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# Smudge on an Illuminated Manuscript: a Postcolonial Reading of *Shalimar the Clown*

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## Abstract

This Paper begins with Timothy Brennan's riposte to Amir Mehmud and Sara Suleri, underlining, simultaneously, the problem of Post colonialism as described by Brennan. His rather hasty definition is used to underscore the different postcolonial propensity in Pachigam, a fictional village created by Salman Rusdie in the novel *Shalimar the Clown* (henceforth SC). This village is posited as hybrid, fluid, and a space marked by difference. It is a typical but not an unproblematic post colonial space, one which Brennan ignores in his categorical definition of post colonialism. Finally, the essay highlights the essentially ambiguous relationship of Pachigam, a microcosm of Kashmir, with the larger 'postcolonial', 'post-imperial' entities of India and Pakistan.

[**Keywords:** Salman Rusdie, *Shalimar the Clown*, Timothy Brennan, postcolonial, post-imperial, India and Pakistan, Pachigam, Kashmir]

The conversion of ideas into images - metaphorical writing - is clearly of great import to postcolonial authors in their struggle to translate their culturally-specific material into an alien tongue as well as, conversely, to remake English to reflect their divergent cultural realities. Not only do such writers, then, cross linguistic frontiers but they also traverse other borders: the temporal, as they move away from their pasts into very different presents and futures; the psychological, as they shed old selves to adopt new ones; and the social, as they are both transformed by and transform their new societies. And although even nonmigrants experience temporal, psychological, and social change, migrants remain the primal translated and translating beings, subject to and causing more radical cultural ruptures and re-definitions than others.

(Mann, 1995; 37)

He closed his eyes and pictured his Kashmir. He conjured up it its crystal lakes, Shishnag, Wular, Nagin, Dal; its trees, the walnut, the poplar, the chinar, the apple, the peach; its mighty peaks, Nanga Parbat, Rakaposhi, Harmukh. *The Pandits sanskritised the Himalayas.....O! Those days of peace when we all were in love and the rain was in our hands wherever we went.....Everyone carries his address in his pocket so that at least his body would reach home.* (SC 305)

## Timothy Brennan, Pachigam and the Discourses of Post colonialism:

Quite arbitrarily, the beginning note of this essay would make use of the eminent critic Timothy Brennan's stinging critique of Sara Suleri and Amir Mehmud's reading of Brennan's analysis of *The Satanic Verses* (1988). Though Brennan in his critique has taken offence against being used by these postcolonial theoreticians for ostensibly exposing the lapses in his reading of Rusdie, yet, I won't stop here because of the exceptions expressed by Brennan earlier. For my purpose is clear: To involve his rather hastily arranged function of the trope of post colonialism and through an unraveling of the

problematic embedded in this term, seek to relocate Pachigam in the postcolonial sphere, as a special case embodying some of the critical determinants of the post colonial discourse and yet standing out on its own, worth expatiating for an individuated study. The objective, eventually, as in the case of *SC*, if the result of my crude angle of vision on this book is anything to go by, is to find out what went wrong in this otherwise Edenic, myth pervaded, fairy tale, and otherworldly structure of Pachigam.

The argument waged by Sara Suleri and Aamir Mehmud, if all the theoretical paraphernalia is laid aside, rests, essentially on their claims of being in the possession of “Muslim sensibility.” And therefore are endowed with a special vantage point to lay bare the Muslim politics inscribed in Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* (1988). On the basis of their being closely aligned with the Muslim sensibility, the claim made, an unusually tall one is that *The Satanic Verses* primarily deals with the Islamic society in the South-Asia. The ambivalence of form so apparent in this book that you don’t need to be trained in the stylistic dimension of his oeuvre is easily corresponded with the amorphous structure of Muslim society in the subcontinent. That ambivalence in *The Satanic Verses* as also in the *Midnight’s Children* (1981) is linked with ambivalence outside is unambiguous. To make the correspondence between the calculated form and the material and ideological worked outside exclusive to South Asia is less acceptable than saying *SC* is an exclusive preserve of Kashmiri sensibility. The *SC* is as much accessible to a Kashmiri-where most of the book is rooted as it is to someone in America. Though as one familiar with the local moorings, tastes and sounds, some interesting insights may be offered, however, ultimately the book is cast on cosmopolitan canvas bringing in the predominant ideas of the contemporary world within its loop. For Rushdie is a deliberate man, a methodical person. He is as much conscious of his subject matter as that of his globally spread audience.

Naturally, Brennan, who believes that *The Satanic Verses*, when all is said and done, is at its basic orientation, a religious book though of course belonging to a very skeptical branch of Islam, i.e. Sufism, something on which he prides himself-for being the first critic to explore that dimension- is irked by the readings overdetermined by Muslim or Islamic consciousness.<sup>1</sup> However, the end of his essay “Salman Rushdie, *Satanic Verses* and the post colonial criticism” in which he rips apart, point by point, the contentions of the two famous post colonial critics, he leaves with a debatable intervention: Debatable because, not unlike the postcolonial authors whom he earnestly sought to put in place for pushing Rushdie into the South-Asian Islamic tin-box, he problematically circumscribes the agenda of postcolonial trope. He says, immediately in line with the outrage expressed:

Criticism, I think needs to evoke the current torments and threatening gestures of an imperialism we are now living, rather than suggest an unsettling space left behind by an older system, already quaint, that democracy has swept into the past. I don’t feel this in their “postcolonial” writing; and I think they are recoiling at the feel of it in mine. (Brennan 271-276)

Unless one goes with the traditional binarism current in many circles of the postcolonial realm, it is hard to support this narrow formulaic functional description of

the trope of postcolonialism. It does not remain to be said that the realm has become immensely challenging composed as it is of both intervened strands and marked by the emergence of new strands standing on their own definitions and terminological repertoire.

With which strain in this amorphous set of discursive practices should one associate? <sup>ii</sup>Each one has a compelling presentation. There is on the one side the idea of genealogy. The Enlightenment genealogy takes one back to the conceptual notions of modernity, progress, beauty and taste. The more immediate textual, discursive one goes back to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and from him onwards to a whole range of critics inhabiting the domain. Even if the genealogical field is by passed what remains is equally potent enough to compel our attention. With the theoretical refinement and institutional consolidation of postcolonial studies as a cultural discipline dedicated to the analysis of discourse a stray academic institutional aura has sprung up around the erstwhile liberatory energy. Instead of aiding in exposing the ideological dissimulation of imperialist political economy in the so-called postcolonial world, it has rapidly become a part of the same machinery. With the result a distinct "canonization and commodification" (Wolfreys 205) has made inroads resulting in the brazen complicity of the discipline with sites it was purported to interrogate. Given the variance in the genealogical source, intertwined processes of the movements' growth, differing disciplinary affiliations and not quite similar locations, post colonialism continues to be an emerging heterogeneous and at times contradictory field. It is in this context that Brennan's advocacy of invoking the torments of imperialism presents problems. For when the field is inhabited by the warring tribes of theoreticians motivated by their native persuasions, Suleri and Aamir, despite their naive claim on the Muslim sensibility, do have a prerogative to take post colonialism to areas not sanctioned by the conventional binarism beholden to the first world Academics. This is issue number one, a little distant from my immediate concern, yet the second one, reminiscent of the preceding, wherein, he gives a categorical location and function to third world writers after the withdrawal of the material political boundaries of the empire, is of insistent relevance here. For an enunciation of the unique fictional postcolonial space of Pachigam possessing an unambiguous historical validity would underline the unintentional silence. The point made is:

In fact, it is especially in Third-World fiction after the second world was that the uses of "nation" and "nationalism" are most pronounced. The "nation" is precisely what Foucault has called "discursive formation"- not simply an allegory or imaginative visions. But a gestative political structure which the Third-World artist is very often either consciously building or suffering the lack of. (Brennan)

An implicit division of Third World fiction writers between those who are involved in the nation forming process and those who find themselves in an ideological role devoid of the cornerstone of nation is reflective of, on the one side, an obsessive capacity to treat the former empire whose offshoot the nation is as a reference point and on the other completely ignore, if not deny, the universe of alterities available to a third

world writer. A tangible case in point is Salman Rushdie. May be *Midnight's Children* (1981) and some of his subsequent texts deal with the two issues but how about the *SC*. At one level the objections raised might be brushed away by driving the author into an increasingly rootless cosmopolitan space removed from the rest of the Third World fiction. But the question remains, whether, for example, his latest novel *SC*, the bulk of which is set Kashmir, a chunk of the Third World space, can or cannot be constitutive of the so-called third world fiction. Another factor, which can be usefully interjected here, is the very notion of third world (Aijaz Ahmad in his insightful intervention, though emerging from a Marxist-Hegelian grid, *In Theory: Classes Nations and Literatures* (1992)...elaborately engaged with the idea of "Third World", its genesis, evolution and the ideological repercussions). If *SC* does not seek to directly build or bolster a nation it does not mourn the lack of either. Here it is important to recall that the nation or nationalism as it emerges in Brennan is not the same as it subtly unfolds in Rushdie's novel. In the former, the ideas are intimately connected to the predominant notions of nationhood in the Third World steering clear of the small eclectic, syncretic spaces as Pachigam which though sharing in a profoundly different sense to which I would return soon, yet through its antique, intricate dynamics held out the hope of splendid alternative to the prevailing, predominant theorizations. Beneath the vision of despair and the seemingly complete loss of hope in the form of the decimation of the embedded inter communal structure of this hamlet lay the consecration of an idea which is sought to be recorded by fresh generation product Kashmira, daughter of Boonyi Kaul from Maximilian Ophuls. Her visit to Kashmir, in search of roots and reconstructing the details of her mother's life as well as Pachigam carries a redeeming glimmer not only for her own restless self but the razed down village also. She assumes the form of a transmitting agent of the deep-seated ethos of the myth-laden village. Now returning to the central issue; whatever controversial moments we discover in Brennan's essay and in other contours of the postcolonial discourse there are, however, from a purely functional descriptive perspective certain features common to most of the strains. What I mean by this is that it is possible to identify same overlapping features within various theorizing sites of post colonialism and then easily locate them in Pachigam as well. Let me in the beginning mark out just three of them; Hybridity, Fluidity and Difference.

The Oxford English Dictionary says the word hybrid has come from the Latin word "hybrida" which means the offspring of a tame sow and wild boar, child of a free man and slave, etc. And the subsequent meanings ascribed to the word are "the offspring of two plants or animals of different species or varieties; A person of mixed racial cultural origin; A thing composed of incongruous elements, e, g. a word with parts taken from different languages" (Metcalf 399).<sup>iii</sup> Looked at from which ever angle one wishes Pachigam presents a comprehensive example of hybridity with this set of definitions. Even the etymological meaning of the child of a free man a slave bears interesting correspondence with what transpires in Pachigam. Boonyi Kaul's ignominious exit from the village and the birth of Kashmira from her overtly discomfiting relationship with Maximilian is redolent of the original meaning. Boonyi Kaul, by the time she becomes pregnant, has virtually become a slave under the American ambassador in the "gilded case" of the "pink"

room in Delhi. In this pristine, pre-industrial village by whose side the sweet Muskadoon flows and is overlooked by the Khelmarg meadows centuries old churning has produced a mutually shared imaginative space. The ancient folk-theatre *Bhand Pather* whose sources can be traced to Bharata's *Natyashastra* is still current in this village and exemplifies the liminal inter-communal space.

### **Pachigam and the Hybrid Space:**

Even the nature of the demographic composition of Pachigam has been carefully constituted. Not only does this rainbow composition lend us information about the extensive research that has preceded the framing of this novel but also the manner in which the village emerges as microcosm. There is no reference to any mosque or synagogue-there is a small temple at one end of the village- but there are Muslims, Jews and a small number of Hindus, not excluding a family with Egyptian roots-within Muslims themselves not all are sons of the Pachigam soil. Firdos Noman, wife of the *Sarpanch* and mother of Shalimar, who has come from a village Buffliaz close to the Hills, believes that her family has strong connections with the royal Macedonian family from which Alexander came. She in fact claims her fair hair and blue eyes to be part of the royal Macedonian legacy. It is not entirely a baseless story given the fact that Alexander fought against Porous on the banks of the river Jhelum and that the Greek Historian Herodotus has written about the gold digging ants of northern India. Besides:

Alexander according to the ancients of Buffliaz, had come to these mysterious hills because he had heard that giant, fuzzy, ant like creatures were to be found in that locality... once the Greek army, or at least its generals, found out that the gold-digging ants actually existed, many of them refused to go back home, settling in the region instead and leading the lives of the idle rich, raising miscegenated families amongst whom children with Grecian noses. Blue or green eyes and yellow hair frequently co-existed with darker-haired, differently-nosed Himalyan siblings.” (74)

Interestingly, Bhoomi, who prefers to call herself Boonyi after the majestic Chinar tree, though coming from the Kaul family which is traditionally conceived, along with Butts or Bhats, to be an aboriginal one, has her nose of Grecian character. This is felt by Shalimar once he begins to caress her by the river Muskadoon. Here the mixed evolution of the so-called pure ethnic group is brought to the fore. The surname Joo is not so uncommon in the valley. In Pachigam, the frail, old dancing master Habib Joo is a vital component of the syncretic theatrical form, *Bhand Pather*. Boonyi Kaul is a graceful dancer partly because of the presence of Habib. Once again, the Jewish family in the village brings to light another strand of the intertwined history of Kashmir. Though Habib Joo dies peacefully in his death-bed but his children Ahmed, Sulaiman and his sister Razia meet a violent end. After coming to Pachigam in the valley, Firdous told the story of her 2000 years old ancestor to her son, Shalimar, when he was growing up.

When the valley gradually descends into chaos, they also along with the *Pandits* and the Sufi philosopher Khwaja, Abdul Hakim choose to move out into India. On the way the bus skids off the road. Ahmed, Sulaiman and their sister do not reach their chosen destination. Their death pulls out a deep-rooted arc from the rainbow habitation. Big man Misri's (Egypt is locally termed *Misir*) daughter who is raped by the Gegroo brothers, Abdul Kalam, Allauddin and Aurangzeb has olive-skin, reminiscent of her family's Egyptian origin. The Gujjar prophetess 'Nazare-baddoor' (evil-eye- begone) who lives on a higher ground in the village has her own tale of origin. She believes in the fifteen hundred-year-old treks of her ancestors from somewhere in the central Asia. The upcoming threat to her and rest of Pachigam's existence, of which she had an intuitive knowledge, sharpened her memory of this long migration. Nazare-baddoor spoke of the great trek as if it had happened just the other day and she herself had walked. She would begin nostalgically retracing the important milestones of the long journey. How the *Gujjars* began from the:

Caspian Sea and marching across central Asia, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, over the Khyber Pass and down into the subcontinent. She knew the names of the settlements they had left behind in Iran. Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan and India-Gurjara, Gujrabad, Gujru, Gujrabas, Gujdar-Kotta, Gujargarh, Gujranwala, Gujrat. (64)

Outside the borders of Pachigam, there are the Hangis on the Dal Lake. Their story is no less antique than that of the Pachigam inhabitants. They claim their lineage to have originally descended from the survivors of the Noah's Ark. The point here is not about the historical validity of these ancient ancestry claims-though, no doubt, there are available written and oral records, consecrated in the folk memory which can easily substantiate them-but their contemporary effectiveness that deserved the maximum attention. It is after all the effectiveness not the degree of theoretical refinement, which is the hallmark of a successful inclusive culture. Pachigam offers this practical dimension in ample measure. There is abundance of mixing up: mixed genealogies, mixed religions, mixed myths, mixture of Hindu Shaivism and Islamic Sufism, mixing up of roles in the routine performances of traveling prayers. In a way such varied mixing up defines Pachigam as the latter defines the contours of admixture. Though Pachigam is a predominantly Muslim village yet the reigning opinion is that after death the souls of human beings enter the local birds, an opinion hitting right at the core of Islamic fundamentals of afterlife and the travel of soul into God's abode. On the other hand the Brahmins, quite contrary to the food practices of the rest of Brahmins do not abstain from consuming meat, but are as gastronomic as the rest of the villagers. A time comes in the narrative when the scholarly *Pandit* Pyarelal Kaul becomes the chief chef (*vasta waza*). The blossoming act of this unique mixing up comes in the shape of the sanction given by the elders to love affair between Shalimar and Boonyi. This marriage is bold and beautiful as it does not show anything less than the clear proof of the laying down of inner embankments for the establishment of a model communitarian existence devoid of aggressive identities. It showed in no unclear terms the transformation of the words, Hindu and Muslims into mere descriptive terms and nor sources of division. How in

Kashmir things shared were cherished than those, which divided. Boonyi Kaul's dream communion with her deceased mother immediately before her momentous meeting with her beloved in the Khelmarg meadows further corroborates though in a qualified manner the same eclectic and inclusive spirit. In her dream *Firdos* (a Persian word meaning heaven) went into all directions, directions where the hesitant Boonyi did not want to enter. She told her about the unshackled future and the visions of freedom into which she cannot enter. Boonyi obviously did not want to hear these layered forebodings. The dream conversation moves on:

'A woman can make every choice she pleases just because it pleases her, and pleasing a man comes a poor second, a long way behind' she said. Also, if a woman's heart is true then what the world thinks doesn't matter one jot.' Tis made a big impression on Boonyi. 'That's easy for you to say,' she told her mother. 'Ghosts don't have to live in the real world.'

'I am not a ghost,' Pamposh replied. 'I'm a dream of the mother you want me to be. I am telling you what is already in your heart, what you want me to confirm.'  
(53-54)

This conversation read in conjunction with the Ram-Sita myth drawn from the epic *Ramayana* wherein the *Lakshman Rekha* becomes the focus of her attention, serves to attest the essentially tolerant culture of Pachigam. If the conversation makes us conscious of her inner grappling with the question of going for a physical relationship with the Muslim Shalimar, the intense contemplation of the Lakshman Rekha draws her to reflect on the borders, real and imagined in her village. That she integrates the prancing, handsome right rope walker into her own self is- as does he- removes the *Lakshman Rekha* and the hesitant reception of their mother's voice in the dream from the present into the past. Actually, it shows the projection of her buried fear and anxiety once she steps across that line and yet the self convincing done through this imaginary dialogue reflects the quiet negation of the notion of transgression and the subsequent consequences.

How could it have been otherwise?!! For the kind of life lived in this fictional is a splendid demonstration of the harmony between identity disregard and singular, belligerent regard for a fixed set of symbols. The residents, consciously or unconsciously, do not subscribe to the reductionist view of absolute dissolution of boundaries *Pandit* Pyarelal Kaul, even as he partakes of the non-vegetarian food besides allowing the marriage of his daughter with Shalimar, does worship in the temple. Though, as Pankaj Mishra has highlighted in his review of the book in the *New York Times* there is no mosque in Pachigam, yet the Muslims do possess a sense of affiliation to their religion. This is evidenced on many occasions. Two of which are easily noticeable. One, when the question of marriage between the two young, the Muslim Shalimar and the Hindu Boonyi, Pachigami's arrives, and second, when the formal procedure is worked out about the marriage. On both occasions, the respective rituals belonging to Muslims and Hindus are carefully asserted. Yet this keen assertion should not be confused with the belief in singular, monolithic identity shorn of accretions or mixtures. Similarly, other inalienable



units, be it the Egyptian origin family of Big Man Misri, or the lone Jewish family of Habib Joo or the *Gujjar* prophetess, all have a sense of belonging to the ancestral roots as to the current intertwined formation in Pachigam. This sense of belonging resulting in the structuring of their historical and mythological memory only, eventually, helps in throwing into bold relief the inter-communal existence.

The carefully crafted dream cape of Pachigam, with a distinct shade or two of exoticism does not survive for long. The initial murmur of resentment, bringing to a slow friction the preceding foreboding, against the traditions flexible norms comes from two outsiders. They are *Pandit* Gopinath Razdan and Maulana Bulbul Fakh. Ostensibly Razdan in his modern attire has come to teach in the school, however, his real brief is to act as spy, a spy on the *Bhand Pather* artists, for artists are beheld as natural subversives. It is during his regular dual functioning that he manages to sow doubt in the minds of people particularly his own community members. He is against the freewheeling inter-connectivity between Hindus and Muslims conceiving the liaison between Bhoomi Kaul better known as Boonyi Kaul and SC as a wholehearted support for a conduct which is “wanton, lascivious, whorish, debauched, ungodly and idolatrous” (119). On the other Maulana Bulbul Fakh (representing the rise of the fundamentalist Islam), who is presumed to have risen from the leftover of the army hardware, is all hell-fire and damnation against the docile Muslims of Pachigam. For they have polluted their faith by their loose Islamic etiquette’s. He does not find refuge in Pachigam but in the neighboring village of Shirmal, which is connected to the former by “a humble country lane, rusted and dusty” (247) trees. There he converts the mosque into a propaganda house whipping up communal passion with a clear intention of splicing the two communities through the middle for the longer objective of seceding the valley through a well-orchestrated insurgency. Both of them, though in varying degrees of intensity, prise open the dark side of Kashmiri spirit. They were highly critical of the pervading inclusive piety and disliked the scholastics, like Kaul and the Sufi philosopher, feeling intensely that their abstruse speculations made God sound alien. That God, scriptures and the Prophets message have been rendered distant and mysterious, and inaccessible for seeking intercession in the achievement of material social and political and religious goals. Both in a way emphasize the return to the sources of the faith. They made themselves interested in dogma, a practice quite opposed to the forerunning one, and stressed the futility of mixing sacred dogma with “tricks of dialectics” and “metaphysical quibbles” (*Enconium Sancti Tomae Aquinatis*). Earlier the ground plan of religious thought in the village was unambiguous. The people of higher thought and the Sufi philosopher absorbed themselves in the belief of life as a dialogue with God without any fear to freedom, security or creativity, and the common people sustained the simple form of life with no unbending assent to the propositions of an inherited creed. Giving a go-by to given certitudes, no interest in dogma and the absence of a host of intermediaries, underlying the discourse of the modern Razdan and the fundamentalist Maulana is the conception of a human-like God subject to the same constraints and limitations. Let us listen to the “appointed superior,” (264) the iron-Mullah to gauge one of the potential reasons for the entry of discord into Pachigam:

'The infidel believes in the immutability of the soul,' said Bulbul Fakh.' But we believe that all living things can be transformed in the service of the truth. The infidel says that a man's character will decide his fate; we say that a man's fate will forge his character anew. The infidel holds that the picture of the world he draws is a picture we must all recognize. We say that his picture means nothing to us, for we live in a different world. The infidel speaks of universal truth. We know that the universe is an illusion and that truth lies beyond the illusion, where the infidel cannot see. The infidel believes that the world is his. But we shall drive him from his redoubts and cast him into darkness and live in Paradise and rejoice as he plunges into fire.' (267)

The point here to understand is that these two forces in addition to others which complement each other in laying to ruins the mystically oriented entity of Pachigam have their source ultimately in alienation. Alienation engendered by modernity and consolidated by postcolonial ambiguities of the sub-continent. Maulana Bulbul Fakh, metonymically represents the religio-political fundamentalist organization Jammāt-e-Islami founded by Maulana Abul Ala Maududi (1903-1979) in 1941. This organization drew inspiration from the larger revivalist spirits in the Muslim world. The emphasis in this as well as other movements was on a travel backwards towards the core tenants of Islam. A study and analysis of the Prophet's time was the means to replicate the same in the current disoriented conditions. It was a healing strategy. Modernity wreaked psychological havoc in the Islamic world leading to cultural dislocation and anxiety. A way out of this grueling circumstance was discovered in a more literal interpretation of the scriptures. That is to say receiving the message and directions as they were by the Prophet and companions. Maulana Bulbul Fakh's fulmination against Hindus is partly based on this literalist exegesis of the scripture. This went directly against plural matrix of the village in which God was mystery personified and most inscrutable, and not worshiped in the manner Maulana pursued to establish and popularize.

### **Fluidity and Difference in Pachigam**

Not just against the overarching hybridity, the Maulana and his counterparts on the other side, took strong exception to the supernumerary duo of fluidity and difference, other two widely accepted terms in the postcolonial territory. In the village fluidity came naturally, a corollary of the hybrid spirit. The ideas, stories and names were formed as freely as they could be. This tendency is fundamentally due to the absence of watertight cultural compartments or mutually exclusive zones and the presence of a border-less imagination. Pyarelal Koul's home is certainly at one corner removed from those of the majority community but his wife Pamposh Kaul (who preferred to call herself after her friend Firdos Noman's choice) and Firdos Butt (or Bhat) very often meet in the saffron fields. So do Pyarelal and Shalimar's father. During the primary interaction between Boonyi and Shalimar, Pyarelal is seen lost in his other worldly reverie by the side of Muskadoon and, the courting duo sit on a rock nearby. As there are no demarcated boundaries in the imagination so is there non-existence of the same in the geographical territory. It is the

usness which characterizes the atmosphere not *Me* and *You*; a living dialogue of worldviews in its primordial form becomes easily available. The anecdotes, stories and tales freely mingle with each other irrespective of their source and create a common pool which is subsequently drawn upon by the traveling players. Abdullah Noman's memory is believed to be a library of inexhaustible tales. But he is not entirely unique because "every family in Pachigam had its store of such narratives, and because all the stories of all the families were told to all the children it was as though everyone belonged to everyone else...."(236). The magic circle, unfortunately, is broken for good once Boonyi runs away to Delhi to become the American ambassador's "whore."

One is inclined to argue that the atmosphere animating Pachigam approximates to the Bakhtinian influential formulations of carnival. For as the eminent theoretician underscores in reference to Carnival there is ample allowance for a free and familiar contact among people without regard to hierarchies as well as the free indulgence in harmless blasphemy and profanation. There are "carnival misalliances" (Shalimar and Boonyi). There is "joyful relativity" of all structure and order, and a perpetual organic process of birth and death, nourishment and decay that is wholly trans-individual. In fact the social interaction free of inhibitions is so profound that subjectivity is predicated upon inter-subjectivity. Self-hood is social and one's individuality turns out to be nothing but a gift of the other, grace of the neighbor. In this sublime interconnectedness are included the non-humans as well (birds are an integral part of the spiritual philosophy of the village. The dominant belief is that after death souls of beings inhabit the local birds). However, there is a note of caution. Though the milieu does embody "a kind of folk wisdom that celebrates the body," it does allow various celebrations "in which a sort of licensed misrule is practiced" (25) and it does give space for polyphonic discourse yet, as it is clearly visible, one does not notice opposition to forms of authority or "a pageant without footlights and without a division into performers and spectators" (Bakhtin 122). Contrary to this the *Bhand Pather* players receive generous patronage from the ruling king, Maharaja Hari Singh. When the crucial Ramleela and Budshah performance is to happen in the Shalimar Garden, the audience as well as the actors are aware of the special royal presence. Even Boonyi Kaul feels tempted by the American ambassador during a performance specially arranged for the official guests. Instead of mocking and ridiculing the authorities-as Bakhtin would have wished to happen as per the carnival spirit-the artists of the village are trying to curry favor for material rewards (a depiction which cannot most probably stand the test of historical validity).

### **Pachigam and Post-coloniality:**

Carnivalesque spirit aside, how does one relate to hybridity and difference in terms of their narrativisation in contemporary enunciation of postcolonial theory? That is a crucial question, which leads one to a seemingly ironical statement of the existence of postcoloniality in pre-modern, precolonial times. Current hybridity discourse is for the most part intimately connected with the breaking of territorial boundaries and the transnational movement of people, a situation obtained after the breakdown of colonial

empires. In literary genres, particularly the novel, discussion revolving around hybrid characters born of either mixed races, mixed cultures and so on, forms an inalienable feature.

Looking at the composition of Pachigam, it is clear that the population is an interracial mix. The family of Big Man Misri, as the surname indicates, can trace its roots to Egypt (Egypt in Urdu and Kashmiri is known as *Misr*). Though in contemporary Kashmir the number of *Misris* is meager yet the assumption of the intrusion of Egyptian genes into the local genetic pool is not unfounded. Many historical landmarks in the valley testify to the popular myth which is used by Rushdie to build a secular ethos. Majid A Siraj has given a clear picture of the same:

Moses led his people to Kashmir from Egypt. As proof of this theory the elders in Kashmir even today get called joo after their name derived from the word Jew, as a mark of respect. Scholars in ancient history have stated that the first inhabitants of Kashmir came from a tribe B' nai Israil. They were Jews and migrated with their leaders Moses and settled in Kashmir. It is believed by some theologians that Moses is buried in Kashmir. Even today in Bandipore Kashmir, a grave is present on the peak of the hill called "Baal Bebu". The name mentioned in the Old Testament as Mount Nebu.....The fact remains that all religions of the world have a stake in Kashmir..... (Siraj 45)

Even the old *Gujjar* prophetess living in a hut away from the village believes her ancestors to have actually descended from the eastern European country of Georgia and after a tortuous journey crisscrossing centuries finally managed to reach Kashmir.) In short the blue eyes (Boonyi Kaul), Greek nose (Boonyi Kaul), Jewish surnames (Habib Joo, Ahmed Joo, Suleiman Joo and Razia Joo), Egyptian surnames (Big Man Misri) and so on and so forth, all point towards a plural social formation irrespective of visible barriers. And all that from the pre-colonial through colonial centuries and after, until its sad decease recently.

Now, if independence of the erstwhile colonized states is taken as the "foundational" post colonial moment-of course there are not few who would easily disregard such presumption as preposterous- then the decease of Pachigam can be located in the same moment. It is on the eve of the decolonization of subcontinent that Kashmir is found in an unenviable position. The leaders tussled with each other for the claim on popular imagination. India and Pakistan, both newly independent countries, used their own resources to win over the leadership. The struggle of the Kashmiris against the Dogra Raj got partially obscured by the new struggle against equally tempting allurements from the two nations. Thus the freedom from the Hindu Dogra Raj instead of bringing about a cultural exhilaration and the infusion of fresh strength into Pachigam brought a grueling entrapment between the two desires of India and Pakistan. The commotion in the Shalimar Gardens when the Ram Leela performance is underway vividly exemplifies the looming danger from the two modern nation states. As time moved on the sharpening of two immediate choices began to wear down the long running eclectic growth of Pachigam. So independence of the subcontinent was not the liberation

of Kashmir. It created an “ambiguous relationship” (Zutshi 2) with words like nationalism, independence and citizenship. As a former princely state with a majority Muslim population under a Hindu Maharaja, Jammu and Kashmir was caught in incredibly difficult choices. Independence and the subsequent partition marked the onset of a certain psychological imprisonment in contraries. Families got divided on the basis of these contraries. (SC joins ranks of Pan Islamists and Anees supports independence while their common father longs for the former camaraderie). This ambivalent experience born of the departure of Britishers is aptly summarized by the famous Kashmiri poet Ghulam Ahmed Mahjoor in a historic poem *Azadi* (Freedom):

Let us all offer thanksgiving,  
 For freedom has come to us;  
 It's after ages that she has beamed  
 Her radiance on us.  
 In western climes Freedom comes  
 With a shower of light and grace,  
 But dry, sterile thunder is all  
 She has for our soil.  
 Poverty and starvation,  
 Lawlessness and repression-  
 It is with these blessings  
 That she has come to us.  
 Freedom, being of heavenly birth,  
 Can't move from door to door;  
 You'll find her camping in the homes  
 Of a chosen few alone.  
 She says she will not tolerate  
 Any wealth in private hands;  
 That's why they are wringing capital  
 Out of the hands of everyone.  
 There's mourning in every house  
 But in sequestered bowers  
 Our rulers, like bridegrooms,  
 Are in Alliance win Freedom.  
 There's restlessness in every heart,  
 But no one dare speak out-  
 Afraid that with their free expression  
 Freedom may be annoyed.

(Mahjoor 74 -77)

The poem sums up the relentlessly unforgiving history of Kashmir. Since the Mughal emperor Akbar's invasion and occupation in 1586, it is for the first time the poet's land has tasted freedom. The freedom, however, brings to his mind the painful legacy of slavery; poverty and destitution of his countrymen. Freedom ironically induces the identity crisis. Are we Indians, Pakistanis or do we constitute an independent nation? Due to the enactment of the rite of power over the subjects, the political thinking of the

subject became a partial process rather mimicking one or the other elite and ruling political formation in one of the two countries. “The discourse of mimicry,” Bhabha argues “is constructed around an *ambivalence*...the *ambivalence* of mimicry ([that which shows itself as] almost the same, *but not quite* does not merely ‘rupture’ the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a ‘partial’ process” (Bhabha 85-6). Some Kashmiris became Pakistani citizens, some of them were made Indian citizens without the flow of due constitutional rights. And the worst part, seen with suspicion on both sides of the international border. Should then the coming of freedom be celebrated or mourned? If mourned, would it ever return, annoyed that it might be?!!! Hence the ambiguous relationship with the achievement of political freedom because “the telling of colonial and post colonial stories....demands a more naked relation to the ambivalence represented by the greater mobility of disempowerment. To tell the history of another is to be pressed against the limits of one’s own self” (Suleri 111).

In another couplet the message of ambivalence is firmly brought home:

Am ready to give my life for India  
But my heart is with Pakistan.

On this growing and uncomfortable state of ambivalence came calling the people like Maulana Bulbul Fakh, *Pandit* Gopinath Razdan and Colonel Hammirdev Kachwaha. They use various blandishments to bring round the population to their own side. For example the idea of purity is mooted; purity of faith and the threat of impure influences by freely mixing with groups of other denominations. Muslims must stop polluting their unique faith by allowing the infidels to enter into their Islamic loop and also by following the daily rituals of Islam. So goes the harangue of the Maulana. Razdan acting as a spy under the guise of a school teacher sows the seeds of doubt and suspicion among the community members. As he belongs to the *Pandit* community, the Muslim segment smells a conspiracy in his dubious activities. Hammirdev literally executes the hammer on the population trying to beat them into complete submission to the military authority. His failure to grab the attention of the beautiful Boonyi further infuriates him; possession of power and sexual failure barely make a happy relationship. He resolves to come down heavily on the rebels, the “ungrateful” (he had presumably come for their security but discovers to his shock very few reciprocating to his patriotic gestures.) Kashmiris. And he does so eventually; getting the military machinery into action against the men and women of the village. The cantonment called Elasticnagar ‘because of its well-established tendency to stretch’ () ‘as the soldiers flood in’ (Tait ); it continues to expand till it brings within its ambit the entire manuscript of a landscape on which glorious saints and- if folklore is to be believed-prophets have carved their impressions. Between themselves these sponsored actors share the responsibility of ruining Pachigam. But does the story of Pachigam end there? Probably yes and probably not; it has been razed down to earth, old idiom of life is extinct, however, the story moves around for resurrection. Kashmira came to record the saga of the fairy tale hamlet all the way from Los Angeles. The smudged manuscript resonant with the most ancient voices has been preserved. Rendered distasteful and invisible it might have been but as the author says *manuscripts do not burn*.

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<sup>i</sup> Timothy Brennan in his astute essay deploys Agha Shahid Ali's essay "Satanic Verses and the Secular Muslim Response" (Ali, Agha Shahid. "The Satanic Verses: A Secular Muslim's Response." *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 4.1 (1990/1991): 295-300.) to put weight behind his argument.

<sup>ii</sup> As an interdisciplinary field concerned with the political, social, cultural and aesthetic structures of colonial domination and resistance, the post colonial field is riven by differences in exposition. More recently the realm has got spliced between those who find a certain redeeming glimmer in discursive radicalism and those who, drawing inspiration from particular strands of the anticolonial movement, believe in political insurgence and are dismissive of the current character of theory in general. Vijay Mishra in his "What is Post(-) colonialism" (Mishra ,Vijay, and Bob Hodge, "What is Post(-)colonialism?" *Textual Practice* 5 (1991): 399-414) magnifies the hyphen in between the words post and colonialism. He, in fact, invokes Rushdie right in the beginning of the essay and problematises his use of the English language and the spoiled relationship with the Islamic world, as a post colonial writer. The condemnation of Rushdie by the Islamic postcolonial world raises interesting question about the category of the post colonial itself and whether one can....." From purely theoretical perspectives, the onset of globalization has brought its own peculiar set of challenges. So much so that the perception is gaining ground that the post colonial phase is over. For example Makarand Paranjape in his essay "The End of Post colonialism" argues:

It is obvious that when I say the end of post-colonialism, I mean its fall, termination, death. That is one obvious sense. But "end" also means goal, purpose, objective, ultimate aim. So while "end" means finish, termination, closing, it also means purpose, fruition, desideratum. Let us consider this other meaning—the end as *prayojan* or objective. I would like to suggest that the ultimate end, that is purpose or fruition or post-colonialism will, paradoxically, be best served by its early end or termination. To put it differently, I would suggest that the end of post-colonialism as a discourse will serve the true purpose or fulfillment of post-colonialism. Why do I say this? That is because the true culmination of post-colonialism is actually full or complete decolonization. Because post-colonialism as a discourse postpones or stalls decolonization, we should exit from it and frame our own alternative discourse.( "The

End of Postcolonialism?” at the seminar on “Re-viewing Culture and Imperialism,” University of Calcutta, March 10-11, 2004 )

On the other hand there are critics lending a discernible prescriptive touch to post colonial studies. Jean Comaroff, whose take on the aggressive character of the post colonial state is representative of such a body of criticism. (Please see,.... Comaroff, Jean. “The End of History, Again? Pursuing the Past in the Postcolony.” *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*. Eds. Suvir Kaul et al. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2006. 125-144)

Thus far from rendering the “post colonial” to a fixed entity, it emerges very convincingly that the function/s of a post colonial critic/s(say Sara Suleri or Aamir Mehmud, whose mandate, quite curiously was circumscribed by Brennan by outlining for the limited/limiting post colonial project) are multiple and varying in nature at the same time subject to the place and use made of the post colonial lens. The “post-colonial” is a very convenient blanket word, a portmanteau, a holdall if you will, which allows a lot of different types of things. It is this imprecision and ambiguity that has contributed to its prevalence.” For it is none other than Brennan himself-whose pioneering study of Rushdie in the post colonial frame yielded not a few useful features-who agrees with the porousness and the unbordered character of post colonial studies field.

<sup>iii</sup> The change in the names of characters is a stock feature in Rushdie. It has been noticed in some of his earlier novels (*The Moors Last Sigh*, *Shame*). In this novel while the characters starkly rattle in the cubbyholes of symbol and metaphor, there is simultaneously a rattling fluctuation emerging from name changes. Maximilian Ophuls at one time is a forgerer and runs around carrying the name “Sebastian Brandt” (161). During the resistance years in Strausborough as he is serving in the Action Section of Combat Etudiant, Max became “Niccolo” (164). Another time he rechristens himself after “Jacques Wimpfeling” (164)-a medieval humanist. Similarly his wife undergoes name changes. She is Ursula Brandt, Grey Rat and Margaret “Peggy” Rhodes at different points in the narrative.

On the other side in Pachigam as well names go on changing. Bhoomi turns into Boonyi, Pamposh into Giri, Pyarelal into “Toorpoonyi” (meaning cold water in Kashmiri), Hammirdev into Hammerdev etc etc. So what is the possible rationale behind these changes?

In the case of Maximilian Ophuls, it is obvious. His name changes are more strategically rooted as he is a resistance fighter. For him the differing names act as survival tactics by deluding the enemy. But the ease with which he succeeds in making, unmaking and reinventing himself is a “narcotic discovery” (162). The reinvention of the self becomes a self-perpetuating process getting out of his rational control. In Pachigam, aside from the horrific change in Hammirdev boding ill for the population, the easily accepted changes are emblematic of the fluidity of identities and the easy mingling in the primeval multicultural space. Therefore the logic behind theses shifting landscapes of character names is a mixed bag. Sometimes because of contextual compulsions (Max), sometimes because the character has a discomfiting feeling with her original name (Boonyi) or simply used to underline the broadminded hybrid existence.

However underlying this all is the authorial unease with the fixed value or vision on life represented by a given name. The impetuous change brought to bear upon characters is actually the introjection of the author’s postcolonial migrant subjectivity.

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