



Exilement in Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*

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Indian born British author Salman Rushdie is well-known as a leading novelist among the writers of Indian English Literature. He is one of most brilliant writers of English Language. He is blessed with wonderful artistic skill and imagination and has an extraordinary intelligence in understanding the universe. His fictions are more involved with the global realities of migration and cultural hybridity.

Rushdie's fifth novel *The Moor's Last Sigh* was published in 1995 is set in Indian cities of Bombay and Cochin. In Rushdie's fiction, Bombay has served as the place where India's different cultures meet. *The Moor's Last Sigh* is an incestuous family saga where the novel has a beginning of family chart trace the birth and death dates and relations of the members of the Da Gama and Zogoiby families. The novel overfills with intrusive outsiders as well as member of four generations of the family. It represents the end of post colonialism. The narrator MoraesZogoiby has been called as Moor throughout the book.

Moraes traces his family history throughout his lifetime. His father, Abraham Zogoiby is a South-Indian Jew, who claims descent from Spain when the last Moorist King Sultan Boabdil of Granada was driven out by the Catholic Armies of Ferdinand and Isabella. Boabdil acquired a Jewish mistress in exile after the loss of Moraes kingdom. And his mother Aurora da Gama was the last in the prosperous Portuguese family of Vasco da Gama. "CHRISTIANS, PORTUGUESE AND JEWS: Chinese tiles promotion godless views; pushy ladies, skirts- nor- saris, Spanish shenanigans, Moorish crowns... can this really be India?" (87). After the birth of their son MoraesZogoiby his father Abraham came to know about the origin of his mother and named him Moraes as a descent of Moorish and Zogoiby as a descent of Vasco da Gama which means unlucky.

Moraes and his father represent the three major Western influences of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Moraes is unnaturally big and suffer from a disease that age twice as fast as a normal person's does and also has deforms hand. Abraham faced a lot of economic backdrops in his business in Bombay which was relieved by his Hindu friend Raman Fielding.

The novel portrays Rushdie double exile position both the national and the individual level. His dialectical interrelation- ship between the author and narrative, narrative and nationality and the nationality and the individual has been brought out in the novel. The word "Moor" is connected with two painting of the name made by two different characters. The first is the painting of his mother Aurora Zogoiby and the second the artist paint over or repainted it the famous sigh. The immigration from Spain to India and India to Spain is the major theme present in the novel that is the book starts where it finishes in Spain.

The novel traces the decade that Jews and Moors are expelled from Spain, and that Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama set sail from there for new worlds. Moor is a Jew, Christian and an Indian. His mother's family is descended from the Portuguese who settled in Goa, and his father's side can trace its lineage to the Christian of Spain when both Moors and Jews were expelled. They have been Indian for many centuries. Moor, the protagonist and fictional narrator of the novel bring out the exile expression as "a real Bombay mix" neither a Christian nor a Jew rather "a Cathjew nut", "a Jewholic" and "atomised".

I, however, was raised neither as Catholic nor as Jew; I was both, and nothing: a Jewholic - anonymous, a Cathjew nut, a stewpot, a mongrel cur. I was –what's the word these days? – *atomised*. Yessir: a real Bombay mix. (104)

The four central figures are Aurora da Gama, Abraham Zogoiby, Moor and Vasco Miranda acquires an international reputation.

Mine is the Story of the fall from grace of a high-born cross-breed: me, MoreasZogoiby, called "Moor", for most of my life the only male heir, to the Spice, trade-'n'-big-business crores of the da Gama-Zogoiby dynasty of Cochin, and of my banishment from what I had every right to think of as my natural life by my mother Aurora, *nee* da Gama, most illustrious of our modern artists, a great beauty who was also the most sharp- tongued woman of her generation, handing out the hot stuff to anybody who came within range. (5)

Rushdie's personal experience after *fatwa*, a religious order issued by a Muslim leader, has also put a light on the immigration. Moor's narrating events of his life is also the life of Rushdie, where Moor was born within four and half months. When he was one year, he looked like a man of twenty and so on, in the same way Rushdie was psychologically been affected by his *fatwa* and he had to go in underground existence. He comments "Speaking for myself at this late hour? Just about managing, thanks for asking; though old, old, old before my time" (53).

The character of Aurora brings out the idea of Rushdie's unity in his mind. Even though he is separated from India, he has the love towards it, which cannot be separated. Aurora's painting of interlink her family's member representations within the crowd shows that she feels fundamental separation between peoples of all sorts but it is impossible. The separation is only a fantasy of human minds. The family in India cannot be isolated anywhere. She paints every person representing the mural as a part of "Mother India", with love and caring. Her opinion is that people in India have a common denominator, whatever traditions or religion they may be but they are bound as children of India. Her painting was during 1975 to 1977 with a complex and surreal painting with a great many important details about India. She sketches the

quotidian lives of the people of Bombay. She goes among them as the “unblinking lizard on the wall of history, watching, watching, watching” and dreaming (131-32). She is a “social realist” artist “She returned day after day to her chosen scenes, and in slow steps the magic works, people stopped noticing her; they as a house and even had curtains over its windows, and allowed the truth of their lives to return to their faces” (130).

Aurora is attempting to create “one universe, one dimension, one country, one dream” where people and creatures of all types walk the beach together without boundaries, divisions and margins in her paintings.

‘This seaside, this hill, with the fort on top. Water-gardens and hanging gardens, watchtowers and towers of silence too. Place where worlds collide, flow in and out of out another, and washofy away. Place where an air-man can drown in water, or else grow gills; where a water-creature can get drunk, but also chokeofy, on air. One universe, one dimension, one country, one dream, bumpo’ing into another, or being under, or on top of. Call it Palimpsestine. And above it all, in the palace,...’. (226)

She inter-mingles these peoples and creatures and shows them sharing a land and a sea together. There are no divisions of time, of reality and fantasy, of wealth and poverty, and ethnicity. She has created a world in which literally all boundaries are broken. The second part of her painting is about the dark aspects of Bombay with example from the movie the “Mother India”. P.Balaswamy in “A Post- modern, Provocative, Metropolitan Mother India: Aurora Zogoiby of Rushdie’s *The Moor Last Sigh*” comments:

In Aurora Da Gama Zogoiby, the flamboyant mother of the Moor, however, Rushdie goes father and supplants the traditional image of the kind, compassionate, rural, heroic Mother courtesy Nargis of Mehboob Khan’s classic movie Mother India with, to put it in his own words, his own sort of Mother India,... metropolitan, sophisticated, noisy, angry and different. (87)

All Aurora’s important paintings determine the narrative structure of the novel. Mooristan paintings are a fusion of Alhambra with the Mughal palace- fortresses in Delhi and Agra. Mooristan for Aurora is also a palimpsest- nightmare where irreconcilable world knock, not only in terms of a surreal or layer- painting technique, but also in terms of revealing hidden worlds of danger and horror lurking beneath superficial surfaces of pseudo- civilization in sex, politics, religion and commerce. Aurora’s painting of Bombay in the second part which is full of violence and corruption by the religious leader Raman Fielding where Bombay is been destroyed by bomb.

Moor is the ultimate hybrid in the novel. He has a wide variety of cultural and ethnic histories. He like his mother Aurora attempts to erase any boundaries. As Greenberg in “‘The Base Indian’ or ‘The Base Judean’? Othello and the Metaphor of the Palimpsest in Salman Rushdie’s *The Moor’s Last Sigh*” states Moor as: “More, over the course of the novel, appropriately becomes a misfit in every sort of way: he is a religious and ethnic mongrel, a dispossessed heir, a banished son, a political refugee” (94). Moor’s placement at the centre of the narrative in novel confirms Rushdie’s well established interest in hybrid identities. Jew, Muslim and Indian provides as index to the text’s exploration of hybridity. Moor the half Jewish and half Christian is on his way to self exilement in Spain.

Moor comes to know about Fielding through his lover Uma Saraswati. She is a beautiful deranged and brilliant young Hindu artist. She set herself as a rival personally and professionally to his mother

Aurora. After Uma engineers the Moor's expulsion from his family, Moor transfers his devotion from his mother to Uma. She accuses that Aurora has three affairs, infect, everyone in Bombay knows it clearly "that retard kekooMody," "Vasco Miranda, the fat fraud" and "MainduckRaman Fielding" (256). Uma plots to destroy the Moor. She makes terrible inconceivable use of Moor's passion for her to poison his parent's minds against him. Moor is forced to indulge in the "Under World" corruption presided by Fielding. Moor comments as:

they are not inhuman, these Mainduck- style little Hitlers, and it is in their humanity that we must locate our collective guilt... for if they are just minsters... then the rest of us are excused. I personally do not wish to be excused. I made my choice and lived my life. (297)

Aurora's paintings turn dark and threatening. Her style becomes mores naturalistic as she shows herself watching the Moor watching Uma. Aurora's aesthetic eye trails him into the underworld where she watched his decline with increasing horror. Moor later sees himself in the painting of his mother as:

The 'Moor in exile' sequence – the controversial 'dark Moors' born of a passionate irony that had been ground down by pain, and later unjustly accused of 'negativity', 'cynicism', even 'nihilism'- constituted the most important work of Aurora Zogoiby's later years. ... Almost every piece contained elements of collage, and over time these elements became the most dominant features of the series. (301)

Uma's painting deals with opportunistic new India, with its artists ready to search in the "dead sea" of their country's heritage or pass off with religious fervour. It is postmodernist art. The fall of Bombay is the destruction of home, the beginning of up rootedness and the entering into hill which Rushdie equates with the loss of family roots. P. Balaswamy point out some of India's social and economic sphere in "A Post- modern, Provocative, Metropolitan Mother India: Aurora Zogoiby of Rushdie's *The Moor Last Sigh*", he writes that the Indian society,

...has witnessed for-reaching changes being effected not only in its social and economic spheres, but, in the psychological, cultural, ethical makeup of the individuals. Too. The changes are more daringly and glaringly adopted among the Indian women in their outlook, behaviour and attitude. The 'Bharat Nair' image, in particular, has received many severs beatings, the ramifications of which are yet to be felt on a large scale.(89)

Rushdie represents non singularity of identity and thereby subverts the attempts of assigning monological identity as an individual and as an exile. Rushdie has created a migrant narrator Moor, who relates his story from outside India. For Rushdie the migrant is a subject, he comments in *Imaginary Homeland* that: "Suspects reality: having experienced several ways of being, he understands their illusory nature. To see thing plainly, you have to cross a frontier" (125).

Rushdie as duel exile tends to define his identity, his homogeneity by differentiating himself and his ordeals. The rapture between aspiration ego-ideal valorised by dominant culture and the experience of actual social devaluation cuts through the very centre of his subjectivity will be an apt conclusion.

Works Consulted

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That *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Salman Rushdie's sixth novel, did not win Great Britain's most prestigious literary award, the Booker Prize, is both unfortunate and understandable. It is unfortunate because *The Moor's Last Sigh* is a remarkable book that rises far above the difficult conditions under which it was written and to which it obliquely refers. There is a family tree followed by a family history, a leisurely (to the extent that anything in Rushdie's hyperkinetic fiction can be called leisurely) century-long look back to the root of the whole matter of family rifts and premature deaths and thwarted loves and mad passions and weak chests and power and money and the more morally dubious seductions and mysteries of art.