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DEFERMENT OF BINARY ELEMENTS IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *SHALIMAR THE CLOWN*  
AND *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*

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**ABSTRACT**

Postcolonial era was a period of transition, degeneration, regeneration, fragmentation, unification, uncertainty, stability, nationalism, globalization, enforced mass migration, rootlessness and metamorphosis with a special seal of three phases tagged to it namely, 'adopt', 'adapt' and 'adept' which led to identity crisis, double consciousness and finally, the duet and duel of binary oppositions. The postcolonial era experienced many poles-apart forces working simultaneously to shape the destiny of the decolonized nations, particularly India. Hope built its castle where despair dwelt, too; private affairs and public affairs embraced each other; women seemed submissive, but, they emboldened themselves during crisis; harsh realities of the era were fantastically unbelievable; records of unbelievable historical facts and realities seemed fictitious; East and West cultures mated to give birth to the so called 'Indian Modern'; peace seemed to dawn after the Britishers vacated the nation, but it was followed by Indo-Pak and Indo-China wars; waves of unconditional love and humanism seemed to be in progress to build the nation, but hatred and revenge tumbled forth due to Indo-Pak partition and further slicing of the nation into small states. To sum up, it can be said that it was an era of interplay of dualism where opposite forces co-existed, complementing each other and this notion has been greatly explained and approved by the poststructuralists, especially Derrida and J. Hillis Miller, who are centrally concerned with the aim to show the fluid and unstable nature of personal and gender identity, the shifting, polyvalent, contradictory currents of signification within texts and the play of binary opposites. Salman Rushdie's works, which fall under postcolonial literature, exhibit in candid profusion the duet and the duel of binary oppositions, acquiring a unique stance to become the theme, form and method in various hues by means of their fusion, fission and parallel propagations. This paper aims to identify these binary opposites in operation and their roles played in different milieus in the select novels of Rushdie.

Keywords: Binary opposites; 'domestic enclosure'; 'enclosed exchange'; 'osmotic mixing'; Deferment; and supplement.

In Jacques Derrida's perception, the Post-modern complexity is something 'unthinkable' due to 'the notion of structure lacking any center' and allowing 'the *free play* of the structure'. (Derrida 351-52) Especially, the postcolonial era experienced many poles-apart forces working simultaneously to shape the destiny of the decolonized nations, particularly India. Hope built its castle where despair dwelt, too; private affairs and public affairs embraced each other; women seemed submissive, but, they emboldened themselves during crisis; harsh realities of the era were fantastically unbelievable; records of unbelievable historical facts and realities seemed fictitious; East and West cultures mated to give birth to the so called 'Indian Modern'; peace seemed to dawn after Britishers vacated the nation, but it was followed by Indo-Pak and Indo-China wars; waves of unconditional love and humanism seemed to be in progress to build the nation, but hatred and revenge tumbled forth due to Indo-Pak partition and further slicing of the nation into small states. Thus, this era witnessed interplay of dualism where opposite elements conflicted as well as co-existed between each other. This phenomenon can be better analyzed from the theoretical perspective of post structural exponents, such as Jacques Derrida and J. Hillis Miller. Their deconstructive principles deal with the fluid and unstable nature of realities and contradictory currents of signification within texts and the play of binary opposites.

Salman Rushdie's works, which fall under postcolonial literature, discuss such complexity of language in candid profusion; especially the duet and the duel of binary oppositions acquires a unique stance to become the theme, form and method in various hues by means of their fusion, fission and parallel propagations. The dual aspects in his works conform to and confirm the dualities in operation in the postcolonial period. It deals with fusion of fantasy and realism, cultural amalgamation of the East and the West, fusion of public and private affairs, intertwining of hope and despair, depiction of love as both constructive and destructive force, intermingling of history and fiction, encounter of tradition or conventionalism with the newness of the modern world, bridging the world of love, peace, harmony with the world of hatred, war, fury and revenge, role of faith and betrayal in human relationships, and depiction of women as bold as well as submissive characters.

M. Keith Booker observes that 'embracing contradictions' (Booker 977) is the central themes and strategies of Rushdie's fiction. Josna. E. Rege endorses this view and says further that Rushdie's approach to duality in *Midnight's Children* 'functions as theme, as form, and as a method that enables a shift in postcolonial nationalistic discourse by exposing and enacting the radical ambivalence of the Indian nation'. (356-57) Though Booker M. Keith and Rege acknowledge the interplay of dualism in Rushdie's works, they cleave apart in certain aspects. Booker is of the opinion that Rushdie constructs and inhabits his opposing dualities only to expose their limitations. He believes duality as a method enables Rushdie to expose dualism as a prison, whereas Rege believes Rushdie's 'reproduction, reconfiguration, and critique of nationalist dualities as creating new possibilities for postcolonial narrative discourse in the eighties, but also as raising doubts about the outcome of the swirling embrace of polar opposites'. (357) She raises a queer question: "Will it be perpetual motion, fusion, or fission?" (357)

Structuralists like Saussure believe that conceptualizing experiences is possible in terms of polar opposites:

... for it always expresses an opposition of terms; it differs only in that the opposition is particularly significant (e.g. the formation of German plurals of the type *Nacht: Nlchte*). Each term present in the grammatical fact (the singular without umlaut or final *e* in opposition to the plural with umlaut and *-e*) consists of the interplay of a number of oppositions within the system. When isolated, neither *Nacht* nor *Ndchte* is anything: thus everything is opposition. (121-22)

Further discussing about binary opposites, Saussure puts forth many interesting ideas:

Putting it another way, the *Nacht: Ndchte* relation can be expressed by an algebraic formula  $a/b$  in which *a* and *b* are not simple terms but result from a set of relations. Language, in a manner of speaking, is a type of algebra consisting solely of complex terms. Some of its oppositions are more significant than others; but units and grammatical facts are only different names for designating diverse aspects of the same general fact: the functioning of linguistic oppositions. (122)

But, Derrida questions the act of privileging in the pair which is euro centric by nature and observes that this neat pairing of opposites advanced by Structuralism does not work that way. According to Derrida, these two oppositions overlap and share some common elements, and there is no fixed center. This theoretical perception is a quite appropriate tool for analyzing Salman Rushdie's dichotomy of vision - "For every snake, there is a ladder; for every ladder, a snake." (MC 425) and "For every O' Dwyer, ... there is a Shaheed Udham Singh, and for every Trotsky a Mercader awaits." (SC 30) Moreover, this analysis of binary elements can be further expanded and intensified by applying the principle of Miller's deconstructive reading: "... word and counterword subdivide and reveal themselves each to be fissured already within themselves" (Miller 441) which proposes the idea that a word 'has no meaning without that counterpart'. (Miller 441)

Rushdie brings striking interplay of binary elements – the most terrible and the most pleasant - with the arrival of Kashmira / India into the territory of India in *Shalimar the Clown*. This incident encompasses within it the interplay of hope and despair, love and hatred, peace and wars, degeneration of the old and regeneration of the new, East and West cultures, and private and public affairs. Moreover, each one of these elements in the pairs of binary opposites, far from being unequivocally what it is, subdivides within itself to recapitulate the relation of both the elements in the pair, and on the larger scale, it appears to be one or the other pole. Rushdie equates the East with the West, and brings them closer in such a way that they seem to reflect each other: "Everywhere was a mirror of everywhere else. Executions, police brutality, explosions, and riots: Los Angeles was beginning to look like wartime Strasbourg; like Kashmir." (SC 355) Kashmira takes off from her Western father's abode to her mother's Eastern one. The situation in Los Angeles is that of despair, and Kashmira's take off is viewed as an act directing towards hope, but, this hope further subdivides into hope and despair, as the events open up one after the other. The blossoming of Kashmira-Yuvraj relationship amidst the chain of betrayals and the elements of anti-love that surrounded Max, Boonyi and Shalimar, and the natural beauty and bounty of Kashmir constitute the 'aesthetics'. The disintegration and decay of Kashmir valley under the grip of terrorism and Indo-Pak antagonism constitute the 'grotesque', here.

Before Kashmira heads towards East, an appalling description of Harris's execution at San Quentin State Prison is given and soon afterwards, Rushdie makes the readers munch his sweet-bitter philosophy in the form of Harris's last words left behind before his execution: "You can be a king or a sweeper, but everybody dances with the Grim Reaper." (SC 355) India Ophuls a.k.a Kashmira Noman heads towards East after eight days of Harris's execution in the gas chamber. Kashmira's odyssey towards Kashmir comes as an emotional relief and a chill drizzle of hope for her: "The lizard people were rising up from their subterranean redoubts; the sleeping dragon had woken. And India, flying east, was on fire also. There is no India, she thought. There is only Kashmira. There is only Kashmir." (SC 356) Her hope, here, further reforming itself, subdivides into two new binary opposites, namely the confrontation of her present identity as an American and the identity she hopes to acquire as an Indian, as Kashmira, and this leads further to confrontation and amalgamation of East and West in the events that follow.

In this episode, Rushdie makes the terrible and the pleasant events meet in such a way that they both defer and supplement each other. The words – "Pellets of sodium cyanide wrapped in cheesecloth were lowered into a small vat of sulphuric acid and Harris began to gasp and twitch." (SC 355) – strike a contrast to the words - "As Kashmira, then, Kashmira in a baseball cap and jeans, she walked into the Press Club in Delhi and with American daring asked the old India hands for guidance and help ..." (SC 356) Along with the terrible and the pleasant, Rushdie makes the East and the West encounter to bestow a new identity on Kashmira: "She would not be India in India. She would be her mother's child." (SC 356) Here, Rushdie brings all the dual aspects required for the situation and narration, and lets them operate to have a free play that create not one, but, a series of rings. Each of these rings is always ready and welcome to receive the next and on the whole, remains open ended, always having the possibility of having another link added. This again gives further room for 'enclosed exchange', 'intimate "nestling" domesticity' (Miller 445) and 'domestic enclosure' (Miller 446) among the ringlets, as elucidated by Miller.

Between the two worlds of despair of the West and the East, India's rising aircraft is shown as a ray of hope, making the East and West encounter and unite, substantiating a perfect equation between them:

Below India's rising aircraft drivers were being pulled from their cars and chased and beaten by men holding rocks ... Stores were looted, cars were torched, there were fires everywhere, on, for example, Normandie, Florence, Crenshaw, Arlington, Figueroa, Olympic, Jefferson, Pico and Rodeo. What was burning? Everything. Auto repair shops, Launderlands, Korean eateries, ... all over the city. L.A. was a flame-grilled Whopper that night. (SC 356)

Soon, at the Press Club in Delhi, Kashmira is informed that Kashmir, her destination, is no way better than the world she has left behind. Her realization that she has momentarily escaped from a land of fury to another similar one, once again, takes place amidst her success in boarding a Fokker Friendship bound for Srinagar with papers, introductions, phone numbers and 'a new name whose meaning she needed to learn'. (SC 357) Her take off from Los Angeles, which was 'a flame-grilled Whopper' that night, in comparison to her take off from Delhi to Srinagar, three days later, is much realistically harsh, yet, tinged with hope. The latter is fantastically realistic: "As the plane crossed the Pir Panjal she felt as if she had passed through a magic portal..." (SC 357) The mention of the 'new name' among the phone numbers which needed to be learnt by Kashmira, and the readers leashes the pleasure of curiosity and pain simultaneously. For the readers, it arouses curiosity whereas for Kashmira, it is pain: "The need didn't feel like excitement. It felt like pain." (SC 357) Here, the binary opposites in operation create a strange chain without beginning or end in which none of them acquire a commanding role, an origin, a goal or an underlying principle. The chain is, thus, always left open and unpredictable, as the focus shifts and escapes from what was there earlier and what happened after the operation of binary opposites. The speedy follow up of events shifts the focus towards the formation of chain and the direction in which it moves, leaving behind a blurred image of the old ringlets and highlighting only on the newly formed ones.

Kashmira and Yuvraj meet when they are caught in the whirlpool of hope and despair after the death of their fathers. After his father's death, Yuvraj feels that his life was coming to an end, and all that are to follow would follow as it had to, but, would unquestionably be 'less graceful, less courteous and less civilized than what had gone' (SC 357). Kashmira, similarly, heads towards Kashmir with deep pain: "... she wondered in sudden terror whether she had come to Kashmir to be reborn, or to die." (SC 357) Here, the 'grotesque', originating from the deaths of Max and Sardar Harbans Singh, and the consequent pain and horror, defers all chances of eternal freedom, whereas the 'aesthetics', blossoming from Kashmira-Yuvraj union in the war prone zone of Kashmir, restores freedom of action, ushering in hope, meaningfulness and the spirit of readiness to be available in all means.

The terrible and the pleasant shake hands in the description of Sardar Harbans Singh's demise amidst spring flowers and honey bees with his favorite tartan rug across his knees and his beloved son by his side. The fantastical and the unpleasant embrace each other when the nature seems to mourn his death: "... when he stopped breathing the bees stopped buzzing and the air silenced its whispers." (SC 357)

A kind of infinite certainty paves way for hope when Kashmira meets Yuvraj on the ninth day of his father's death, when the reading of the Guru Granth Sahib was being completed. Yuvraj considers her arrival as a sign from the Almighty: "... she was his father's dying gift." (SC 358) The sad demise of Yuvraj's father takes a new turn towards hope with the gentle breeze of Kashmira's visit and pleasant events follow one after the other to fill the air with hope and happiness, and yet, the dangers of hatred and violence lurk and roar gently in the background: Kashmira is welcomed like a member of the family and offered the best hospitality; she is allowed to take part in the Bhog ceremony with which the rituals end on the tenth day; she listens to the 'hymns of passing' and partakes in the *karah parsad* and *langar*; and Yuvraj is presented with the turban and made the new head of the family. Thus, the waves of hope propagate one after the other till the relatives disperse without wailing and lamentation and Yuvraj gets time to talk to her to know the reason for her visit. Before he gets the answer from her, his intuitions grasp the real reason that she had come to make him fall in love with her, and this makes him exclaim –"You have come into our story at the end ..." (SC 358) The end of the death ceremony of Sardar Harbans Singh paves way for Kashmira-Yuvraj romance, exemplifying the interplay of the 'grotesque' and the 'aesthetics'.

Kashmira moves from Los Angeles, a land of fury, to enter another land of fury where Yuvraj dwells. Rushdie makes their love bloom amidst deaths, hatred, revenge and violence. In fact, the hostile milieu around makes them an easy prey of love, and thus, their love blossoms with violence, war and revenge in the background, complementing each other. The deaths of Max and Sardar Harbans Singh cleave out a vacuum of solitude in Kashmira and Yuvraj which naturally prompts and binds them both with affinity. Sardar Harbans Singh's 'credo' about human tragedy peeps in during their first conversation which amalgamates the terrible and the pleasant:

... our human tragedy is that we are unable to comprehend our experience, it slips through our fingers, we can't hold on to it, and the more time passes, the harder it gets. Maybe too much time has passed for you and you will have to accept, I'm sorry to say it, that there are things about your experience you will never understand ... the natural world gave us explanations to compensate for the meanings we could not grasp. The slant of the cold sunlight on a winter pine, the music of water, an oar cutting the lake and the flight of birds, the mountains' nobility, the silence of the silence. We are given life but must accept that it is unattainable and rejoice in what can be held in the eye, the memory, the mind. (SC 358)

Pachigam village, under 'crackdown', is kept in the background, and all the charming qualities of Yuvraj are set afloat in the forefront: undammed torrent of speech and poetic side of Yuvraj; the sparkle in his eyes when he speaks of *sakhtsazi* (manufacture) and *naqashi* (decoration); his voice, full of feeling, when he speaks about the origins of the craft of numdah rug-making in Central Asia in Yarkand and Sinkiang, in the days of the old Silk Route; the shine in his eyes with the mention of ancient glory of Samarkand and Tashkent, even though they were fading, at present, down-at-heel dumps; his voice, dropping with awe, while describing the weaving and embroidery of the shawls of Kashmir; his lyrical comparisons of weaving and embroidery of Kashmir to Gobelin tapestries, though he had never seen such things; and his boyish excitement and technical language in explaining about *sozni* embroidery techniques, satin-stitch and *ari* work, the hair of the ibex goat and the legendary *jamawar* shawls, comprise the 'aesthetics'. Yuvraj's words about Pachigam, "The fanatics kill our gents and the army shames our ladies." (SC 361) and his excited words about Kashmira's arrival after his father's demise, blended with a pinch of sorrow - "Only now that he has sadly departed but you have gladly come." (SC 358) - form a delta of hope-despair, love-hatred, war-peace, harmony-turmoil and the terrible-the pleasant. Here, the 'aesthetics' promotes the thought - "Living is keeping the absurd alive. Keeping it alive is, above all, contemplating." (Camus 845) - whereas the 'grotesque' reminds of the constant confrontation between man and his obscurity, and insistence upon an impossible transparency over man's desire for unity and his desire to solve the mystery of his longing for this unity, clarity and cohesion. The 'aesthetics' ushers in a revolt, devoid of any sort of resignation, and a certainty of crushing fate.

Kashmir, in this episode, is shown flickering in integration (the aesthetics) and disintegration (the grotesque) simultaneously through Yuvraj in his worshipful regard and interminable accounts of handicraft manufacture, and his recitals of poetry in his admittedly beautiful voice, insulated from the city's daily noises of marching feet, violence and terrorism. Integration of Kashmir and its culture is captured in Yuvraj's words: "So many artists together make every piece, the final work is not one man's alone, it is the product of our whole culture, it is not only made in but in fact made by Kashmir." (SC 359) Such harmony and synchronization are dismantled by the intrusion of an unpleasant and terrible snapshot of the burned-out-houses, the tanks, the fear in every woman's eye and the 'different terror' (SC 361) in the eyes of the men. The enchanting spell, created by Kashmir 'in spring, the leaves budding on the chinars, the swaying poplars, the blossom on the fruit trees, the cradling mountains circled all around' (SC 361), etc., is broken when Yuvraj names certain towns where militants had murdered the locals. The disintegrated Kashmir is presented with its integration: "Even in its time of darkness it was still a place of light." (SC 361) Kashmir, thus, like the prefix 'para', becomes 'a permeable membrane' and 'the boundary itself', 'forming an ambiguous transition' (Miller 441), bounded by its integration within disintegration.

The love between Kashmira and Yuvraj blossoms as they move in and out of the beautiful garden of Yuvraj and the hostile regions beyond Pachigam. The garden of Yuvraj is described as tiny Shangri-La, 'a miraculous island of calm in the middle of a war zone' (SC 361), which stands juxtaposed to the scene in Kunan

Poshpora, where twenty-three women had been raped by soldiers at gunpoint. Yuvraj's handsome face and undimmed graces, sparks of light seen in his and Kashmira's eyes and their deepened blushes, as their love story progresses, emerge as contrasting bright shades of hope and delight to compensate the dull and dreadful shades of shootings, hangings, stabbings, decapitations, bombings and systematic violation against young girls by the Indian army units. Similarly, the revolting descriptions of how the girls of Kashmir were treated by the Indian soldiers - "... girls taken to army camps, naked, and strung up from trees, their breasts cut with knives" (SC 362) – are followed by a sweet apology from Yuvraj for drawing in the ugliness of Kashmir. The most pleasant is then brought in amidst the most terrible: "His left hand shook on the steering wheel. She placed her right hand over it. It was the first time they had touched." (SC 362) At this juncture, love and violence show parallel propagation, once again confirming Miller's concept that a word 'has no meaning without that counterpart' (Miller 441). The most fantastical, yet, nauseating thing happens when they reach the Muskadoon, the place where her mother, Boonyi, as a teenager, had made love with Shalimar the Clown: "The world disappeared. There was only the stream, its babble like thunder in her ears. She felt as if she were drowning." (SC 362) One wonders here about what is that which makes Kashmira feel like drowning – Is it Boonyi's ghost? Is it the babbling sound of the stream? Is it the strange and hostile environment of Kashmir? Is it the pain of loneliness? The bank of Muskadoon, like a membrane, as does the prefix 'para', allows hymeneal bonding and 'osmotic mixing' (Miller 443), and creates mirage of confusing emotions and images. Here, the 'grotesque' supplements the sense of finiteness and anxiety, and therefore, a sense of 'nonbeing' that later kicks out the 'being' out of its seclusion to affirm itself dynamically. (Tillich 947) The 'aesthetics' leads the sense of 'nonbeing', a step forward by opening up the divine self-seclusion, and reveals man as power and love. These processes of supplementation lead to a third sphere where 'nonbeing' belongs to 'being', 'being' embraces itself and the 'non-being', 'being' is thought as the negation of the negation of 'being', and 'being' affirms itself against 'nonbeing' (Tillich 946).

Kashmira's exit from Los Angeles and her subsequent entry into the troubled territories of Kashmir depicts her dual nature. She is seen as a bold, rigid and determined woman, conceding softly and surrendering gradually, which reveals her fragile and flexible sides of her nature, to the strong but the pleasant sneaky nature of love towards Yuvraj. She is seen with 'American daring' at the Press Club in Delhi when she asks for guidance and help, and the vehemence of her outburst catches the required attention from the officials concerned. On the third day of her arrival, she succeeds in heading towards her destination, befitting the comments made by Hasina Yambarzal while drawing the similarities between her and her mother, Boonyi: "You have the same look of wanting what you want and never mind if the whole world goes to hell as a result." (SC 364) Kashmira's dual personality, paving way for her peaks of successes (the aesthetics), offers a pleasing contrast to the suffering women of Kashmir at the hands of the Indian soldiers (the grotesque).

Yuvraj's songs and the music of Kashmir, leashing out 'albeit falteringly' (SC 360), from his santoor keep her trapped for five days which is broken off with her deliberate efforts to reach Pachigam, which was under the dark spell of 'crackdown' then. For the first five days in Kashmir, Kashmira witnesses the most beautiful and the pleasant, and on the sixth day, comes most unexpectedly to her surprise, the most repulsive and the sickening snapshot of Pachigam. A glimpse of the *merquam* ragas of the classical form known as Sufiana Kalam, sung by Yuvraj, has its corresponding ugliness too, which is seen in the description of the distorted Pachigam: "It was as if giant burrowing creatures, ants or worms, had wriggled up from underground and built a colony of earthworks in a graveyard." (SC 362) The ears of Kashmira catch the songs of Habba Khatoon, the legendary sixteenth-century poet-princess, who introduced *lol* or lyric love poetry to Kashmir and her eyes witness the nauseating ruins of the old village, the charred foundations of the wooden houses, the blighted orchards, the broken street, new dwellings of ghosts, 'ramshackle hovels of sticks and earth and moss thrown together without any evidences of care or thought, mud igloos with blue smoke' which are the evidences of 'the slovenly products of an inferior species' or as Yuvraj calls them – 'our own kind, regressing towards savagery' (SC 362). Thus, Kashmira acts as 'a permeable membrane', the 'boundary itself', a 'threshold' and a 'margin' (Miller 441), dividing and at the same time, connecting the pleasant and the terrible for their interplay. The irregular-metre *bakhan* songs of the Pahari musical style sung by Yuvraj have their

corresponding binary oppositions in the suspicious eyes of the people who walked near Muskadoon and their sullen, unwelcome and silent faces peering out. The sight of the torn rags that hung over the doorways in Pachigam poses bizarrely opposed to the exclamation of Kashmiri while driving out from the magical paradise of Yuvraj: "Your home, your garden, is so beautiful." (SC 361) The reaction of Yuvraj to this compliment ushers in the 'aesthetics':

"In my childhood, it was a heaven inside a heaven," he said. "But now Kashmir is no longer heavenly and I am not a gardener like my father. I fear the house and garden will not last, without." He stopped in midsentence. "Without what?" she teased him, guessing the unspoken words, but he blushed again and concentrated on the road ahead. *Without a woman's touch*. (SC 361)

The unspoken words, '*Without a woman's touch*', become the source of hope as they herald vociferously the possibility of restoring harmony, peace and orderliness in Kashmir. Here, the 'grotesque' and the 'aesthetics' differ from and defer each other in the roles they play: the 'grotesque' misinterprets the anguish of dread and leads one away from faith, and the 'aesthetics' evacuates all that is finite and petty in man and directs him to his destiny. The interplay of the 'grotesque' and the 'aesthetics' leads to an ambiguous sphere where faith and faithlessness, hope and hopelessness, love and hatred, violence and harmony, and the finite and the infinite embrace.

To sum up, the whole episode has its fabrication in the form of a chain of ringlets of binary opposites – war, peace, fantasy, realism, horror, the pleasant, the terrible, East and West cultures, etc. – where love and violence run parallel and encompass all other binary opposites within their vicinity. As such, love and violence run around the design of fabrication that constitutes the chain of ringlets of other binary opposites as defining borders. Here, the 'aesthetics' – peace, love, fantasy, romance, the pleasant, beauty, etc. – acts as a necessary filter to facilitate the reception of the atrocities of war and violence without repulsion. The interplay of the 'grotesque' and the 'aesthetics', here, brings to the focus the co-existence of endeavors for harmonious international relations amongst countries and international terrorists' activities in the present era. The main cause for this interplay can be traced out from Indo-Pak partition and the dispute over the possession of Kashmir.

"In *Midnight's Children* the terrible and the pleasant, the serious and the absurd are related with the same all-pervading, all-knowing smile. Western concepts of good and evil, of the tragic and the comic, of purpose and history slither and lose hold in this narrative. And yet it is possessed of immense strength as well as consummate skill." (Swann 355) An apt incident to illustrate this statement of Joseph Swann is the one towards the end of the novel when Saleem and his companions are let into the jungle of forgetfulness, the Sunderbans. Saleem is sent with his team of handlers and sixty thousand troops to sniff out and quell the insurgency that is rampant in the East Wing of that country. In the midst of atrocities and the lies of war, Deshmukh, 'the vendor of notions', breaks into the vision of horror. His grotesque incursions bring in the elements of hope, faith and cheerfulness, and these elements make the most grotesque scenes bearable. It is rightly pointed out by Joseph Swann that it is he that speaks the final absolution, restoring the events to a moral order which have been shaken by the postcolonial rudiments. While Saleem and his companions drive through city streets in Dacca, they see that 'weren't-couldn't-have- been true'. They see the soldiers entering women's hostels and dragging them to streets. These 'soldier's-for-Allah' turn flame-throwing machine-guns and hand-grenades on the city slums. Rushdie, here, introduces a sprinkle of light-hearted humour to make this 'overdose of reality' look just real, just normal. He, through Saleem, says that machine-guns and hand-grenades were turned towards the city slums in Dacca just to make an attempt to hold Pakistan together. The narrative reaches to its most uncanny veracity, when Saleem and his companions come across 'a field in which grew crops so strange, with so nauseous an aroma'. (MC 518) Rushdie gives the most unsparing and the most dispassionate description of this 'terrible field' (MC 518) and at the same time, dilutes this overdose of unbearable reality of mass killing with the cheerful whistling sounds and prattles of Deshmukh, which has a dual purpose of making the tensed atmosphere a bit normal and mocking at the pathetic helpless predicament of mankind in the postcolonial era:

There was a scavenging peasant moving about, whistling as he worked, with an outsize gunnysack on his back ... The whistle echoed around the field, bouncing off fallen helmets, resounding hollowly from the barrels of mud-blocked rifles, sinking without trace into the fallen boots of the strange, strange crops ... The crops were dead, having been hit by some unknown blight...and most of them, but not all, wore the uniform of the West Pakistani army. (MC 518)

Once again the prattles of the peasant are poured into the cup of harsh realities of war to make it sweet and digestible to the maximum possible extent by Rushdie: "Ho sirs! India has come, my sirs! Ho yes! *Ho yes.*" – And all over the field, the crops were leaking nourishing bone-marrow into the soil while he, "No shoot I, my sirs. Ho no. I have news ..." (MC 518)

His prattles are followed by wares for sale or exchange and all of a sudden, Rushdie adds the bitterest and the strongest decoction to the cup of realities of war: a pyramid is seen in the middle of the field, with ants crawling over it; it consists of six feet and three heads, bits of torso, scraps of uniforms, intestines and shattered bones; and one of the three heads has a blind left eye, another has hair thickly plastered down with hair oil and the third has deep hollows at the temples. The ugliest and the most unbearable of all realities comes as a thunderbolt to both Saleem and the readers when they come to realize that these three heads in the pyramid are none other than his childhood friends. The cup of realities has to be gulped and so, Rushdie sums up the purpose of the war with words that seem to be as light as snowflakes and as hard as frost: "...the purpose of that entire war had been to re-unite me with an old life, to bring me back together with my old friends." (MC 521 )

The episode in the 'terrible field' of bone-marrow ends with the tragic and the comic, the good and the evil and the serious and the absurd slithering into each other to make the unreal look real, the unbelievable believable, the abnormal normal and the unacceptable acceptable: "Deshmukh, the vendor of notions, called cheerfully after us: "Ho sirs! Ho my poor sirs! Who knows when a man will die? Who, my sirs, knows why?" "(MC 521) The awful truth of the history of Indo- Pak war is blown to a higher, but equally historical truth through Deshmukh, an alien element preying on the dead: "... life must go on; trade must go on, my sir, not true?"(MC 519) His words usher in hope, ready to create ringlets of binary oppositions one after the other: "Ho sirs! Enough fighting has been already. Be normal now, my sirs. I beg. Ho God."(MC 520)

Rushdie's attempt to amalgamate the terrible and the pleasant by bringing in Deshmukh as a peripheral figure counterbalances the central action in the novel, and the reader is left with a feeling that there isn't anything terrible that exceeds its reach. Joseph Swann has rightly interpreted the role and position of this vendor of notions. His presence, to Joseph Swann, represents a complementary rather than a contradictory force to the interpretative flow of the narrative and as such, the centripetal and the centrifugal tendencies are brought to strike a perfect equipoise and a never disturbed balance. The ironic twists Rushdie brings in the narrative technique, keeping Deshmukh in the foreground rather than in the background and inserting metaphors for delight such as 'strange, strange crops' (MC 518) and the pyramid of corpses, guarantee unity and continuity of experiences in the novel through extension of events of war into the body of Saleem's history.

The interplay of dualities in Rushdie's works, as seen in the instances discussed here, signify 'at once proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority, something at once inside a domestic economy and outside it, something simultaneously this side of the boundary line, threshold, or margin, and at the same time beyond it, equivalent in status and at the same time secondary or subsidiary, submissive, as of guest to host, slave to master' (Miller 441). The uniqueness in the duet and the duel of binary opposites, handled by Rushdie, is that the binary opposites are not only simultaneously found on both sides of the boundary line but also between inside and outside. They also form the boundary themselves, the screen which is at once a permeable membrane connecting inside and outside, confusing them with one another, allowing the outside in, making the inside out, dividing them but also forming an ambiguous transition between one and the other. Kashmira– Yuvraj love episode in *Shalimar the Clown* becomes a potpourri of binary opposites where Rushdie prepares a stage for duets and a combat ring for duels of these binary opposites, and this microcosm in particular reflects the operation of polar-opposite forces throughout the country during the postcolonial era. The integration of Kashmir in spite of its disintegration under the grip

of violence and terrorism, within and beyond its frontiers, is vividly drawn with the interplay of the 'aesthetics' and the 'grotesque'. The 'aesthetics' brings out the beauty and bounty of Kashmir valley, and the 'grotesque' draws out its decay under the spell of violence. The romance of Kashmira-Yuvraj love story strikes a contrast to the atrocities of war and violence at the hands of the terrorists and the Indian soldiers who had come there to protect the valley. Their love conditions and brings luster to the narrative. Similarly, the interplay of binary opposites in the episode of Saleem – in – Sundarbans in *Midnight's Children*, reflects the philosophy of life and man's pathetic predicament amidst the whirlpool of infinite uncertainties and possibilities, made functional only through the photosynthesis of binary opposites. This duet and duel of these dual elements contribute artistically to the procreation of art of suspense in the process of narration in the novels of Rushdie. The play of dualities in the hands of Rushdie receives a scintillating effect as they are not confined to their respective spheres when they are in operation, instead each one of the binary opposite pairs, set in action, serves a purpose, and therefore, they create triangles, not mere polar oppositions. A third sphere is created which is related to both the elements in the pair, taking positions sometimes before them or between them as they divide, consume and exchange across when they meet.

The deferment of binary opposites in these two episodes seems to signify more appropriately among many such significations as this: "... a man is no other than a series of undertakings, that he is the sum, the organization, the set of relations that constitute these undertakings." (Sartre 854). The 'grotesque', in the interplay, supplements the innate lack in the 'aesthetics' of the potentiality to admit that man is what he purposes to be and he exists only in so far as he realizes himself. It advocates that man is the sum of his actions and what his life is. Similarly, the 'aesthetics', in the interplay, supplements the innate lack in the 'grotesque' of the potentiality to overcome quietism and inaction and thus, emerge to a higher level to realize that there is no reality except in action.

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