way over-achievers. The end of Begum Naveed Talver shows what well could have been Arjumand's fate had either of the two traps marriage or love closed down on

her. Worn out by continuous child bearing Naveed hangs herself coming to the conclusion that there was no hope for women in the world because "no matter how hard you tried to be the most proper of ladies, the men would come and stuff you full of alien, unwanted life."

Naveed's determination meets its first and last obstacle in sexual relations. Here is one opponent whom she is powerless to overcome because he is aided and abetted by convention - he is her own husband.

Sex is used as a dehumanizing procedure by men in all marriages. Raza Hyder wants to use it as an instrument to create a son for himself. Iskander Harappa uses it to gratify his senses and when Rani 'loosens up' after a baby he is quick to abandon her. Talvar-ul-Haq's mission in life seems to be the multiplication of the human race. Thus, it is used for purposes other than love and intimacy. It is no more than a physical act.

The only woman who realises the import of all this is Arjumand. She is the only one

to escape belittlement in the book. Is it only a coincidence that she is a virgin. In a society that drapes so many 'purdahs' to hide the physical, the only way to escape being stifled is to deny the physical. At the end of the story we find her rolling her hips seductively at the 'peach-faced' Captain Ijaz. Her sex appeal becomes a force to reckon with whereas sex boomerangs on all other women disfiguring their lives. She emerges victorious in the end - a woman who no man could touch surely deserved the sceptre.

III.d.iv. Even with minor characters the author is consistent with his thesis that in such a society sex destroys women. For Pinkie Aurangzeb, the dazzling socialite, erosion comes in the shape of desertion and loneliness. The coveted coquette is converted into a harridan breeding turkeys. There is something pathetic in the description of Pinkie that follows - Pinkie 'like a long dried date.' The same Pinkie who had made Reza Hyder gasp!

Shahbanou, the ayah, sacrifices her body to Omar Khayyam to save her ward Sufiya

from his advances. The sacrifice bears an adulterous fruit - "Once again a Parsee girl had been made pregnant". Once again there was a mother with a fatherless child.

This sentence takes us back to the first unfortunate - Farah. Farah who used to be known as the ice - block on account of her 'sub-zero' coldness to her many suitors was forced to marry her teacher in order to provide a father for the child in her womb. In both cases, only the female is affected socially. The father, Omar Khayyam, escapes without blemish on his social character.

He is ofcourse reserved for a far more terrible fate. His wife Shame on whom society had heaped all humiliations, voluntarily experiences the final one - the encroachment of man. She then becomes an agent of destruction. She is metamorphosed into Nemesis. Needless to say, she symbolizes the smouldering volcano of female retaliation. Omar Khayyam thinks of her as being totally free for the first time in her life.

But that freedom has only forebodings of death for him. His end at her hands is not only dramatic but also couched in an imagery significant in itself:

He stood beside the bed and waited for her like a bridegroom on his wedding night, as she climbed towards him roaring like a fire driven by the wind. (p.286).

Shame destroys! Perverted sex does not procreate. It recoils on itself. What could be more appropriate than the burning down of the house of Shame in the end.

1. Salman Rushdie, Shame (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1983) p.173. All quotations unless otherwise indicated, are from the same book.
2. Terry Eagleton. Literary Theory (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

SITUATING SHANE : FOUR COMPARISONS

After establishing the dominant themes in the text an effort is made to situate it in context of other related texts.

MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN AND SHAME

IV.e.i. When the oeuvre of the author comprises three novels and a bit more, the temptation to generalize becomes too much. Salman Rushdie's 'Grimus', 'Midnight's Children' and 'Shame' followed each other in quick succession. Painstaking scholarship can perhaps find threads of similarities running through all three. But according to the present writer, 'Grimus' is separated from the other two novels not only by the fund of popularity but also by the style of conception and execution, 'Grimus' is a flight of fantasy conjuring up a world totally separated from ours. The novel makes an elemental break with reality right in the beginning. The elixir of life in the yellow phial and that of death in the blue, the whimsical names Birddog and Flapping Eagle, can be at best interpreted

symbolically. The town of K and stones of Sisyphus recall the 'pundits' of existentialism but the novel remains one based on theory. 'Midnight's Children' and 'Shame' both deal with tangible socio-political realities. 'Midnight's Children' Rushdie's second novel marks a stage of development in his career. Here he employs the authorial instruments of fantasy, whimsy and exaggerated diction that he had introduced in 'Grimus', to forge the reality of a nation. 'Shame' is a continuation of this tradition. One can't go as far as to say that it is a sequel to the greater 'Midnight's Children.' But it definitely belongs to the same tradition. Due to similarities of genre the differences between the two become more stark. 'Shame' has been seen as a weak continuation of the rather strange way of writing that reached its climax in 'Midnight's Children.' Though some people mainly the uninitiated in literature, happily acknowledge 'Shame' to be easier reading - the literati are content to give it a place below the former novel. The present writer bowing acquiescence to both views will attempt to show how difference in conception makes Shame

easier reading but a lesser novel than *Midnight's Children*.

IV.d.ii. In his first novel Rushdie chose India as a locale and the history of India since independence as his subject matter. As brought out by the novel, India is perceived as a multitudinous nation teeming with people and traditions. It has a culture of variety - colourful and melodramatic. It has also a culture of fate where strange things happen to people. But still there is a sense of infinite options and possibilities. There is also a sense of waste - of untapped opportunities, of men annihilated by history. Though the separate existence of Pakistan is not even half a century old, there is a gulf of difference between the two countries or at least Rushdie perceives a difference. Pakistan is like a sealed chamber, almost claustrophobic in its insistence on inexorable frontier. It is a society generating chaos, generating seeds of its own destruction. Bound securely by religion

on all sides it has to contain its own havoc. The repressed women are the subversive potential for revolution and change. Of course then, there can be no steady progression of history. Rushdie's vision is apocalyptic - like the phoenix the political system will have to annihilate itself to rise again anew from its own ashes.

IV.a.iii. The first clue to the perception of the author is the size of the books. 'Midnight's Children' runs to more than 220,000 words whereas 'Shame' is roughly half the size. The former novel abounds with characters but 'Shame' with a neat family tree in the very beginning is frankly the story of two families. Exigencies of the subject matter make 'Midnight's Children' the diverse book that it is. Within the space of an artistic form something spectacular is being attempted - the political history of a nation is being told by highlighting certain crucial social events. The protagonist Saleem Sinai is to carry the burden of thirty years of a nation's eventful history. How does institutionalized life have a relationship with individual life? In Saleem's character the story of a nation and that of an adolescent are confounded.

In fact in certain episodes Saleem is convinced that he is responsible for what is happening to the country. The intention of the author can be gleaned from Ramram Seth's prophecy:

A son - such a son! And then it comes,
'A son Sahiba, who will never be
older than his motherland - neither
older nor younger. There will be
two heads - but you shall see the
only one. - there will be knees
and a nose a nose and knees... Newspaper
praises him, two mothers raise him!
Bicyclists love him - but, crowds
will shove him! Sisters will weep
Cobra will creep ---. --- 'Washing
will hide him - Voices will guide
him! Friends mutilate him - blood
will betray him! ----- 'Spittoons
will brain him - doctors will ~~drain~~
drain him - jungle will claim him
- wizards reclaim him! Soldiers will
try him - tyrants will fry him --
---. --- 'He will have sons without
having sons! He will be old before
he is old! And he will die -- before
he is dead.'

The prophecy is as much for India
the nation as it is for Saleem Sinai. The isomorphic
relationship between an adolescent boy and
an evolving nation is an artistic masterstroke.
The individual is conceived not as a unity but
as a play of various forces. Saleem Sinai the
man is a result of his parentage, his infected
sinuses, his premature puberty etc. The character

is fluid, dynamic, changeable - like the nation. The author has consciously worked on this analogy. The wealth of research that has gone into developmental psychology has made it possible for him to work on this thesis. The individual becomes as complex as a nation and his life as involved as political history. Besides this the close interplay between the individual and the institution is cleverly brought out as being too close. The society subsumes the individual in *Shame* too but here the schism has been perceived between individual and social urges. Reza Hyder and Iskander Mirza the socio-political messiahs attempt to modify the course of history to suit their own requirements. The Frankenstein of consummate social processes proves too big for them to cope with. Their actions ricochet onto them and each meets his Nemesis. Throughout '*Shame*' individual urges and social demands stand in diametric opposition to each other. In *Midnight's Children* there is no such simplification because Saleem constitutes the society just as much as the society constitutes him.

--- because it is the privilege
and the curse of *Midnight's Children*

to be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes,² and be unable to live or die in peace.

IV.a.iv. This simplification of the schism between the individual and the society can not merely be attributed to Rushdie's imagination. Pakistan is a far more 'deliberate' creation than India. The author sees it as a palimpsest:

It is the true desire of every artist to impose his or her vision on the world, and Pakistan, the peeling, fragmenting palimpsest, increasingly at war with itself, may be described as a failure of the dreaming mind.

A palimpsest, as the author says obscures what lies beneath. So the Indianness of the two moth - eaten bits of land that constituted Pakistan had to be hidden by super imposing a fresh history on them.

India on the other hand had a far more indefinite, confused birth as shown by the circumstances of Saleem. Saleem is a usurper because Amina Sinai's son is not her own son really. Later on confusion becomes the hall mark of Saleem's life. He becomes a radio - receiver - a prey to any predator:

Let me sum up, at a crucial point in the history of our child - nation when 5 year plans were being drawn up and elections were approaching and language marchers were fighting over Bombay, a 9 yrs old boy named Saleem Sinai acquired a miraculous gift. Despite the many vital uses to which his abilities could have been put by his impoverished, under-developed country. He chose to conceal his talents, frittering them away on inconsequential voyeurism and petty cheating...

Fearing parental obtrusion he suppressed the news of his transformation, seeking parental congratulations he abused his talents at school. This flaw in his character can partially be excused on the grounds of his under years, but only partially. Confused thinking was to bedevil much of his career.

This mysterious gift was the ability to get into other peoples brains. It is easy to relate the social exhibitionism of Saleem to the growing pains of the country India. Parental approval of course can be interpreted in various uncomplimentary ways. The reference to elections and the five years plans is not accidental. Neither of these is an indigenous phenomenon - the concept of democracy came from the west whereas the 5 year plans came from socialist

mentors. The resultant confusion is common to both India and Saleem - to India which came with the pot - pourri ideology of 1956.

Similarly, the breaking up of the Midnight's Children's conference has a direct relationship with language riots. Later as we see, not only Saleem's mind but also his body becomes a simulacrum of the nation. At the end of the novel we find the poor tortured body cracking up - clearly a foreboding for the nation. Thus, the country India evolves through the person of the protagonist whereas Pakistan is produced as if ^{with} a flourish of an impresario's hand. India has been conceived in — process - as an evolving organism whereas Pakistan is concrete, ready-made. The differences in conception is of stasis and motion.

IV.a.v. The concretization of the country Pakistan changes the attitude of the author from what it was when he was dealing with India. In Midnight's Children the country was perceived in motion so the urge of the artist was to reflect

more and more of the motion in the novel. The urge was to devour experience. The protagonist - the surrogate author, passes from the security of a middle class home to the scum - the abode of beggars, shifts from Bombay to Karachi and wanders off in the Sunderbans. He is converted into an idiot as an aftermath of a head injury and he fights for Pakistan as a dog. Saleem is like an open wound displayed to the world so that the sharp slings and arrows of socio-political winds could act on him. In Shame the experiences of the protagonist Omar Khayyam are limited to three families of roughly the same socio-economic background - his own Nishapur family, Iskander Harappa's swinging eat and Reza Hyder's orthodox home.

This fact makes it possible for the author to take a position somewhere above the subject matter in 'Shame'. The surrogate author in this novel has been confidently inserted as a commentator on the action. He is almost an armchair theorist consciously looking for causes and worst of all putting forward a solution to the political dilemma of the country.

Midnight's Children had Rushdie grovelling on his knees, dirtying his hands to rummage into the mystery of the country. The person of the dilapidated Saleem is as far possible from ^{an} arm-chair theorist as can be imagined. Saleem literally and figuratively takes quite a few knock^s in life. He has a bicycle accident, a sinus operation, a head injury, an electric shock, food-poisoning etc. Grounds are well prepared for his ultimate cracking up.

IV.a.vi. It is not surprising that in a book that presumed to deal with India, the author found it necessary to insert a whole section on Pakistan. Saleem's life undergoes a dramatic change there. His sister the footwear - burning brass monkey of India is metamorphosed into a veiled, mysterious songstress. In Pakistan Saleem finds an incestuous love stirring in his heart. He is desperate to cleanse his heart of the emotion - but this purity comes to him at a strange price:

Purity - that highest of ideals: that an
angelic virtue for which Pakistan was
named, and which dropped from every note

of my sister's songs: - seemed very far away, how could I have known that history - which has the power of pardoning sinners - was at that moment counting down towards a moment in which it would manage at one stroke, to cleanse me from head to foot?

Perhaps the kind of purity that Saleem achieved is comparable to the ideal of 'purity' that the country is based on. In 'Shame' in a section quoted in this very chapter Pakistan has been compared to a palimpsest. Saleem too becomes a kind of human palimpsest.

The concept of the country Pakistan is very much within and through India. Pakistan cannot be defined with accuracy until the India within it is described. It is no coincidence that Saleem is present when Peppercote is planning his coup. The actual history of the age need not bother us here. It is enough to note that India remains a constant factor. Even in 'Shame', there is a hankering back to the parent country on the part of the author. The roots of Bilquis's Shame are in the old city of Indraprastha and Raza Hyder's dual character too has its origins

there. Accidents divide countries but the parent-culture knits more than land - it knits the spirit of the land.

IV.b.

THE MEDIOCRITY OF MAN

AND

THE ANGER OF THE BEAST

IV.b.i. Even before Darwin's threat of jolting mankind to a sense of humility, man had established various relationships with the animal world. In the twentieth century our languages reverberate with echoes of days when man hunted animals or was hunted by them. In at least most Indian languages and in English 'bestial urges' refer broadly to ungoverned sexual appetite and needless cruelty. Besides that, one can be proud as a peacock, clever as a fox, brave like a lion. On the one hand asocial behaviour is branded animal-like, on the other hand characteristics peculiar to animals are ascribed to human beings.

A totally different approach to this relationship is the deification of animals. The Hindu pantheon includes a monkey-God and an elephant-God. Many other animals are considered sacred. Even in the Christian tradition the lamb is the symbol of Christ's purity and innocence.

The meaning to be extracted from these observations is not too far below the surface. In the beast man views an obverse of himself. The reflection startles him to the consciousness of his humanity. After all, man is a man only by permission of beasts. Beast is the 'other' of man. Fairy tales confirm this thesis. The anthropomorphism of the beasts in these tales makes the tales the fantasies they are.

The existential 'other' has a dual relationship with the being-that of an object and that of an objectifier. Thus man is sandwiched between the concept of the beast. It hovers above him in its Godlike stance and grovels below his feet in the shape of a quadruped. The beast in our collective unconscious has a kind of dumb innocence, a vindictive cruelty

as well as a superhuman wisdom. It is a creature of mystery. Thus it has become a part of our awe-inspiring unknown futures. According to the Hindu tradition the coming of KALKI avatar will herald the arrival of a new era. The anti-Christ in some interpretations of Christianity is either born of a wolf or is an animal itself. The author in Shame has worked on this archetype.

IV.b.ii. The concretization of the agent of change into a beast is not peculiar to Salman Rushdie in the gamut of literature. At least two distinct examples of poems of eschatological themes spring to mind - William Blake's 'The Tiger' and W.B. Yeats's 'The Second Coming'. The assumption of these works of literature is that good preceded evil in the world, that evil is unnatural, of a later growth than good. When it colonizes the world an agent of social change has to take birth to sweep away the evil. An important point to be noted here is that the view taken encompasses the whole society. It is not individual wrongdoings that have to

be weeded out. It is the malfunctioning of a whole machinery that has to be righted. Mere human agency becomes ineffectual, impotent. A higher being on the ontological ladder is to be generated: The mythical beast:

Surely some revelation is at hand
Surely the Second Coming is at hand
The Second Coming; Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: Somewhere in
 sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and head of man
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun
Is moving its slow things, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds
The darkness drops again, but now we know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to a nightmare by a rocking cradle
And what rough beast, its hour come round
 at last
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born
(The Second Coming; W.B. Yeats)

The Yeatsian beast symbolizes the solar gyre - an age of masculinity, pitiless and rough, a diametric opposite to what has gone before. Rushdie's beast also turns the social order upside down. Instead of the hunted it becomes the hunter, instead of the passive sufferer it becomes the actor. Rushdie's beast hands over supreme political power to the weakest

section of society - the women. The age that follows the social catastrophe belongs rightly to Arjumand Harappa. In the preceding age the soldiers had considered it the ultimate insult to salute a woman. In the age that follows the reins of power are in feminine hands. There is another symbolic inversion. Arjumand imprisons her mother whereas Sufiye had been transformed into a beast by her mother. A reversion of social roles has taken place - the progeny has become stronger than the progenitor.

IV.b.iii. On all fours, the calluses thick on her palms and soles. The black hair, once shorn by Bilquis Hyder, long now and matted around her face, enclosing it like fur; the pale skin of her mohajir ancestry burned and toughened by the sun, bearing like battle scars the lacerations of bushes, animals, her own itch - scratching nails. Fiery eyes and the stink of ordure and death.⁶

The transformation has taken place from a girl who could have been compared to an oriental miniature had the author been in a more expansive mood. How does a human organism transcend itself to become a beast? How has Darwin's evolutionary theory been inverted? The author has posited an equation in the novel.

Socials: Non socials: Human beings: Beast

Thus the definition of 'humanness' is a social condemnation of the beast. It results from a group - rejection of bestiality, from mutual acceptance of non-beastlike norms. A baby born out of this charmed circle is comparable to a beast. Omar Khayyam suckled on three pairs of breasts is naturally an outsider:

Have you heard of those wolf-children suckled - we must suppose on the feral multiple breasts of a moon - howling dam? ----- Omar Khayyam, too, fed at too - many mammary glands; and he wandered for some four thousand days in the thing - infested jungle that was Nishapur, his walled - in wild piece, his mother - country---⁷.

The accident of birth places Omar Khayyam precariously on the border line between humanness and beastdom. But making a bid for the social he initiates himself into society, schools himself, learns the peculiar ways of man. The intention of the author is thus to depict a movement from beastdom to manhood and from womanhood to beastdom:

When the stars throw down their spears
And watered heavens with their tears
Did he smile his work to see
Did he who make the lamb make thee ?
(The Tiger, William Blake)

The character of Sufiya Zinobia is a study of the transformation of the lamb into the tiger. God (and for God one may read social order here) does not always temper the wind for the shorn lamb. No divine hand interceded when Bilquis sheared off Sufiya's hair, no intervention was made when she rained blows on her head. Should the lamb then rear up to defend itself? When man (in this case women) is treated like a beast there is a defiance of the social order, a crossing over the boundary between man and beast. The maltreatment of Sufiya is a reversion of human/social values:

Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold
Here anarchy is loosed upon the world
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed
and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned
(The Second Coming, W.B. Yeats)

The social values have turned topsy turvy. To put the point clearly a schism has taken place between the social and the human.

The society is condoning values that it recognizes to be non-human - women are maltreated though it is humanly recognized that such behaviour is unacceptable. A sign post in a club lumps women and dogs together though women certainly belong to the human world.

Thus a transformation is effected in the person of Sufiya. Treated like a beast, she becomes the embodiment of purity for the author: What is a saint? A saint is a person who suffers in our 'stead.

To approach beastdom there is a messiah - like change in her character. She is becoming non-human. Sainthood is the prefiguration of beastdom. The human-being in her rebels against the Beast. Aided and abetted by a man who is graduating into humanness she fights with the Beast. The Yeatsian beast of apocalypse elouches towards Bethlehem in spite of the indignation of the desert birds. The wife in Sufiya struggles to retain her husband but the social malady is beyond repair - the

social and the non-social have been confounded by the society. Thus, rises the Beast - God who judges and executes. Its task completed it bursts out of the vessel and reduces to ashes the whole social structure.

THE STATE AND THE INDIVIDUAL

IV.c.i. Both Milan Kundera and Salman Rushdie are concerned with the effects that a repressive state can have on its people. They are writing in a particular genre - the political novel. Ofcourse Kundera writes as an emigre. He writes with the bitterness of a former political enthusiast who was dropped from the charmed ideological circle. Rushdie is more detached from his subject. Pakistan for him is a synthetic creation which his family had adopted as a nation. The most obvious relation between the two novels - 'The Book of Laughter and Forgetting' and 'Shame' is the masterpiece of an Austrian - 'The Trial' by Franz Kafka. Both Kundera and Rushdie quote from him. There is a brooding, gloomy atmosphere in 'The Trial'. The Kafkaesque landscape, the

labyrinthine faceless bureaucracy induce a sense of helplessness in the reader. Kundera and Rushdie capture the inexorability of the political system and the vulnerability of the individual in face of it, in their novels.

IV.c.ii. Kundera is pained that the new political regime is forcing Czechoslovakia into oblivion. Very systematically the country's culture is being rubbed out from the memory of the people. Kundera himself is to be obliterated. All his books were, one day, suddenly removed from the shelves of the library. The oblivion that stares at him in the country of his birth is a kind of artistic defeat. Factors totally extraneous to art are making an artist superfluous. It is a type of extinction that Josef K's trial was haunted by - complete defeat of the individual at the hands of a system.

Kundera writes with a lump in his throat:

Gottwald, Clementis and all others did not know about Kafka and Kafka knew they did not know. Prague in

his novels is a city without memory. It has even forgotten its name. Nobody there remembers anything, nobody recalls anything. Even Josef K does not seem to know anything about his previous life. No song is capable of uniting the city's present with its past by recalling the moment of its birth.

Time in Kafka's novel is the time of a humanity that has lost all continuity with humanity, of a humanity that no longer knows anything nor remembers anything, that lives in nameless cities with nameless streets or streets with names different from the ones they had yesterday, because a name means continuity with the past and people without a past are people without a name.⁸

The very concept of organised forgetting has a tinge of nightmarish quality that bears Kafka's stamp. Rushdie's preoccupation though similar is more exaggerated, less bitter:

My story's palimpsest country has, I repeat, no name of its own. The exiled Czech writer Kundera once wrote: 'A name means continuity with the past and people without a past are people without a name.' But I am dealing with a fact that refuses to be suppressed, that is doing battle with the present; so it is perhaps unduly harsh of me to deny my fairyland a title.⁹

T.S. Eliot knew that what he was about when he deemed tradition as one of the

most important components of literature. Even in contemporary literary theories intertextuality (masquerading under various other terms) plays an important role. Continuity with the past is life-breath to an artist. Thereby cultural output becomes a river flowing through centuries - every novel originating from the previous one, every artist taking his inspiration from the preceding generation. This system of continuity gives the ephemeral work of art permanence and the artist an illusion of immortality. It must be noted that the analogy of the river is from nature. It is indeed a natural phenomenon that every object has a meaning beyond its own appointed place and time. Every moment in history leans towards the future. This gives a meaning to every isolated incident, each isolated life.

Manipulators of Czech and Pakistani history violate this fundamental law of continuity. Wielding the baton of political power they think it possible to marshal cultural and social history. They generate a feeling of insecurity among the people who begin to feel as ephemeral and vulnerable as their past.

Kundera's country is being made to forget itself whereas Pakistan is being forged. To suit political ends the differences between Pakistan and the parent country are exaggerated, new values like Islam are injected into people. The rebellion of the artist is to be understood in this context.

IV.c.ii. But one last word on the subject: the first time I sat down to think about Anahita Muhammad, I recalled the last sentence in which Joseph K is stabbed to death. My Anna, like Kafka's Joseph died under a knife, not Sufiya Zinobia Hyder; but that sentence, the Ghost of an epigraph, hangs over her story still: "Like a dog! he said: it was as if he meant the shame of it to outlive him."¹⁰

The extract is from 'Shame'. The author burns with indignation at the idea of the individual being so treated by an institution. An important point to be noted here is that the individual is not given a chance to offer a defence for himself. The institution's language is too refined to reach the individual. Similarly, the individual speaks too base a language to reach out to what was originally his own creation. Anahita's father represents the inexorable

values of the society. Anahita cannot confront him with her own point of view. Josef K too found it impossible to convey his state of innocence to his accuser. The father and the accusers have attained a position of inflexibility through institutionalization. They remain at the back of every individual's mind - archetypes of blind fate. They are the unknown factor in every equation of life.

Kundera felt this blindness in the raw. A major incident in 'The Book of Laughter and Forgetting' is related in the first person. After being declared persona non-grata in public life, Kundera tries his hand at astrology under a pseudonym. The joke holds well until his lady accomplice is questioned and threatened by the authorities. She meets him surreptitiously to discuss the situation. Kundera is shocked by the feelings that arise in him during the rendezvous:

Perhaps that wild desire to rape R (the lady accomplice) was merely a desperate attempt to grab at something during the fall. Because from the

day they excluded me from the circle, I have not stopped falling. I am still falling, all they have done is give me another push to make me fall further, deeper, away from my country and into the void of a world resounding with the terrifying laughter of the angels that covers my every word with its din.

The political thesis of 'Shame' becomes more comprehensible in the light of this extract. A repressive government can work havoc with even the most personal aspect of the individual's life. In Kundera's novel the layers of protective sophistication peel off to reveal an afraid woman. On the other hand misery and anger seize Kundera due to alienation from his ideology. The intellectual finds that his intellect has been made impotent. This helplessness works itself into a destructive rage and he hankers for possession. In 'Shame' as has been discussed before sex becomes a weapon to kill the individuality of women. The society is a scene of perversion. It has also been discussed that the cause and effect relationship of sexual and political life can be inverted - each explains the reason for the other.

The relationship between the sexual and the political can be explained on the basis of the individual's desire to strive for superiority. The commonest of inborn desires is blocked by the repressive government in many spheres. Squirring under the iron heels of his tormentors, the individual usually decides to compensate elsewhere. Sexual life being one of the most personal aspects of life provides a welcome escape. Besides this, sexual act in many societies is related to an assertion of superiority. Women become convenient targets in most societies due to the myth of weakness associated with them. One may refer back to The 'Trial'. Josef K condemned as he is to mortal confusion, finds a welcome escape in the arms of Feni - the Advocate's housekeeper. The desperation with which he seeks her is almost ugly.

IV.c.iii. The feeling of shame as has already been discussed is given definite sexual connotations in the novel. Similarly Kundera relates 'litotat' to the feeling of inferiority that the student gets when confronted by his athletic girl friend.

The former (Shame) is more insidious and more difficult to define. Kundera has not developed the concept of 'litotat' very much in the novel. But the feeling of frustration (the closest translation) can be compared with political frustration depicted in other incidents. Thus, both authors are making a very close connection between the sexual and the social.

In fact, the feeling of 'litotat' can be generalized to the whole of 'The Book of Laughter and Forgetting'. It is basically self-destructive. The climax of the novel is like a sexual non-climax where the sex act loses its meaning.

On and on the men talked. The others listened with interest, their naked genitals staring dully, sadly, listlessly at the yellow sand.

This is the end-result of 'litotat' of frustration. The end of shame provides a stark contrast. Here the murderer and the murdered are couched in marital imagery. Thus, shame results in a conflagration whereas the 'Book of Laughter and Forgetting' fizzles out making the former a revolutionary text and the latter a pessimistic saga.

To reiterate the point the imagery is noteworthy. Rebellion has to start at the most personal (sexual) level. Rushdie foresees it for his country whereas Kundera foresees a continuing 'litotet.'

To support this thesis another parallel can be drawn between the two novels. Children who are sexually immature capture and kill Tamine in Kundera's novel. In Rushdie's work the sexual values that Reza's Islam enjoins upon the public are infantile. The laughter of the children is that of angels whose fanaticism makes them a threat for human beings. Similarly puritanism of Reza is too simplistic to be practicable. The former is victorious, the latter is overthrown. Sex becomes destructive in the former, ineffectual in the latter.

'SHAME', SALMAN RUSHDIE

AND

'CAN PAKISTAN SURVIVE', TARIQ ALI

IV..d.i. Rushdie cannot be accused of being

a Marxist. Yet, his interpretation of Pakistani history and Tariq Ali's analysis of that country's problems bear some striking resemblances. Rushdie's preoccupation in *Shame* is just as much ideological as Tariq Ali's is artistic. The former is writing a novel first and foremost just^{as} the latter is writing a non-fictional analysis of Pakistani history. The former admits that his novel deals with two families only. Whereas the latter posits incidents from national life, relating them to certain others that have gone before, finding a reason for their occurrence. Making a very broad classification one may say that Rushdie's concerns are literary and Tariq Ali's politico-economic.

Points of similarities between the two works not only prove Rushdie's genius as a twentieth century thinker but also vindicate his art. The two works make a similar impact on the reader conveying a similar thesis as will be discussed later on. They prove that Rushdie's grasp of the socio-political atmosphere of his locale is remarkable. He has conceived of the literary in relation to objective truth and has been successful.

One is tempted to refer to Marxist critics at this juncture. Engels had propounded the concept of the triumph of realism. Simply put it means that social reality asserts itself in a work of art through the medium of the artist inspite of his personal predilection. Lukac's attributed this triumph of realism to the fact of truly great writers making it a yardstick of measuring all literary values. The socio-political reality that rears its head in 'Shame' may not be as unconscious as the concept suggests. The writer of Shame is far more alive to the situations of his country, far more involved in its politics than a mere scribe would be. Still, the greatness of his art has its roots in the synthesis of the literary and the socio-political. Indeed, Shame can be read on two levels - one as novel or fiction, two as a socio-political text. Lukac's observation is worthy of mention here:

Every understanding and concept of the external world is nothing but a reflection of reality that exists independently of our consciousness.

It must be noted that Tariq Ali's work is not being treated as objective reality. Many may disagree with his thesis entirely. However,

it cannot be denied that his is a factual account of the history of Pakistan. Moreover, the book has an unmistakable ideological bent. The points of correspondence are a mutual compliment to both the writers' perspicacity.

IV.d.ii. First of all let us take the simple problem of Baluchi nationalism. Rushdie deals with the province under a fictional name Q which connotes Quetta the capital of Baluchistan. With remarkable skill he splits his plot into two sub-levels. On the one hand Q is the birthplace of Omar Khayyam Shakil who plays a major role in the final catastrophe. On the second level Q has also generated Babur who teams up with the guerillas and is killed. On the one hand Q is the periphery of the society where all values are inverted. In the third chapter in the section entitled 'In and Out of Society' it was discussed in contrast with the centre which is the area of maximum concentration (or repression). Values thin out, become sparse in this area as is depicted by the description of the tribals.

The thin-eyed, rock-hard tribals who dwell in those mountains and who were occasionally to be seen in the streets

of Q. (whose softer inhabitants crossed streets to avoid the tribal mountainous stench and baring uncere-
monious shoulders) also called the range, 'the roof the paradise'.¹⁴

Thus, the ostracism Baluchis are subjected to is depicted graphically with a single stroke. It is only befitting that the outsider to the society Omar is born here. The tribals are a part of the atmosphere inhaled by our hero. He grows up with the sense of being an outcaste - a man who is not even the hero of his own life.

Tariq Ali refers to the same phenomenon:

Baluchistan has 'plagued' every government in Pakistan since 1947. The reason for this lies in the fact that the Baluch were not allowed to decide for themselves whether or not they wished to accede to the new state in 1947. The most influential Baluch ruler, the Khan of Kalat, was initially opposed to accession and claimed the right to form an independent state on the model of Nepal.¹⁵

Here the bone of contention is political but the message conveyed is the same.

On the second level in Rushdie's novel Q is a scene of violence, of revolution in which Babur plays an important role. It is only logical that the first progeny in the periphery be an outsider and the second a revolutionary. Perhaps Babur was rebelling against his brother also, perhaps he was denouncing his sense of not belonging. He is rejecting Omar's whole personality while finding a new one for himself:

Babur Shakil in a dangerous veil of brandy, comedy enters his bloodstream, effects a permanent mutation - Hey mister, you know what they say about us tribals, too little patriotism and too much sex-drive, well its all true, want to know why? - yes - so take patriotism. Number one, government takes our rice for Army troops, we should be proud, no, but we just complain there is none for us. Number two, government mines our minerals and economy gets a boost, but we just beef that nobody here sees the cost. Number three, gas from Needle, now provides sixty percent of national requirement, but still we are not happy moaning all the time how the gas is not domestically available in these parts. Now how could people be less patriotic, you must agree. But fortunately our government loves us still so much that it has made our sex-drive the top national priority - How's

that? - But it is obvious to see. This government is happy to go on screwing us from now till doomsday.¹⁶

The description of economic exploitation here is comparable to Tariq Ali's ideological analysis. The movement is from periphery to centre - the concentration of day to day luxuries in the centre at the cost of the periphery. A vacuum social, political and economic is rampant in Q. In Tariq Ali's book the situation is put forward in the form of an excerpt from a Baluch nationalist's speech:

They say we must join Pakistan for economic reasons. Yet we have minerals, we have petroleum, we have ports. The question is what would Pakistan be without us?¹⁷

Thus, understanding of the repercussions of economic matters on social framework informs Rushdie's work as well.

IV.d.iii. Interpretation of historical events apart, even the characters of the rulers as depicted in the two works, are similar, Iskander Harappa is a fictional creation but not much imagination is needed to perceive the Bhutto

in him. The two authors refer to the same brashness, brilliance and decadence that constituted Bhutto's character. Tariq Ali denounces his politics in the following terms:

--- Bhutto preferred to utilize the PPP as a family heirloom. He frowned upon dissent, treated his colleagues as inferior and established a party regime which was blatantly dictatorial. In keeping with this image, Bhutto stated that he would like the new constitution to be based on a presidential system. He clearly believed that the country's entire political system could be a replica of the PPP.

Rushdie describes his authoritarian way of functioning in the following way:

He never liked arguments. Do as he ordered and do it now, or put a put out on your ear you go.

This was as it should be.... The spoilt nobleman who had always had things his way is under the illusion that he can manage his country in the same way as he had managed his estate. Instead of wishing to serve the country he saw it as his private domain. When the mask of democracy was removed from his face an ugly dictator peeped out. Such was the fate of the country.

Zia-ul-Haq's character is more complex as he has been able to hold on to power for almost nine years now. Both Rushdie and Ali depict his fox-like cunning, his insidious way of functioning, in their own way:

Zia's measures of 16 Oct 1979, while not exactly a bolt from the blue for some commentators, were none the less the equivalent of a second coup for most of Pakistan's politicians. Islam was the cloak with which the generals sought to cover their nakedness. A repressive code, partially modelled on medieval Islamic punishments was introduced to punish social and political dissenters: public flogging, amputation of the hands of burglars and criminals; stoning to death of adulterers; execution of political activists; torture of women political prisoners. These were some of the measures put on the statute book by the military regime. This is what Zia was referring to when he later stated that 'for the past 4 years we have been trying to bring Islamic values to the country'. At the moment of writing, no one has actually been amputated or stoned to death, though many have been sentenced to receive these punishments. The whole plan is 'aimed at brutalising our political culture, at preparing people to accept repression and repressive measures'. The institutionalized brutality is designed to ensure a semipermanent passivity. Only partial success, however, has been achieved on this front, and the silent anger that undoubtedly exists in many parts of the country could so on erupt into a violent explosion on the streets.²⁰

And now from Shame:

'General Hyder' the Angrez television interviewer asks Raza, 'informed sources opine, close observers claim, many of our viewers in the west would say, how would you refute the argument, have you a point of view about the allegation that your institution of such Islamic punishments as flogging and cutting off of hands might be seen in certain quarters as being, arguably, according to certain definition, so to speak, barbaric?'

Raza Hyder smiles at the camera, a courteous smile, the smile of a man of true good manners and no little decorum. 'It is not barbaric, he replies. 'Why? For 3 reasons.' He prizes finger for each reason and counts them off. 'Number one,' he explains, 'is that, kindly understand, a law in itself is neither barbaric nor not barbaric. What matters is the man who is applying the law. And in this case it is I, Raza Hyder, who am doing it, so ofcourse it will not be barbaric.

'Number two, let me say, sir, that we are not some savages down from the trees, you see? We will not simply order people to stick out their hands, like this, and go 'fataakh' with a butcher's knife. No, sir. All will be done under the most hygienic conditions with proper medical supervision, use of anaesthetic etcetera.

'But the third reason is that these are not laws, my dear fellow, which we have plucked out of the wind. These are the holy words of God, as revealed in sacred texts. Now if they are holy words of God, they cannot also be barbaric, it is not possible. They must be some other thing.'

IV.d.iv. Thus we see that the similarity between the two books is not of subject matter only. There is correspondence in the conception as well. Both predict an end to the the existing state of affairs. It is indeed interesting that the jacket of the pelican edition of 'Can Pakistan Survive' shows the map of the country on fire. Fire as we have noted earlier is a recurring motif in Shere. Thus both are of the opinion that the cup of wrongs done to the country is brimming full now.

The difference in the two books is mainly of genre. Different ways of saying similar things can provide a lesson in direct and indirect communication. Tariq Ali approaches Pakistan directly whereas Ruchdie reaches out to the country through the characters of the protagonists that is indirectly.

1. Salman Rushdie, Midnight's Children (New York: Avon Books, 1982) p.316
2. Ibid., p.552
3. Salman Rushdie, Shame (New Delhi: Rupe & Co., 1983) p.87
4. Rushdie, Midnight's Childre, p.204
5. Ibid., p.394
6. Rushdie, Shame, p.254
7. Ibid., p.12
8. Milan Kundera, The Book of Laughter and Forgetting (Harmondsworth Penguin Books, 1984) p.157
9. Rushdie, Shame, p.88
10. Ibid., pp 117-118
11. Kundera, p.76
12. Ibid., p.228
13. Ehrhard Behr and Ruth Goldschmidt Kunzer, Georg Lukac's (Frederick Unger Publishing Co., 1972)
14. Rushdie, Shame, p.23
15. Tariq Ali, Can Pakistan Survive? The Death of a State (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1983) p.115
16. Rushdie, Shame, p.130

17. Ali, pp 115-116
18. Ibid., p.108
19. Rushdie, Shame, p.189
20. Ali, pp 138-139
21. Rushdie, Shame, p.245

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