

“VIEWS OF OMAR KHAYYAM, THE NARRATOR OF THE NOVEL SHAME TAKES HIS NAME FROM THE GREAT PERSIAN POET OF THE SAME NAME”

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ABSTRACT

The life of Saleem in Midnight's Children or to a little extent Omar in Shame can be compared to the wretched fate of Kama of the epic Mahabharata. Kama throughout lives an ordinary life unaware of his noble blood, Saleem's humble origins are changed for the luxury life of Shiva's whereas Omar carries on his life in the same house because his house itself bears multiple mothers and an unknown wife of an Englishman. Characterization in Rushdie is unique and mystic. Whereas some of his characters are identifiable with political figures, others he claims to be inspired by not a single but several noticeable human traits or several traits noticeable in a human being. They often come out of several gestures or from small details of the character from which the rest of the character grows. Therefore personalities of characters in Rushdie are rather a mixture of more than one person. Like, a little American girl Evie Burns is a mixture and an exaggeration of the worst of features of some tomboyish girls in Rushdie's neighbor hood.

Key Words: wretched fate, mystic, inspired, personalities, exaggeration, neighbor hood

INTRODUCTION

Omar Khayyam of Shame, relished the love of not one but two mothers. Besides his real mother Vanita and putative mother Amina, the midwife Mary Pereira, who gives a new life to Saleem by baby swapping and whose love is a threat to Amina, is also a kind of mother to him. He supposedly has four fathers, Wee, Ahmed, Methwold and Nadir who impregnated her in her dreams. Saleem himself tells us about his heredity that he 'had more mothers than most mothers have children' (Midnight's Children 291). 'All my life,' he adds, 'consciously or unconsciously, I have sought out fathers' (Midnight's Children 508) thus 'giving birth to parents has been one of my stranger talents' (Midnight's Children 291). Still yet further when he is entrusted to the care of his aunt Pia, he finds his parentage in his uncle Hanif and aunt Pia during their regular card- games where he used to occupy the sacred place of the son they never had. Then in Pakistan at Zulfikar's residence in the presence of Ayub Khan when his son Zafar embarrassed him by 'wetting his pants,' Saleem saved the honour of the family by creating a new father for himself, Zulfikar who addressed him as 'my son' (Midnight's Children 348).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

What is even more startling is the fact that Saleem's 'fathers' outnumbered his 'mothers.' As a result of the 'mischievous perversity' of a dread, having 'confused Amina about the parentage of her child,' this 'child of midnight' is given a fourth father [Nadir Khan] 'to set beside Winkie and

Methwold and Ahmed Sinai' (Midnight's Children 149). The German snake doctor and his uncle Zulfikar are also credited with giving a paternal new lease of life. Then there is the snake- charmer Picture Singh, who rescued him from Bangladesh, and was 'the last in the line of men who have been willing to become my fathers...' (Midnight's Children 452). Rushdie, thus, emphasizes the absurdity of the divisions among religions into Hindu, Muslim or Christian by making his narrator, Saleem Sinai all three which also seem to typify the ambi(multi)guous identity of India itself. With so many mother figures and more plentiful father figures, his nebulous inheritance matches his fragmentary nature.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It becomes evident that Rushdie is concerned about the identity of his nation in similar vein as his narrator Saleem is in search of his identity through out the novel and his multi- religious roots (fathers and mothers of various religions) reminds one of the communalism prevalent in 'functioning anarchy' (J.K. Galbraith) of India. (Imaginary Homelands 27)

The life of Saleem in Midnight's Children or to a little extent Omar in Shame can be compared to the wretched fate of Kama of the epic Mahabharata. Kama throughout lives an ordinary life unaware of his noble blood, Saleem's humble origins are changed for the luxury life of Shiva's whereas Omar carries on his life in the same house because his house itself bears multiple mothers and an unknown wife of an Englishman.

Characterization in Rushdie is unique and mystic. Whereas some of his characters are identifiable with political figures, others he claims to be inspired by not a single but several noticeable human traits or several traits noticeable in a human being. They often come out of several gestures or from small details of the character from which the rest of the character grows. Therefore personalities of characters in Rushdie are rather a mixture of more than one person. Like, a little American girl Evie Burns is a mixture and an exaggeration of the worst of features of some tomboyish girls in Rushdie's neighbourhood. There were a couple of English and a couple of American girls and one who probably was most like Evie Burns, Rushdie informs was not American but an Australian.' At the same time he straightforwardly refutes some of the characters that seem to be directly lifted from his life or family. In his interview to Jean W. Ross he enlightens the readers that the Brass Monkey, Saleem's little sister in Midnight's Children is popularly assumed as his sister in real life but according to him it is the most fictional character in the entire book and none of his three sisters are like her (Reder 3). It might be amusing for Rushdie when people take his fantasy to be reality but at times it is embarrassing too, when he is corrected by the readers. To exemplify we have an instance when a mail reported that Mrs N Fernandes, a figure on Rushdie's pickle jar is not an old lady as is supposed by him but a very fat, bald old man who runs that factory in Bombay. Thus, Rushdie gets acquainted with his own characters through the readers' feedback. He further claims that places, rather than people, are more of autobiographical nature be it Saleem's house or the school, they resemble more closely with his own house and school in Mumbai. Even the incidents are of autobiographical

nature. The news of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination resulted in fear in Saleem's family watching a movie. This is parallel to an event in Rushdie's life when his parents after hearing the same news in real got tensed due to rising tension between Hindu Muslim communities. They were relieved only when they learned that the assassin was a Hindu just like Sinai's. So we can say that characterization in Rushdie is of not prime importance; narrative is about events and the allegory of characters acts as metaphors to the literal narrative of history.

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