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PORTRAYAL OF TERRORISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN RUSHDIE'S *SHALIMAR THE CLOWN*

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ABSTRACT:

*Among the later Indian Diasporic writers, the most notable is Salman Rushdie, born in India, now living in the U. K. Rushdie with his famous work *Midnight's Children* ushered a new trend of writing. He used a hybrid language- English generously peppered with Indian terms to convey a theme that could be seen as representing the wide canvas of India. He is usually categorized under the magic realism mode of writing most famously associated with Gabriel Garcia Marquez. It mixes religion, fantasy and mythology into more grounded reality. The modern world is passing through so many problems of communalism, extremism, terrorism, fanaticism and hidden imperialism of powerful countries in the name of humanism which are the violators of human rights. Salman Rushdie in his novel *Shalimar the Clown* has very beautifully painted the picture of violation of human rights by terrorism propelled by religious zealotry. In *Shalimar the Clown*, Rushdie has suggested that three ideologies, i.e., personal, political and religious, should be intertwined to curb terrorism. Only then human beings can exist peacefully and human rights can be provided to everyone. The present paper is a humble attempt to look into this novel from the point of view of the treatment of violence and terrorism.*

KEYWORDS: *Magic Realism, Diaspora, Indian Writing in English, Violence and Terrorism.*

Introduction:

Indian English literature refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in the English language and whose native or co- native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian Diaspora such as V. S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri and Salman Rushdie, who are of Indian descent. Among the later writers, the most notable is Salman Rushdie, born in India, now living in the U. K. Rushdie with his famous work *Midnight's Children* ushered a new trend of writing. He used a hybrid language- English generously peppered with Indian terms to convey a theme that could be seen as representing

the wide canvas of India. He is usually categorized under the magic realism mode of writing most famously associated with Gabriel Garcia Marquez. It mixes religion, fantasy and mythology into more grounded reality. Rushdie has been compared to authors such as Peter Carey, Emma Tennant, and Angela Carter. His somewhat flippant and familiar way of treating religion has provoked criticism.

Salman Rushdie uses magic realism as a style of writing. Magic realism is when magical elements are used in short stories, novellas, etc. as a literary tool. His writing style can be called magic realism combined with historical fiction. His stories center on the Indian subcontinent and mostly contain themes like migrations to and fro the East and the West and the incidences occurring in between them.

Human Rights impart the right of equality and life of dignity with the spirit of brotherhood and humanity. With the affirmation and Universal Declaration by the U.N. General Assembly, Human Rights became very powerful machinery to protect human beings from the danger of civil human rights which are threatened by national and international terrorism. Governments of all forms are compelled to recognize their obligations and insure such rights within the jurisdiction of human rights. International Government is also bound morally to support other countries in following the civil human rights. But terrorism is the biggest stumbling block in the way of providing human rights to human beings. Religious zealotry is fanning the flame of terrorism.

Salman Rushdie in his novel *Shalimar the Clown* has very beautifully painted the picture of violation of human rights by terrorism propelled by religious zealotry. Terrorism puts the venom of terror into the clear stream of human brotherhood and natural relationship. It has spread all over the world and become a global phenomenon. It creates unpredictable violence which becomes very difficult to combat. Religious and ethnic variety of terrorism have become the dynamic forces which violate human rights and women and children become their soft targets. In *Shalimar the Clown*, Rushdie has suggested that three ideologies, i.e., personal, political and religious, should be intertwined to curb terrorism. Only then human beings can exist peacefully and human rights can be provided to everyone. In this novel we find that the three important characters- Shalimar a young Muslim boy, Boonyi a beautiful Hindu girl and Max Ophuls a Jewish European- have three different religious, personal and political ideologies. Due to the different ideological point of view, Max Ophuls interferes in the love affair of Shalimar and Boonyi, the married couple and Boonyi abandons her husband and turns to Max Ophuls for money and new life. She forgets her promises which she had taken to be with Shalimar through thick and thin. She forgets her love and chooses money and power over love. It shocked Shalimar so much that he changed his mind and sense of affection and love because he was deserted by his own beloved whom he loved more than anything. The interference of Max Ophuls, a Jewish European who entices Boonyi who breaks the love bond made

with Shalimar, brings forth the catastrophe and turns Shalimar into a terrorist being bereft of his beloved. Such events change Shalimar, the clown into an assassin and savage avenger and the world of peace and happiness of his life is lost forever. Shalimar kills Max Ophuls and Boonyi to revenge upon them for the loss of his love and peaceful coexistence in the valley of Kashmir. Rushdie has brought to light that due to ethnic and religious differences, Max interferes in the love life of Shalimar and desolates the resolved love of the couple. Shalimar becomes so savage that he does not spare even the life of Kashmira who is Boonyi's daughter. Here, Rushdie has brought to light that due to ethnic and religious hatred and differences, love is desolate and peaceful coexistence turns into terrorism.

In this novel, the novelist has presented the two different worlds: a world of peaceful coexistence and the world of terrorism and extremism. Kashmiri people lived in peace from the time of yore. Both the Hindus and the Muslims coexisted in the valley of Kashmir. They had tolerance and inter-cultural common sense of compromise. Compromise and tolerance are the two wheels of human existence. Without them we can't expect human rights. There is a human dimension to this precis- idyll. That is the inhabitants of the two rival villages- Pachigam and Shirmal, solve their disagreements with humour, moderation and inter- cultural common sense and compromise. They bend their ideologies and dogmas to suit their friendship.

The two rival villages- Pachigam and Shirmal- are represented by two different ethnic groups i.e. the Hindus and the Muslims who live in peaceful coexistence due to their amiable understanding and love for each other's religious background. Religious hatred is very much responsible for violation of human rights. Religious tolerance is essential for the existence of human beings. Fanatic ideologies create terrorism and mass destruction of human values where we can't hope for human rights. It is the violation of religious trust by Max Ophuls which breaks the love bond of Boonyi and Shalimar who becomes a terrorist and kills both of them. So, the religious sentiment of any ethnic group should be honoured. The insult of any religion is the cause of terrorism. Insults to Islam were the causes of terrorism. The West always wonders about the root cause of terrorism; such actions are its root cause.

Inter- religious respect and regard are a must for all human beings to maintain peace and development. Such a life of peace and happiness is enjoyed by the people of Kashmir in villages like Pachigam and Shirmal and in the open field of Khelmarg in the valley of Kashmir. But, this heavenly freedom and happiness is turned into hell by the stupid and brutal fire- breathing sermons of Mullahs in their local mosques. Three Muslim boys being instigated by their sermons capture an innocent Hindu girl from the neighbouring village while she is gathering flowers and rape her. The girl's father swears to revenge on them. Fully armed, he gallops the Muslim village where the three rapists flee into the sanctuary of the mosque. They never come out. They remain inside and starve to death.

The mosque is locked and never used again. Rushdie is very frank in his exposition of tragedy which debar human beings from enjoying human rights. Such stupid actions cause the tragic destruction of paradise of Kashmir. They create deadly effect in the polarisation of the Hindus and the Muslims.

Besides these types of terrorism, there is state-sponsored terrorism which deprives the human beings of their civil rights due to the blindness of power. Such terrorism faces counter terrorism and innocent life is destroyed. Now such terrorism has engulfed the entire world and it is difficult to save human beings from the terror in the modern terrorism which puts landmines and explosives through remote control. Innocent people are killed in large numbers in this way. According to a report published in *The Times of India*, “Landmines still hit 2000 people across the world every month: about 800 die, while 1200 others are maimed. Most of the victims are civilians”. (*The Sunday Times*, June 19, 2007).

The governments are trying to defuse such landmines. But it seems to be very difficult. Most of the recent weapons are in the hands of the terrorists which are catastrophic for human beings. In such a situation, it can't be expected to have human rights when the survival of human beings is at stake. Human rights seem to be a distant dream in the world which is full of terrorists and extremists with powerful weapons of destruction in their hands. According to another report published in *The Times of India*, “About 100,000 mines are defused annually. Even if no new mines are planted from now on, it would take about 1100 years to diffuse the millions of mines planted across the globe” (*The Sunday Times*, March 4, 2012).

The modern world is passing through so many problems of communalism, extremism, terrorism, fanaticism and hidden imperialism of powerful countries in the name of humanism which are the violators of human rights. The people of poor countries like Somalia, Eritria, and Ethiopia and a few more from African countries can't expect their human rights. Everywhere we find the violation of human rights. It is the duty of writers to talk about such sensitive issues also. There are Indian writers who are doing what they can, and there are even Indian critics who are trying to read such writers on their own. But Indian opinion-makers, T. V. hosts, editors of glossy supplements, owners of fashionable bookshops, society hostesses etc. still need to overcome the Indian historically induced colonial tendency to tail-wag. Let Indian readers choose for themselves by allowing more general and public visibility to literature that has not been approved by the invisible ink of British patronage.

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