



# A STUDY OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF SALMAN RUSHDIE

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*Abstract:* Salman Rushdie, a postmodernist immigrant, is regarded as one of the greatest novelists of the 20th century. His magic realism method incorporates mythology, religion, history, fantasy, and humor into the real world. He makes an effort to reenact the cultural crisis in his art and reinvent it for the postcolonial era. His work focuses on India's history, politics, and identity as seen through his narrators. He weaves real-world information with his fantastical fiction. Rushdie does not claim to be omniscient because he only sees things in pieces, which is a must for any realistic story. He won't present any entirely personal characters because of this. Salman Rushdie encourages women to struggle to break free from their oppressive roles through his writings. He has been effective in developing strong female heroines who face life with great fortitude and strength rather than allowing their personal traumas to overwhelm them.

Key words: Fantasy, fortitude, Immigrant, mythology, trauma.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Salman Rushdie, a postmodernist immigrant, is regarded as one of the greatest novelists of the 20th century. His magic realism method incorporates mythology, religion, history, fantasy, and humor into the real world. He makes an effort to reenact the cultural crisis in his art and reinvent it for the postcolonial era. His work focuses on India's history, politics, and identity as seen through his narrators. He weaves real-world information with his fantastical fiction. Rushdie does not claim to be omniscient because he only sees things in pieces, which is a must for any realistic story. He won't present any entirely personal characters because of this. He depicts social norms, cultural practices, religious beliefs, familial and familiar relationships, and the reliable burden of traditional authority in his novels. This depiction of traditional authority has sparked a rebellion against the institutionalized forces of oppression and injustice against women.

Rushdie is a postcolonial author in the straightforward sense that his writing deals with contemporary Pakistan and India as well as Western cities with sizable populations drawn from nations that were conquered by Western imperialism in the third decade of the twentieth century. Despite the harsh criticism, he has been praised for his portrayal of the developing world, particularly its women. Postcolonial writing in Indian English is frequently engaged with socially marginalized groups including the underprivileged and women. Both male and female authors have emphasized how tradition-bound cultures have a tendency to favor inferior groups.

Rushdie is simultaneously on all sides and not on any one. He was educated in India and England and lives in the postcolonial and multicultural environment of Western metropolises. He is a writer from a different time and place. However, he also acts as an ambassador for the fresh perspectives of those who have left the Indian subcontinent. However, postcolonial literature asserts that it gives voice to the oppressed people from the many former empires and writes in opposition to attempts by the West to impose its own voice on their histories and identities. Therefore, detractors may see Rushdie's personal perspective as a denial of all of this. Rushdie is a privately educated Londoner who now resides in New York and has a background in advertising. He writes only in English because he insists on it.

Salman Rushdie incorporates the post-colonial literature conundrum inside the canon of Indo-English literature in his writing. At the same time, he writes to appeal to a global readership, particularly one in the west. Rushdie is a translated individual who, by writing in English, performs the translation for the western reader. His ability to write in English is so exceptional that even a simple sentence can move the reader to tears. Salman Rushdie depicts social norms, cultural practices, religious beliefs, familial

and familiar relationships, and the reliable burden of traditional authority in his novels. This depiction of traditional authority has sparked a rebellion against the institutionalized forces of oppression and injustice against women.

Salman Rushdie encourages women to struggle to break free from their oppressive roles through his writings. He has been effective in developing strong female heroines who face life with great fortitude and strength rather than allowing their personal traumas to overwhelm them. The paper examines the injustice and misery experienced by women, paying particular attention to Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, *Fury*, and *Shalimar the Clown* novels.

The theme of Rushdie's fiction is the immigrant and cultural mixture. His fictional characters are cultural fusions that are torn between the cultures of two different nations. To achieve balance, they battle between the two civilizations. They are also acutely aware of each culture's advantages and disadvantages. Rushdie's book can be interpreted as a subversive literature that blurs the line between fact and fiction. It is therefore challenging to challenge the historical record's monopoly and objectivity claim. He is a brilliant storyteller whose characters frequently use puns in the various languages used in and around India and Pakistan. His stories never fail to surprise the reader.

*Midnight Children*, *Shame*, *Fury* and *Shalimar the Clown* are the four books that the researcher has chosen for her study. The partition of British India and India's journey from British colonialism to independence are topics covered in these works. The tale is a comedic allegory that explores the history of contemporary India through the experiences of 1,000 kids. Evidently, they were born at midnight on August 15, 1947, the day India formally declared its independence from Great Britain. The 1,000 and one kids were all endowed with magical abilities. Saleem Sinai, the main character and narrator of the book, is one of the two guys born simultaneously. He was born with telepathic abilities and a huge, continually dripping nose.

*Shame* can be considered as a counterpoint to *Midnight's Children*, which primarily focuses on India while employing the entire South Asian peninsula as its canvas. *Shame* is a serious yet lighthearted novel that combines politics, mythology, history, and fantasy. It also looks at power dynamics and the connection between violence and shame. Shame is frequently used as a metaphor for Pakistani politics. Both its political bent and its magical realism are traits that define it. *Shame* discusses Pakistan's cultural history, authenticity, and honesty, as well as, of course, the shame and shamelessness of individual and familial honor. Pakistan thus has a connection to the feelings of embarrassment that led a Pakistani family in England to murder their daughter for sexual dishonor.

He is currently the most well-known writer of our time because of how frequently his blatant allusions have gotten him into trouble. While *Ground beneath Her Feet* is mostly set in New York, Rushdie's upcoming book, *Fury*, is totally set there. It seems to be simpler and more accurate to Rushdie's life occurrences. The main character, Malik Solanka, was raised in New York City as a television talk show host after being born in India and receiving his philosophical education at Cambridge. Malik resides in Bombay, the same city where many of Rushdie's characters, including Saladin Chamcha, Saleem Sinai, and Moraes Zogby, grew up.

Malik Solanka, a professor at King's College in London, resides there with his second wife and son, who is four years old. He departs from his family and travels to Manhattan from London. After a fight, he finds himself pointing a knife at his son and his sleeping wife. There are many subplots in this, including references to a string of murders in which affluent young women in New York are raped and chopped to death. Solanka, who is confused, worries that he might have committed these gruesome atrocities during a drunken frenzy. The girlfriends of the gins commit the killings.

A political novel with a love tale at its core, *Shalimar the Clown* is set in Kashmir. The four primary characters in Rushdie's story are Shalimar, Max Ophuls, Boonyi, and India, Ophuls' daughter. Rushdie attempts to connect this story to a much bigger context by setting it inside geopolitical and modern situations. Rushdie concentrates on Kashmir, a region that has experienced conflict since the India-Pakistan partition and where violence has substantially increased recently.

Pachigam, a small but renowned village of entertainers and caterers, is the passion of Shalimar and Boonyi's lives. Although they practice different religions, this has no impact on their marriage. The fairy-tale romance between Shalimar and Boonyi swiftly disintegrates when Boonyi learns that marrying Shalimar will subject her to a life term in prison. She has goals that won't be realized in the little village where she will spend the remainder of her life. She starts looking for an opportunity to flee at that point.

Shalimar discovers a route into the USA following the killing of Boonyi. Here, she applies to work as Max Ophuls' driver before shooting and killing him in front of his daughter, India, in broad daylight. India, who was horrified by the terrible murder of her father, visits Kashmir in search of explanations and discovers her ancestry. She also develops feelings for Yuvraj, a Kashmiri man. Shalimar is imprisoned in the USA, and upon her return, she targets him with hateful letters rather than with arrows or knives. Shalimar escapes from jail in the novel's last chapters and finds her home. She is prepared to murder if necessary while she waits for him with her bow and arrows.

Salman Rushdie is a significant postmodernist author from the perspective of feminist literature because all of his books feature women characters in some capacity. In practically all of Rushdie's novels, women are represented, which infuses an international sensibility into an Indian milieu. The way that women are portrayed in his writings is influenced by this synthesis of Western and Indian ideas. His female heroines tend to be from the Indian subcontinent and adhere to a certain form of feminism that is specific to the Third World.

Women make forceful arguments against the Euro centrism of much Western feminism, as well as against its ignorance of colonial history and propensity to mimic colonial practices of representation. In order to create an identity that is independent of a patriarchal society, several Indian women novelists have studied female subjectivity. Thus, the Bildungsroman, or the concept of maturing from childhood to womanhood, is a common tactic. Given the widespread belief that Salman Rushdie exhibits characteristic Indianness in the development and portrayal of women characters, the research will be both appropriate and useful. Rushdie has drawn criticism for his depiction of women as unimportant beings.

The study at hand will be an original effort as a result of this criticism and the fact that Rushdie is a writer with a variety of views, experiences, and scholarships. If a woman is not the major character, it suggests that she lacks influence and has no substantial contribution to make to the development of the other characters. The goal of this study is to examine how women are portrayed in a few of Salman Rushdie's writings in light of the aforementioned critique.

Women in Rushdie's writing are noted, then subjected to analysis and interpretation. One of the main goals is to examine the writings for women's perspective and, if possible, explain Rushdie's development as a feminist writer. The interpretations have been developed in relation to the context of occurrence because the novels are narrative in character and because of their stream of

consciousness approach. The psychological, sociological, and archetypal approaches have all been used to examine how women are portrayed while following the plot from the perspective of each character.

A thorough analysis of the texts has been conducted, conclusions are taken from the text's point of view, and references from the available criticism are cited to support the viewpoint. The study of the subject is *A Study of Women Characters in Selected Novels of Salman Rushdie* and examines how women are handled against that backdrop. *Women's Predicament*, offers a thorough exploration of how women characters resist both within and outside of the roles they play. Women come into contact, convention and modernism, as well as their personal conflicts with families and society, are how they demonstrate their desire to achieve independence for themselves as strong, capable women. It also reveals how he creates female warriors who defy societal norms, religious beliefs, and practices. He portrays women as fighters, victims, heroines, and eventual winners thanks to their unbreakable spirits and conciliation-oriented approaches.

This paper also includes a study of how the novel deals with societal norms of beauty and sexuality in the context of the women who possess them and those who utilize them. The researcher is attempting to investigate how a woman is subjected to a lifelong apprenticeship in the construction of gender roles from an early age and how, as a result of being praised for her role as a selfless, compassionate, and nurturing individual, she is constrained to the boundaries of her home. In order to comprehend how Rushdie depicts his female characters in their diverse roles, the chapter seeks to their views of their sexual and biological duties. These central concepts — sex as incest — are contested by the protagonists.

A woman undergoes a long apprenticeship in gender role edification from a young age and how, by elevating her role as a self-sacrificing, caring, and fostering person, she is constrained to the confines of her home in the fifth chapter, titled *Uncertainties of Marriage Life*. An ideal woman in Indian culture is one who endures a variety of hardships while giving of herself to others in order to keep the web of connection intact and ensure that no one is left alone.

When reading Rushdie's books closely, the reader will notice that he also portrays the idea that when women, regardless of their status, education, and intelligence, attempt to marry according to their own preferences, it is likely to ruin their chances in both the worlds in which they rebel against male dominance and the one in which they embrace. Rushdie, however, depicts her as frank, brave, experienced in action, and resolute.

One of the most influential writers of our time is Salman Rushdie. He is particularly significant because, through his work, he poses uncomfortable, frequently disturbing questions about commitment and identity. In a time and place where even the tenets of religion, science, and literary value are frequently questioned. This voice is sorely needed. It is important for readers to see women's rights and female emancipation emerge from books and become a reality in a period when these concepts are not only abstract ideas. These books are either religious or metaphysical, yet there is a hidden significance underneath such suggestions. It focuses on the social and political upheavals, racial and religious prejudice, and violence that exist in society.

Saleem fixes a lot of the historical mistakes he makes in his postmodern work, and occasionally he does them on purpose even though they are true. Rushdie has surmounted the restrictions of historical accounts by using the magic realist style, which results in an odd blend of the natural and supernatural in the tale of Saleem and Padma. Saleem's telepathic ability, which enables him to read people's minds and set up meetings, is quite postmodernist. He makes an effort to comprehend and analyze the multi-layered and complex reality of the socio-political life of the Indian subcontinent during the Emergency reign of Indira Gandhi. As a satirist, he is quite direct in his commentary on the events of that time. Rushdie demonstrates the postmodern philosophy of myth construction, and he uses myths to create a new historical era.

Indian women still have a long way to go before they can claim their identity as unique people with their own aspirations, desires, dreams, and views of what it means to be human. Science and technological advancements have only had an external impact on Indian society, and particularly the lives of women. The inner transformation of the people still requires a significant shift in their attitude. Without hesitation, women are expected to fit into the cast in Indian society. Rushdie serving as the embodiment of the contemporary Indian Women paints a picture of the difficulties faced by women in patriarchal society and how they depart from the norm to learn about themselves.

Rushdie expertly addresses a variety of conflicting, stereotypical, and intimate facets of the man-woman interaction. In her novels, the dissonant side of marriage is increasingly apparent. It is possible to say that the novels up for review portray love, marriage, religion, homelessness, nostalgia, a yearning for the past, violence, and political beliefs in all their vile coarseness. The novelist accurately described the violence in the world around them because they genuinely shared its sense. The novelist's endeavor to influence public opinion through his literature was successful in its goal. The preferred method to achieve the desired result is through pictorial explanations. This suggests that the author has effectively expressed her moral condemnation of specific courses of behavior.

The present, the differences as well as the parallels and overlaps of the various cultures existing in one nation, as well as the difficulties and dubious concerns related to it, are all depicted in the novels chosen for study. In fact, one could argue that multiculturalism, in its positive sense, serves as the foundation of the entire system. The writings of Salman Rushdie offer a wealth of opportunities for further study. The author's novels' depictions of femininity may be chosen for study. It will also be examined how Indian writers and writers from the Diaspora interpret traditional and cultural elements differently. It could be beneficial to analyze Salman Rushdie's books critically.

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